

The Church – Growing...

Read Ephesians 4.1 and 4.7-16 – The Make Up of The Church

Ephesians 4.1 – We have been chosen by Christ – what a calling!

Ephesians 4.7-16 – talks about Jesus as the head of church, the giver of gifts (verse 11), the body of Christ, the truth of Christ, the maturity of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4 talks about specific gifts and roles in the church. Here are some of these gifts that we can learn about and think about whether we have (or want!) these gifts too:

1. Apostles (usually more than one) – sent by churches – see Acts 11.22 and Acts 13
2. Prophets (usually more than one – see Acts 13.1)
3. Evangelists (Philip – see Acts 8)
4. Shepherds (just look at the life of Jesus!)
5. Teachers (see Acts 13.1, 1 Tim 5)

We find the purpose of the gifts in verse 12 (and 15, 16). To prepare God's people to serve, to make the body of Christ stronger. The body of Christ is dependent on Christ who is the one and only head of the church. The parts of the church are held and joined together and need each other to grow stronger together.

We see our choice – verse 13 or verse 14? Are we going to be mature, strong and unified in our faith together as the body, continually growing in Christ towards him and his perfection? Or are we going to be like babies in the faith, swung left or right by every new idea, tricked like fools by people out to cause deception?

What's your choice? How do we protect ourselves? One clue is in verse 15, speaking the truth in love. We must know the truth (through the Word and the Spirit), live this truth, grow in this truth and share this truth. We must also hold each other accountable and call people to account in love when they step from the truth. How many Christians and/or churches are truly doing this!?!

What Is Church?

1. The church means being part of the body of Christ.
2. It means being part of a local church BUT we need to be part of the wider picture. Within any one area there is only one church (eg the church at Ephesus, the church at Corinth). Never does it say churches – we need to be unified together with all other Christians – without compromising the truth and essentials of the Gospel and the Bible. This has been one of the moves of the Spirit in the Western church recently.
3. See Matthew 16 – The Holy Spirit reveals to Peter who Jesus is. On the rock of Jesus, the church will be built. This is where many have got it wrong i.e. it's not Peter who is the head

or the rock of the church! This would go against the clear teaching of the Bible that Jesus is the one and only head of the church (see Ephesians 1.21-23). Common sense would tell us that Peter is not the basis of the worldwide church, but Jesus – the cornerstone. Jesus appears to be talking here of Peter's confession of faith – that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Peter would have made a very shaky rock for the church to be built on, like any one of us. He denied Jesus (John 18.24-26), was told to 'get behind me Satan' by Jesus (Matthew 16.23), and even was rebuked publicly by Paul for not continuing to reach out to Gentiles (non-Jews) – see Galatians 2.11-14. Additionally, Peter himself spoke in Acts 4.11 (quoting Psalm 118.22), that Jesus is the cornerstone of the faith, the stone that the builders rejected.

So, back to Matthew 16, we see it is on this confession by Peter, on this basis of faith (that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God), that the church of Jesus Christ is built. An alternative is from the Greek words for 'rock' used by Jesus. When Jesus talks about Peter being a rock, the Greek word used is 'petros' which means 'rock' or 'individual stone' (from The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance). When Jesus then says, *"on this rock I will build the church"* – the Greek word for rock is 'petra' which means large rock attached to the bedrock, rocky crag, or other large rock formation, in contrast to individual stones, with a focus that this is a suitable, solid foundation (from The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance). So the Greek shows that the 2 'rocks' are not the same. We therefore can assume (as well), that Jesus called Peter the 'petros' and then called himself (Jesus), the 'petra'. Therefore it is Jesus testifying that he (Jesus) is the head and the basis of the church. In Matthew 7.24-27, we find the parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock – and the foolish man who built his house on sand. We learn that the wise man heard and then did what Jesus said (by obeying his Word) and built his house on the rock. What is the word used here for 'rock'? It is petra, the bedrock. We must be like the wise man, we must hear the Word of God and then obey it by putting it into practice. We see that this is the way to build in the Christian life and in the church.

4. In the church we must not follow people as idols or blindly. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul lays into the squabbling church who seem to be divided in following Paul, Apollos and maybe others. Paul says only God is the important one and that they should follow Jesus alone. Notice the link between being called 'babies' and squabbling – a lesson for us all! Paul talks in Galatians about taking time away and learning the Word from the Holy Spirit. The counter to false teaching is regular Bible study in the anointing of the Spirit.

5. In Matthew 18 great authority is given to the church in deciding conflicts within church. Verse 18 is clear that we have a great responsibility on getting it right and that there is always a spiritual dimension to all we do.

Church is about verse 19 – people meeting in God's name – are we? There is great power in this. Out of this develops a full church..

So what is the church made up of?

Philippians talks about God's people (believers), elders and deacons. The roles of these people are defined in the Bible. Different churches interpret these in different ways and that's fine! We don't have to all be exactly the same and God works with what we do! Don't get hung up on having to do things in one certain way – God isn't !!

Good places to look in the Bible about what the church looks like and what leadership can look like are in 1 Timothy 3, 1 Tim 5 and Titus 1.

Example of Timothy.

In Acts 16, the believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about him and respected him. He travelled with Paul and learned from Paul and others. We see in Colossians 1.1 that Colossians was partly written by Timothy. In 1 Thessalonians we see Paul sent Timothy to the church to help them. We also see Timothy settling problems and training others – see 1 Corinthians 4.17 – and leading the church at Ephesus (1 Tim 1.3).

How Do I Play My Part?

- Make sure you play your part in the body of Christ fully in harmony – only
- Keep learning – be prepared to grow – but God detests pride so be humble always
- Keep reading your Bible, praying and all the basics
- Consider baptism, ask God for spiritual gifts, ask God to send his Spirit on you
- Discipline. A key element that must be present for church to truly be 'church.'