

We are the Church and We are Called to Worship GOD

Welcome to **Week 2** of “**We Are The Church**”! Our goal for this series is to help us understand why the church is to be such a vital part of our lives as followers of Jesus. We hope that by the time we are done with this series that you will have a newfound appreciation for the Church and that we all will change our mindset from thinking about the church as a place we GO to understanding that the CHURCH is who we are supposed to BE.

Last week we defined the CHURCH **as a local assembly of believers that desire to WALK with Jesus together, GROW to be like Jesus together and ultimately LOVE like Jesus together.** But why is the local church needed for this? What purpose does it really serve? Can't I do these things on my own without being connected to an assembly of other believers? Sadly enough, there are many professing believers today that don't feel the church is really all that vital to their lives or to their relationship with Christ. Many of them are perfectly fine with being associated with the Universal Church merely by name but really have no desire or see the importance of belonging to the Local Church. Well, we want to address this issue by taking a look at THREE MINISTRY PURPOSES of the Church and how each of these are a vital part in helping you grow in your relationship to Christ. Today, we are going to focus on the first purpose and with each of the remaining two weeks we will unpack the final two. So let's dive into the first ministry purpose of the CHURCH.

Ministry Purpose #1 - We are the Church and we are called to Worship GOD

One of the ministry responsibilities we have in our lives as believers is to WORSHIP and ADORE GOD! In fact this is what we were created for and it is worship that really sets the tone for the other two purposes we are going to look at. That is why here at Vertical Church one of our **Core Values** is **VIBRANT WORSHIP SETS THE TONE.** Worship is a demonstration of our love and devotion to God especially in light of what God has done for us. It is derived from the first of two vital commandments Jesus calls us to observe when he said to the lawyer in Matthew 22

Matthew 22:35-38 (NIV) 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: **36** “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” **37** Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment.

Our worship is not only to be based on WHAT God has done for us but it is also to be our response in light of WHO He is. **Revelation 4:11 (NIV)** “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” He is worthy of all worship therefore, we should worship HIM in all of His splendor, majesty, and authority as King of the universe.

Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus begins with an anthem of PRAISE in his opening address. **Ephesians 1:3-10 (NIV)** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

When we consider what God has lovingly provided for us through Christ Jesus the SON, praise should be our automatic response. What God has done for us should lead us to worship and praise His holy NAME!

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace **8** that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, **9** he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, **10** to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

His desire for us from before the beginning of creation, because we are made in His image, was that we be HOLY and BLAMELESS set apart to Him. And even though sin would enter into the world and taint our lives He made a way for us to still achieve what He so desires for all of our lives and He did so by providing His SON as a payment for our sin that we could be adopted into His family and return to what His original intent was for our lives.

Ephesians 1:11-14 (NIV) **11** In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, **12** in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. **13** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Notice, what is at the center of our redemption from sin and what is at the center of our being made holy and set apart to Him by the Holy Spirit. It is that He would receive praise and worship! That He alone would be glorified and exalted. We exist as a CHURCH to WORSHIP HIM! That our very existence would bring GLORY to His NAME! That our lives would offer praise to HIM! The way we live and the way we carry ourselves as believers should bring GLORY to God and cause people to take notice! We are to be a testimony to God's ability to redeem and to change what sin has disrupted. No other group of people can do this. But WE are the CHURCH and we are called to WORSHIP HIM! If we are going to fulfill this ministry purpose as a church and as an individual we need to establish 3 MINDSETS as a believer and we need to allow the church to hold us accountable to them.

Mindset #1 - We need to be intensely DEVOTED to walk in the way of LOVE

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV) 1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Notice how the way Christ loved us was an offering of worship to the Father and because of how He loved us we have been drawn to the Father. We are to follow His example in love so that through our offering of worship we may draw others to the Father as well. **Our LOVE for others must flow from a heart of worship.** Worship has to be our motivation. We love not for what we get in return but we love so that God may be glorified. Nothing will turn the heads of others and grab their attention like Christ-like love when it is demonstrated by our lives. **John 13:34-35 (NIV)** 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The church not only gives me an opportunity to LEARN about God's love for me but it gives me a place to EXPERIENCE it through other believers, a place to PRACTICE it by loving on others, and a place to to be held ACCOUNTABLE to live it out in my daily life with others outside of the church body. Living the Christian life apart from a local body of believers stunts this activity in our lives.

Mindset #2 - We need to be intensely DEVOTED to pursue HOLINESS

We will all worship something because we were made to worship. We don't choose if we worship, but we do choose what we will worship. When we do we become like what we worship. Therefore holiness issues reveal worship issues. Listen to how Paul describes this in **Ephesians 5:3-14 (NIV)** But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Sin hinders and tarnishes God's glory in our lives. When sin is present or allowed to take over in our lives we become like a tarnished or dirty mirror that restricts the full reflection of God's glory through our lives.. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. How can praise be offered to God when we fill our mouths with other things that do the exact opposite. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. When we allow other things to rule and reign in our life it is impossible to worship God because we are guilty of idolatrous actions and our hearts are very susceptible to things that lead us away from God. This reality is why we must take very seriously a pursuit of what is holy and acceptable to God not because we are trying to earn our salvation but because I don't want anything to take away from God's glory or from the salvation which has been declared over my life through faith in Jesus! 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them. We are to influence others by showing them there is a better way. Not join with them damning them to God's wrath.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything

exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. **14**
This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Our pursuit of holy living or our lack thereof will impact our worship! Let me ask you a question. What is the reason you are pursuing HOLINESS? Is it to earn favor with God or to achieve salvation? Or, is it a desire to worship HIM? To have a life that reflects His glory so that others may see God at work in you?

Hebrews 12:14 (NIV) Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

We are to pursue holiness as an act of worship just like we are to be devoted to love like Him as an act of worship! It is hard to bring glory to God with a life that is lived in complete opposition to God or is embracing the very things He died to redeem us from. We pursue holiness because we are pursuing what God has always intended us to be. We pursue holiness because He is worthy of worship and our lives should reflect that.

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Corinthians 6:20 you were bought with a price. So honor God with your bodies.

Again the local church is a vital part of my pursuit of holiness. Just like in my pursuit of love the church provides me a place to learn about what holiness is and to hold me accountable to that which I am learning. Here’s why this is important! My heart left to its own devices will deceive me. In fact, it will go so far as to look for things that will justify why I can act or behave a certain way. Sometimes we will look for a passage of scripture taken out of context to promote our sin or we may look for a book or a certain Christian author to give us an excuse or reason to continue in a certain behavior or belief. When what God has really given us as a place to grow and mature in holiness and to find answers to the questions we are wrestling with is The CHURCH! Remember (this is not just any group of people) but these people are a God called assembly who have been filled with the Holy Spirit, the same group from which we have all learned about Jesus and His salvation. **The church is to help me understand what sin is and what needs to be given over to God in my life so He can have His way in my heart fully.** Who else is going to do this? The culture isn’t going to do that. In fact the culture is going to tell me certain things are no big deal. Like living together before we get married. Sex outside of the context of a marriage between a man and a woman being ok as long as it is consensual or as long as we love each other. Even when it comes to understanding God’s word I need the church to help me understand and grow in God’s word. Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the ability to understand God’s word and how it is to be applied to our heart. But God has given us

the church as a protective covering for us as we grow and mature so that we make sure we are following the Spirit and not our own selfish hearts.

This covering is for all of us even for us as pastor leaders. Paul gave Pastor Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 some instruction on being aware of false teachers and how he must make sure that he guides his heart in the truth as well so that he is not deceived.

1 Timothy 4:1-6 (NIV) The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. **2** Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. **3** They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. Some of the false teaching circulating in the church at Ephesus where Timothy pastored was dealing with issues of complete celibacy or particular fasting rituals as a way to cleanse oneself of sin or to make oneself more holy. Of course there is nothing wrong with celibacy and nothing wrong with fasting but these disciplines were being hijacked by certain religious people as a way to add to what only Jesus could provide and it was leading people astray and confusing them regarding salvation. The church has been entrusted with God's word and we are to make sure that it is properly being taught and applied in our lives. **4** For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, **5** because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. **6** If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

Notice how the collective work of the church worked in this matter to provide proper instruction. In fact, Paul's instruction took place in the church and it's a benefit to Timothy as well as something Timothy could use to instruct others in the church that he was leading. In fact, most of the NT consists of letters to the churches dealing with Christian conduct and issues of sin hindering the witness and the worship of the church. God has given the church authority to speak on these issues and to protect and teach the scriptures. God always has had a called out group of people He trusts to carry out His word. Not just any group but a group of Spirit-filled believers.

We need to be intensely DEVOTED to walk in the way of LOVE. We need to be intensely DEVOTED to pursue HOLINESS

Mindset #3 We need to be intensely DEVOTED to being filled with the HOLY SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:15-20 (NIV) **15** Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. **18** Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, **20** always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is given to us when we turn from our sin and trust by faith in Christ! These are the words Peter preached to the crowd on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that we looked at last week. The Holy Spirit is a gift but we must be intensely devoted to the pursuit of being FILLED with the Holy Spirit because there are a lot of distractions trying to quench His work in our life and He will not go where we do not give Him free access. If we are to be a church that worships God and properly fulfills that mission we need to be filled with His Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit means we are Spirit empowered, Spirit-led, and Spirit controlled. How do we become filled with the Holy Spirit?

ASK Him to fill you! Matthew 7:7 (NIV) “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

CONFESS and TURN from sin that quenches His work in your life! 1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NIV)
19 Do not quench the Spirit. **20** Do not treat prophecies with contempt **21** but test them all; hold on to what is good, **22** reject every kind of evil.

TRANSFORM your mind by the WORD of God. Romans 12:2 (NIV) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

APPLY the WORD of God to your life. Galatian 5:16 (NIV) So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

The Holy Spirit wants nothing more than to make much of Jesus. **John 15:26 (NIV)** “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.”

And he wants to be turned loose in your life to do just that. But we must invite Him into every area of our lives. We must confess and repent of sin that quenches His work in our lives. We must allow God’s word to both transform our thinking and be applied in our lives.

Are you holding Him back? The church needs more people who are filled with the Holy Spirit! When we are, there is a synergy that takes place where people are encouraged in their faith and it becomes a place where others can experience the presence of God. We become a place that helps new believers WALK in LOVE, PURSUE HOLINESS, and BECOME FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT themselves. Through us God can draw others to Himself.

When we are intensely DEVOTED to pursue these mindsets God’s glory becomes our only concern and the church becomes a catalyst for the pursuit of spiritual transformation.

We don’t GO to church, we ARE the church! And we have been called to WORSHIP HIM!!

Invitation:

Do you just attend church or are you BEING the church by walking in LOVE, pursuing HOLINESS, and being filled with the HOLY SPIRIT? Are you just going to hang-out with the church at Sunday service or are you a part of the church?

Does WORSHIP set the tone for how you LOVE, how you pursue HOLINESS, and for your desire to be FILLED with the HOLY SPIRIT?

What is quenching The Spirit in your life?

Does the way you live your life as a believer bring glory to GOD?

If you hear a message that makes you think more highly of yourself, but not more highly of God, that's just an encouraging talk. Our job is not to make you feel good, but to help you see God.