

CALL to PRAYER - Pray for the church - that she would be holy and separate from the world

Intro - We have all come to church today...but what is the church? Our *Definitions* series has us trying to answer that question today. You not only should want to come to church but desire to be The Church. Jesus loves the church. He gave Himself to save the church and one day will come again for the church to bring her to Himself. So...you want to be part of the church.

1 Tim. 3:14-15 - Definitions 21 - What is the Church?

A PEOPLE GROUP

1. The Church is a group of people Jesus has called out from the world to Himself
 - a. The called. Church = *ekklesia* = "from the called" or "called out ones"
 - i. 2 Tim. 1:9 Rom. 8:30 1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 26
 - b. Jesus has called to them
 - i. Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."
 - ii. The Good Shepherd calls His own sheep by name - John 10:2-4
 - c. They have heard His voice, answered the call and follow the Shepherd
2. A peculiar group They think different, act different and have a different citizenship (Phil. 3:20)
 - a. A Believing group - They have believed & accepted what the world has rejected
 - i. The church believes God and trusts in His Son - distinct beliefs
 - b. A separate group distinct from the world 2 Cor. 6:16-17
 - i. They are in the world but not of the world and the world hates them.
 - ii. John 15:19 The church is a distinct group that is different from and despised by the world
3. A holy group
 - a. The One who called us is holy, so we are to be holy 1 Peter 1:15-16
 - b. We are called out of darkness and into the light 1 Peter 2:9
 - c. We are called to walk worthy of our holy calling Eph. 4:1
4. A group that loves God - Rom. 8:28
 - a. Are you part of that people-group? The called, chosen and faithful (Rev. 17:14) who love God?

A BRIDE

- Jesus has a special relationship and affection for the church
 - The church is the bride of Christ and He loves His church - Eph. 5:25
 - Jesus loves His church with a particular and singular affection
 - She is the sole object of His marital affection, covenant love & protection
 - Jesus' love often gets diluted for fear someone might feel excluded
 - His love is not a "*philandering love*" - given willy-nilly to every filly
 - Jesus' love is a particular love for a particular people Husband & wife love
 - If you want to feel the assurance of God's love & embrace - be in the church
 - The church is the special object of His affection. He is a one woman Man

- The *Bride of Christ* is the *Body of Christ*
 - Just like the first woman was formed from the side of the first man... (Gen. 2:20-25)
 - So too, the church was formed from the riven side of her Redeemer
 - Christ's side was opened up and as He "slept in grave" His bride was formed from His broken body and presented to Him by the Father
 - Jesus sees her and loves her and knows her
 - She is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. She is His body
 - The son left the Father to be joined to His bride who is His body
- Jesus has so identified Himself with His church that He is incomplete without her
 - Eph. 1:22-23
 - Jesus gave Himself so she could exist and she is part of Him
 - She is His body and He is her Head.
 - Christ and His church are inseparably connected. Can't love one without the other
- Jesus loves the church.... He worked for the church.... gave Himself for the church.... has gone away to prepare a place for the church... and will come again for His church ...so He can be united to His church... and enjoy eternal bliss with His church
 - You want to be part of His church....His bride (the only "happily ever-after" there is)

A TEMPLE

- It is often said that the church is not a building...but the church is a building
 - 1 Cor. 3:9, 16
 - A building built by Jesus Christ - "*I will build My church*" (Matt. 16:18)
 - Built with living stones 1 Peter 2:5 (not an inanimate structure but a living building)
- The church is a living building built for an Occupant
 - The church is a Temple where God resides God's household - 1 Tim. 3:15
 - ~~concert hall~~ ~~lecture hall~~ ~~country club~~ ~~comedy club~~
 - A magnificent building supported by pillars of truth where God dwells - 2 Cor. 6:16
- You should be able to tell when the church meets because God is there 1 Cor. 14:24-25
 - What would people say of our church? Is God here?

A LOCAL ASSEMBLY

- ❖ The church is the gathered assembly. It is where "*the called*" congregate
 - The bride is often in her Husband's house (something wrong if she is never at home)
- ❖ Most of the references to the church are to the local church - the local gathering
 - The church at Rome/Corinth ^{1 Cor. 1:2}/Smyrna.... The church MEETS - Rom. 16:3-5
 - The "*called out ones*" congregate together as a distinct local group
 - Those separate from the world...a holy bride in the Husband's house
- ❖ It is a bad sign when people don't want to gather together as the assembled church
 - Their actions show they are a different people group from the "*called out ones*", believers, separate from world, united to Christ, household of God...assembled
- ❖ You want to be a part of the church - Jesus loves, saves and is coming for the church