

## Guided Bible Study: Week 11

May 30 - June 5, 2020

During the time we cannot have Sunday School and Wednesday Bible Study due to the Corona Virus emergency, Rick is posting a guided Bible study on here to help fill the void left by not having those classes. We encourage you to read the passages in the Bible together with your family. We will post the study for each week.

### WHAT JESUS IS TO THE CHURCH

The Book of Ephesians is filled with ties between Jesus and His church. In that book, which originated as the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus under the inspired guidance of the Holy Spirit, we find Christ's glory reflected in the life of the church. When Wilbur Fields wrote his commentary on Ephesians he even titled it, "The Glorious Church". As we study the book of Ephesians we come to appreciate the church and our need to be involved in it as Christians as we see how the church relates to Jesus.

For this week's Guided Bible Study let's delve into the book of Ephesians to see what Jesus is to the church as revealed in this book. As we do so, may it give us who desire to walk with Jesus a greater appreciation for His church as revealed in the New Testament. May it impress upon us how following Jesus includes our consistent involvement with His church.

We see Jesus is the HEAD OF THE CHURCH. [Read **Ephesians 1.18-23**] Jesus bought our salvation on the cross. We will later in this study mention Him being the church's Savior. Saved people are added to the church (Acts 2.47). Having died, Jesus arose from the dead and eventually ascended to the right hand of God in heaven. Jesus' position as risen Lord and Savior places Him above any and every individual. This authority is as true in the church as anywhere else.

Look at **Ephesians 1.22**. [DISCUSS: Is there any area of church life that Jesus isn't in charge of? Does what is taught and practiced need to be what He approves? Does what we do about winning the lost and reaching out to our world need to be as He taught? Do we need to abide by His principles of stewardship? Must we

have His loving, gracious, forgiving attitude toward others in the church with whom we might disagree?]) Notice that, according to verse 22, God made Jesus to be head over all things to the church. I hope you realized as you discussed the questions that there is no area of the church's life, teachings, and practices but over which Jesus is the ultimate authority.

This all being said, can any person claim to be the head of the church? [Discuss] Since we believe Jesus is still alive and capable of guiding His church through the Scriptures as we apply them, isn't it disrespectful to His Lordship to claim any individual need to serve in the position of the head of the church on earth?

Verse 23 speaks of the church as Jesus' BODY. While the church is about spiritual matters, we Christians put the flesh and bones on it. We go places and do things that need an earthly physical touch on behalf of Jesus.

Jesus is the UNIFIER OF THE CHURCH. [Read **Ephesians 2.11-22**] The word "church" doesn't appear here but the mention of "God's household" in verse 19 shows this section applies to the church, God's collection of people. These verses deal with how the First Century Jews and Gentiles were brought together in the same church. These groups were quite hostile toward one another. Those who truly submitted to Jesus, however, found themselves drawn together in worship and service. Jesus became a bigger issue to them than their ethnic and cultural divide.

[DISCUSS: What are some groups, today, that are divided culturally, racially, or ethnically? How can Jesus bridge this gap? Have you seen this happen? If so talk about it.]

Verse 18 points out that everyone who has access to God has it through Jesus. In other words, the same Jesus saves all saved people. We are God's people because of Him, not ourselves or our distinctive traits. When it comes to our standing with God we have far more that binds us together than could possibly keep us apart. Therefore, let's act accordingly toward our fellow Christians from other people groups.

As seen in verses 21 and 22, the people of the church should be noted for holiness, not hostility. Any divisive and racist attitudes are opposite of holiness. At

a time when our nation again needs healing, concentrate on living out that aspect of holiness that is loving and welcoming, not divisive.

Next, Jesus is the GIFTER OF THE CHURCH. [Read **Ephesians 4.1-16**] The opening verses of this section mention that “body” idea again. They also speak of the unity that exists in Christ’s church when it is functioning as He intended. While there were sometimes divisive issues that had to be dealt with, the church in the First Century was not divided into various denominations like it is now. After this opening section of chapter 4, Paul then moves into the part about Jesus “gifting” people within His church.

[DISCUSS: Do children tend to be gullible? Is this part of what makes them at risk for predators? Might that same trait be present spiritually in new Christians?]

Yes, new Christians (and even some older ones who haven’t matured sufficiently) are vulnerable to worldly influences and false doctrine that could lead them astray and, in the process, break the unity Christ desires for His church. The church, when it functions as intended, is like our bodies. (Note verse 16.) Just as our hands, eyes, ears, hearts, digestive tract, brain, and other parts all work together to make our bodies function properly and accomplish what we need to get done in life, members filling various roles fit together and work together to make the church effective in winning souls, helping the hurting, and strengthening Christians to stay faithful and serve effectively. Thus, there is an effective and efficient unity in the church.

To get the church to this point, Jesus places certain leadership roles in the church. Some (apostles and prophets) were special functions in the First Century and had miraculous abilities to know God’s will when the New Testament hadn’t been completed. However, the others mentioned in verse 11 are permanent. (Read verse 11.)

Jesus doesn’t call people to fill roles without making them able to do so. That’s where the “gifting” comes in. We may not be worthy of such responsibility and of the blessing of serving. However, just as we come into salvation by grace, so Christ extends grace to us in equipping us to serve in a fulfilling and effective manner. (See verses 7-13.) Sometimes we might not realize we’ve received this

gifting until we actually answer a call to serve and rely on Jesus' power and our study of His Word to function.

Finally, Jesus is the SAVIOR AND HUSBAND OF THE CHURCH. [Read **Ephesians 5.22-33**]

Jesus is presented as "Savior" in verse 23. This doesn't require a lot of explanation since we know that He died on the cross and arose from the dead to save us. Furthermore, remember that He adds the saved to the church, according to Acts 2.47 (cited previously). It's hard to argue that one doesn't have to be in the church to be a Christian when we realize that all saved people are added to the church by Jesus! If we don't want to be in Christ's church, there might be something sorely lacking in our relationship with Jesus.

Jesus isn't actually called "husband" in this section, but it contains a well-known comparison between His relationship with the church and the ideal relationship between a husband and wife. Christ's sacrificial love that led Him to the cross to save us is set forth as a model for how a husband ought to love his wife. Christ seeks to nourish and cherish His church to build it up, just as a godly husband seeks to build up his wife and, thus, build up their marriage. May this section not only give an example to husbands and wives, but also draw the church closer to Christ as we remember how much we mean to Him.

Jesus is very important to His church and the church is very important to Him. The church is glorious when it is functioning as intended in Scripture. Jesus makes it glorious. May we grow in Him as we realize and fit into His ideal for His church.