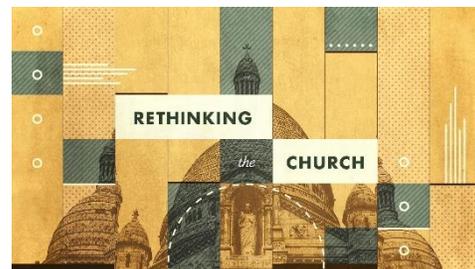


JULY 12, 2020

## UNDERSTAND THE CHURCH

Matthew 16:13-18 (+ the lessons below)



**The Big Idea:** Jesus' purpose is to build His Church – to prepare His Bride, to mature His Body, to build His House. This was the vision that drove the church planters in Acts. This is the vision that must drive all of us at Good Shepherd today – the building of Jesus' Church. It's the main thing, the first thing.

### 1. Building His Church is the central thing God is doing on the earth.

His purpose is not to redeem the culture, Christianize society, reform political systems, or improve everyone's standard of living, but to build His Church. There are many good things we could do, but God has called us to the highest – the building of His House, the preparation of His Bride, the equipping and maturing His Body. Consequently, our ultimate goal is not social improvement for its own sake, through such means as education, medical institutions, agricultural projects, political reform, humanitarian work, or the "Christianizing of the culture." Projects of those kinds will only be beneficial as they directly assist in, or proceed from, the completing of the task to build His Church. They should not be ends in themselves. **Our goal is the building of His Church.**

### 2. Paul uses three metaphors for the church in his letters.

- a. **Bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:25-32, 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-9)
- b. **Body of Christ** (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:18 & 2:19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
- c. **Temple of God** (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:9-17)

Paul sees a broad perspective. He does not merely think of a Sunday morning church with a collection of programs that we need to keep running. He thinks about the nature of the Church, the meaning of the Church, the spiritual reality of it. If we treat the Church merely as a collection of mechanical programs that we have to keep running, we're going to become tired and frustrated. Paul wants us to deeply understand the spiritual reality that is the Church. Then, let whatever programs are necessary come out of that. Let them serve that, and not be their own thing that we must continue. We need to intentionally break out of the unhealthy way of thinking about the Church that has exhausted us. We need to break out of the endless religious activity and engage deeply with the spiritual reality of the Church of Jesus Christ.

### 3. In all three metaphors, there are three constant elements –

- a. **People.** Together we make up the Bride, the Body, the Temple. All true believers are included in this.
- b. **Process.** The Bride is being prepared; the Body is maturing; the Temple is being built. It is not finished yet.
- c. **Purpose.** The Bride will be united with Him; the Body will grow into His image; the Temple will be His eternal dwelling-place. Expressed in different ways, the ultimate purpose in all three images is the same – union with Christ.

### 4. Building Christ's Church means this – We exist to connect people to live the life of a Jesus follow. Our goal is spiritual formation creating personal transformation and people who can influence and guide others.

# LifeGroup Worksheet

JULY 12, 2020

This sheet is to be completed DURING your LifeGroup session

Scripture Reference – **Matthew 16:13-18** (+ the lessons below)

**1. Reflect-** *How has God been working in your life? How has He provided, comforted, answered, reconciled, or guided you? Be open to sharing both your successes and struggles.*

**2. Read-** **Matthew 16:13-18** carefully several times, both with your group and alone.

**3. Engage and Explore-** *What do you think God was communicating to his people when this was first written? Try to answer at least one questions below.*

- From your perspective, what is the current state of the Church?
- When you think of the word “church”, what do you think of? What emotions and feelings do you have?
- Paul uses many metaphors in his letters. The three main ones are –
  - Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-32, 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-9)
  - Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:18 & 2:19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
  - Temple of God (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:9-17)

Read the lessons.

What are the characteristics of each metaphor? List as many as you can.

- Though the Church is a rich reality described through all of these images, which of these three images best describes your personal experience of the Church?
- Reflect for a moment and then share with your team how the church has borne out the reality of that particular image in any way for you.

**4. Connect-** *how this passage applies to you and your relationship to Jesus and others. How is the Holy Spirit speaking to you through this passage? Try to answer at least one question.*

- First, pray! Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the deep reality of the spiritual nature of the Church, and the building of the Church, so that for the rest of your life, you will live in this reality and build the Church in this reality.
- Build out the following chart by adding more to what the church is and is not. Make it BIG! Discuss it.

What the Church Is	What the Church Is Not
Temple of the Holy Spirit, God’s family, Love	Building, Business

**5. Silent Meditation-** *You may want to move away from the group to a quiet spot. Silently read the scripture several more times. Write down the words/passage you want to focus on this week and how you plan to apply God’s truth to your life.*

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**6. Share-** *Key insights with your group from question #5.*

**7. Close in Prayer-** *Try using different prayer models found in the LifeGroup Leader Handbook.*