

The Church | What Is it?

Hello friends, this is Britan and I hope your week is off to a great start.

Friends, today we are going to take a pause from Aaron's series on discipleship to talk about something we have been praying a lot about this week. In fact, it is a very important part of discipleship itself. Let's take a moment to discuss the church and the importance of attending, supporting and serving the church. Today we are going to talk about what the church is, and its importance, next week we will continue the discussion.

Let's begin with a question. What do you think God loves most? Do you think it is the beauty of the ocean? The sound of a child laughing? As I spent time thinking about this lesson, I came to the conclusion that it is the church that God loves most. Let me explain.

The Bible calls the church "the body of Christ," that He nourishes and cares for (Eph. 5). The church is His glorious temple, in which He is pleased to dwell (Rev. 21:3). It is His fullness, because God the Father promised Jesus a great reward that includes His church (Col. 1:18–20). The church is also His adopted family whom He loves and protects (Gal. 4:5). Think about this, Jesus came into the world not only in obedience to the Father's will, fulfilling the mission the Father sent Him to accomplish (John 17:4); He also came into the world because of His great love for His church. Like a husband come to rescue his bride, a king come to save his people, or a shepherd come to rescue his sheep, Jesus came into the world because of His great love for His church. There is nothing in all this world that Jesus loves more than His church.

When Jesus talks about the church he says "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). What Jesus is talking about is the body of believers, followers of Christ that the enemy cannot stand against.

So, let me say again what the church is: the church is the body of Christ, nourished by God, built by Jesus, in which He is pleased to live in. It is the reward of Christ, it is protected by God, and a reason Jesus came to earth. It is something that the Devil cannot beat. Friends, the church is the gathering of the body of Christ. It is you, a Christ follower meeting together with other Christ followers to be protected, to honor God and fulfill the promises God has for you.

Here is what the church is not. The church is not you alone. To be the church, it requires us to meet together. And that is why it is important for us to not just serve Jesus in our work or homes, but to ALSO meet together to worship side by side, to grow from the message, be convicted by the words God has for us, to encourage one another, and walk in the promises of God for the church.

I want to outline just 4 reasons to be involved in your church: it honors God, being involved in church refreshes us, thirdly we lead by example, and fourthly there is power when we come together.

1. It honors God

The great privilege of a Christian is not only to be loved by Jesus, but to love Him and all that He loves. If His greatest love in this world is His church, we should love it as well. In many ways, it is the most beautiful way in which we express our love for Him. As we worship together, the Bible tells us that God joins us. In Matthew 18:20 we read: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I encourage you, never miss the opportunity to go to a Sunday service where God says he will be there with you! Going to church is a tangible expression of our love for God and our desire to meet with him.

2. It refreshes and prepares us

Hebrews 10:24-25 says "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." I know all of you have experienced the attack of the enemy. God knows that this life is filled with difficulty and he is encouraging us to meet together to be encouraged. We were never meant to face hardship alone, just like Eve was made for Adam, we are made to be in community. Weekly meeting together allows for us to be encouraged, to be convicted, to gain wisdom and knowledge, all which we will need to serve and lead effectively.

Next week we will talk about the power of God that is displayed when we meet together. Perhaps you have personal stories of when you worshipped together and God moved. We will also talk about leading by example as the leaders of our communities.

Our encouragement to you today is an important one. We ask you and we pray that church will be a priority in your lives. That you will make it a priority to honor God in this way, by beginning simple, attend church this Sunday and every Sunday.

Let's pray