

Identity Part 7 “I am Connected”

How do you view “the church”

A) Is the Church a building that you go (or is it something that you are a part of?)

B) Is the church a place that you go to in order to receive something spiritually? Or is it also a place where you give of yourself to others?

C) Is the purpose of the Church simply to build up Christians to send them out into the world or is it a place to build up believers to minister to each other.

Those are important questions that need to be answered when talking about the Church.

A) The NT makes it very clear in talking about the church that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ – the Church is something **you are a part of**

B) When you opened your heart to Jesus : Jesus came to dwell in your heart by His Spirit – But something else happened – **Mystical – Mysterious**

C) You were placed **IN CHRIST & IN HIM** - you became a part of something Bigger than yourself – **THE CHURCH OF JC**

D) That is something that is so important for us to remember and understand.

I like the way that Paul puts it in Romans 12:3-6

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:

Paul exhorts us to realize – We are a part of something bigger than ourselves

A) We are A part that makes the whole – **BUT we are not the Whole.**

B) Other words - It is not all about me! – Right ?

1) **But that is so hard for us** – we are conditioned to be myopic and me centered.

Bb) Example: Who is the first person you think about when you wake up?

1) Me! – I am hungry – thirsty – what do I want to eat.

C) **Group picture** – Who is the first person you look for ? Me – Right ?

1) Not me as in Rob – but you yourself.

D) Our biggest problems in marriage – in the Church is when we forget that it is not all about us – right ?

1) The minute you start thinking – this is all about me – TROUBLE!

Tonight we come to Study #7 in our 9 week series called Identity – Looking at who we are in Christ! – Discovering our Spiritual DNA

A) The thing we want to see tonight – is this: In Christ – **We are Connected.** We are a part of something bigger than ourselves

B) Something Beautiful, wonderful, complicated – that Jesus purchased with His Blood.

C) Ephesians 2 is our text V.19

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy

temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

There are four things that I want us to consider tonight about how we are connected –

Three that are seen in our text – One that is not – but is Biblical

#1 We are a Family v.19 Members of the household of God

A) Notice that Paul begins with a negative. **"You "are no longer strangers and foreigners { No longer outsiders**

B) Before we came to Christ – that is what we were – Strangers /Foreigners /Outsiders

C) **What is a stranger?** We have all experienced that before – You travel to a different state – new city – don't know where everything is { **stick out -**

D) **First time in what used to be called Yugo** – dropped off in the middle of the night – No Language didn't know where we were /
1) Howard & Eddie were around the block

Paul says Once we were strangers, - We did not know what God could do for us.

A) We had no idea of the resources of peace and joy and forgiveness – that were available to us

B) But no more, he says. Now that we have come to Christ we are no more strangers.

D) Now we are well acquainted w/ the things of God)

And we are no longer foreigners, either. A foreigner is different than a stranger.

A) A foreigner may be very familiar with the country in which he lives.

B) He may have lived there for years and may be fully acquainted with the possibilities of it.

1) But he is limited. He is all alien; he has no ultimate rights. He is living on a VISA

C) He does not have a birth certificate which makes him a citizen of that land.

1) So No rights / no privileges – he is limited

This is very descriptive of many people in churches. They attend church regularly, sometimes study the Bible, they are familiar w/ the Songs

A) The language of the Church is very familiar to them – but because they have not surrendered their hearts to Christ – (**still foreigners**)

B) They can't experience the blessings of Being in the family of God !!!

C) But Paul says – that is not our Place in Christ **we are no longer Strangers & foreigners**

D) NO Now we are members of the household of God
1) Citizenship in heaven

D) And being a part of the household of God means that we are now a part of wonderful family – The Church

Consider for a few minutes HOW the Church is like a family

A) **It is a place where love is present:** Nothing more special touching seeing a family that loves each other (**Family dinners**)

B) **Husband and Wife** – look & sparkle in their eyes when they look at each other (**Show affection in front of the kids**)

1) **Love of a parent for their children** – Love of siblings

C) Aaron – talking to Amanda – “Any boy ever hurts her”– **I am is going to knock their block off** – THAT IS MY BOY

D) Family that rallies around a member who is sick or in need –

1) Great to see that { **You do that well!**

The Word Fellowship is Koinonia = to share in Common!

A)We share in Common our love for Christ and our relationship with Jesus

B)Charger fans – Share in common their love for the Chargers

C)**First ever Charger game- Jets Brett Favre – Crazy – Bonding – Pp getting all up in my space – hugs – high fives –**

1)Excited over an event – a play – not really Love for each other – it is excitement in the moment

What we experience in the church is so much deeper than that – it transcends seasons and events –

A)It is the result of understanding – what has been done for us – Blood bought

B)Also the result of what has been done in us –

Romans 5:5

“the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

C)God has placed His love in us – because His spirit in our hearts – **He works in us** – in such a way – **Start to love others**

D)The love of God in the Church is a beautiful thing to behold – how people who hardly know each other – { **Common bond – caring** }

1) Rally around each other – Awesome thing to behold – You guys do that well.

So the church is like a family because – It is a place where love is present

But it is also a place where conflict occurs.

A)Is there **ever conflict in your marriage?** Is there ever conflict with your kids! { **Doyles**

B)Guess what – **there is conflict in God’s family too!**

1)Reason – Sinners – flawed – not perfect – each one of us are a work in Progress.

C) **“The Church is a dysfunctional family** – but it is the best dysfunctional family around.” Joe Focht

1)Saints – set apart – but we are sinners – still sin!

D)The Bible has a lot to say about resolving conflict – how we are to go to one another humbly when we have been wronged –

1)Confront in love. **“Know us by our love – seen the most in how we deal with conflict.”**

I was talking to someone recently who came to me because someone in the body had treated them in an unkind way. –

A)They just thought I should know! – I said what I always say in those situations – **“Did you try and talk to them”** No – Why?

Didn’t think they would listen

B)Well you are never going to know until you try – Give them the benefit of the doubt – approach in love – I find that MOST PP are receptive.

C)It is the **immaturity in our kids** that causes them to run to Mom or Dad

1)Mom – she pulled my hair – Dad .. sister is being mean

D)As parents – don’t you love it when your kids get to that place where they are working out their problems with each other among themselves.

1)No longer the Referee – You get to be the Rewarder – get job

E)If you haven’t experienced that yet – Just wait – it is awesome

As a Pastor I actually really enjoy counseling and Discipleship – but one thing I hate is being a ref!

A)Read Matthew 18 – bring someone to the Pastors is the last RESORT – after exhausted other attempts

B) **So the Church is like a family** – because it is a place where Love is present

1) it is a place where conflict occurs

C) I like to say this is what we are about – **We Love Jesus and we are learning how to love each other!**

The Church is a place where encouragement is given

A) Remember times when one of my kids comes home after a rough day at school or a bad game – they are upset – crying – discouraged

B) And maybe they have been holding it in all day: **Suddenly they get home and it just all comes out { Always so dramatic**

1) Denise or I or both of take them aside – Work of encouragement starts to happen – Building them up –

C) That isn't very different from what often happens here –

1) After service – up front – Prayer – IN the counseling offices

2) **In the home fellowships/ Men's / women's groups**

D) 2 Cor 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*

E) **AWESOME BODY MINISTRY –**

So in Christ we are a family – a part of the household of God!

#2 We are a building - Not a building that we come to – but we make up the Building – the House of God

v.20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord

A) In ancient days when a builder was going to build a Building – start w/ **the Cornerstone**

B) A cornerstone was the most basic and essential part of a building, from which the proper placement & alignment of every other part was determined.

1) If the cornerstone was imperfectly cut or placed, the symmetry & stability of the entire building would be adversely affected.

C) It had to be strong enough to support what was built on it, 1) and it had to be precisely laid, because every other part of the structure was oriented to it

D) The cornerstone **was the support, the orienter, and the unifier of the entire building.**

1) That is what Jesus Christ is to God's kingdom, God's family, and God's building.

E) Who do men say that I am ? Who do you say – Christ

1) **Flesh and blood On this Rock – that confession I will build my church..... prevail**

He is the Cornerstone

A) He is the Rock that we have built our lives upon rock of our lives –

B) **TRIED STONE** *Isa.28:16 A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;*

C) The word tried was commonly used to describe “metals” which are tried in the fire to test their quality /

D) The idea is, that God would lay for a foundation not a stone whose qualities are unknown, and whose **stability** might be doubtful.

E) But one whose **firmness and stability** were so fully known, so that the foundation and the structure would be secure.

1) Our lives are built upon a **ROCK** that is immovable / no matter the storm the trial that comes – We stand **ON HIM!!!!**

So Jesus is the Cornerstone – but Peter in his epistle gives us some insight into our place in this building -

A) 1 Peter 2:5-6 Peter declares that *you & are living stones who are being built together as a spiritual house*

B) And Paul says here in v.21 In Christ we are being fit together –
1) *fitted together*) refers to the careful joining of every component of a piece of furniture, wall, building, or other structure.

C) Every part is precisely **cut to fit snugly, strongly, and beautifully with every other part.**

D) We are being fit together – by the Lord!

The Church as a whole & this Church individually – Every person has a place – importance!

A) Saw in Romans 12 Paul uses the analogy of a body

B) A body that has many members – Your body physically – many members –

C) **Hands feet arms legs – fingers – Beautiful when everything is in the right place – functioning**

1) Finger was in my forehead – not cool – hard time listening -

Is there anything that is more Beautiful than the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ – *A building built of Souls – a structure made of hearts*

A) There is no Structure like it- Jesus Delights in it

B) So pleased is God in the architecture of his church, that he has rejoices over his church as he never did with the world.

C) When God made the world the mountains, and the seas, and covered **its valleys with grass; birds of the air**

1) And all the beasts of the field; He made man in His own image

D) And when the angels saw it, they sang together & shouted for joy.

1) **But God did not sing;** He exclaimed that it was very good- But there was no song

E) But listen to what Zephaniah the prophet declared in Zephaniah 3:17 about His Church

17 The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty one, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

WE ARE HIS BRIDE!

Isaiah 62:5 as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.

Our Wedding Denise came down the isle – Sing Hallelujah – I was rejoicing over my Bride - Thanking God for her – that Day!

A) That is God – looks at us His Bride – And He rejoices – He sings LIKE a Man in love – sings a song to His beloved –

B) **God's heart sings at the site of His Church - God himself looking at his church: so fair and beautiful is the structure,
1) that he sings over his work, and as each stone is put in its place,**

C) So In Christ - **The Church is a Family – the household of God**

1) the Church is a Building – a structure of souls – a building of hearts

D) Living stones being fit together by the Lord Himself

A bride / a body – each part functions – beautiful –

A) A deformed body is one – where a part doesn't function

B) Or one parts wants to be more dominant – Right hand – look at me

1) Something wrong with Him

C) In Christ we are a family – We are a Building - #3

#3 The Church is the Dwelling place of God v. 22 in whom (In Christ) you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

A) Understand – it is not the Building that He inhabits but the people in the Building

B) There may be great beauty in an uninhabited structure,- A few yrs ago – I went to the dedication service of CCSD – my friend Pastor Brian Newberry

C) Great new Facility – Impressive – well done –neat design –

D) But really made it awesome –

1)When you went into the Sanctuary, saw the people – began to worship –

E) That was the Church – The Dwelling place of God!

We are told that when two or more are gathered together in His name – He is in the midst of them.

A)So gather over coffee – talk about Jesus – He is there – partaking of that conversation.

B)Family Devotions – He is in the midst – smiling –

C)But I think we are learning that there is a difference between Him being in the midst and him MANIFESTING HIS PRESENCE

But Psalm 22:3 tells us that God inhabits – actually is enthroned upon the praises of His people.

A)In other words there is something special that happens when we are engaged in worship

B)Jesus shows up – enthroned – His presence is felt

1)He displays His majesty and glory in our hearts

C)He is seen by us as being bigger than our problems stronger than our enemies –

D)Something awesome happens in worship

There are times when I come here on a Wed nite – thrashed from the week and stuff going on – tired – discouraged

A) I get here early – walk into this room – I don't feel anything – I don't feel the presence of God –

B) But then body starts to show up – enter act with people – my heart is encouraged –

1)Worship starts – Crying out to God in Song

C) The Bible tells us that God seeks after worshippers – *Seeking those who would worship Him in Spirit and in truth*

D)When we seek Him in that way it is special –

I can't count the times people have come to me and told me how much they sensed the – presence of God in this place

A)What were they sensing ?

B)Was it some holy aura that just kind of hovers over the stage –

1) Somehow comes out of the speakers & light fixtures? – No

C)They were sensing the Presence of God and the Spirit of God – in your lives

That is the end game: Paul says that in Christ – we are being built into the dwelling place of God!

A)A LIVING BREATHING ORGANISM THAT GOD IS wanting to manifest himself to the world.

B)Leads me to the last thing – I want to briefly consider that the church is – not in our text

1)CONCEPT IS BIBLICAL – HOSPITAL

The Church is not a country club for the well off and affluent but a hospital for the hurting – place of healing for the sick

A)See each one of us comes to Christ – broken and stretched by sin and the world

B) God uses **His Word** – and **His Spirit** – but also other **Believers** to play a part in the mending process

C) The **Church is a Place where lives are rebuilt – restored** – that which is broken is set in place

D) **Jesus is the Great Physician – Master Healer**

Two older men were talking about their health problems while at their church. *“My new doctor doesn’t just treat the symptoms, he treats both the mind and the body.”*

“Hmm,” the second man grunted and thought for a moment; then he asked, “Does he give a discount if the mind is already gone?”

C) **Jesus is the great Physician who renews the mind – heals broken hearts – mends crippled lives / rebuilds broken marriages**

D) We are **the patients** – but we are also **the nurses** / the **Physician assistants** – Ministers of Grace / Vessels of healing

1) **God’s word & the love of the spirit are the medicine**

So that is what we are because we are in Christ –

We make up this beautiful and dynamic Structure called the Church

A) **A Hospital for the Hurting** / The Dwelling place of God – a holy Habitation /

B) **A Building** – structure made of souls & hearts /
A Family – loving growing – maturing

C) **I pray that we wouldn’t take for granted this wonderful thing – that God paid a high price for – in order to make us a part of it**

D) **If you are Not a part – Pray – become a part of it today !!!!**