

The Biblical Case for Simple Church Outline

Week 1 - The Biblical Case for Keeping Church Simple

Why do we need a biblical case for simple church?

- Most Ecclesiology is centralized...Not much time spent on ecclesiology in simple church.
- Since the formation of our country and back to the Reformation, our church has been based around a centralized ecclesiology.
- Practical vs Theoretical Ecclesiology
- What a church is not - building, pastor, programs, budget
 - We live as if these things are a requirement
 - "What Church do you go to?" "I went to church today" "Church was great today"
 - Part of this problem stems from the fact that we primarily see the people of God as the church.

Summary:

- All we have known and seen practiced is Centralized Ecclesiology in our Western culture.
- Buildings, pastors, programs and money are not needed to be the church. In fact, in many cases, these things will get in the way.
- There is a difference between practical and theoretical ecclesiology. Though we may agree in our theoretical ecclesiology with simple church aspects, our practical ecclesiology seems to show other priorities.

What are the People of God Called?

- **Saints**
 - **Romans 1:7:** "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Christians**
 - **Acts 11:26:** "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."
- **Disciples**
 - **John 8:31** "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.'"
- **Body of Christ**
 - **1 Corinthians 12:27** "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."
 - **Colossians 1:18** "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."
- **Temple**
 - **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."
- **Bride of Christ**
 - **Ephesians 5:25-27** "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."
 - **2 Corinthians 11:2** "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ."

- **Family of God**
 - **Ephesians 2:19** "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."
 - **Galatians 6:10** "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."
- **Sons of God & Co-Heirs with Christ**
 - **Romans 8:15–17** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- **Royal Priesthood**
 - **1 Peter 2:9** "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."
- **Flock**
 - **John 10:14-16** "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."
- **Ambassador**
 - **2 Corinthians 5:20** "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."
- **Church**
 - **Colossians 1:18** "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."
 - **1 Corinthians 11:18** For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,
 - **Hebrews 12:23** "and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,"

Summary:

- It is important that we gather together, but us being the church is more than how we gather.
- Learning to be the church in simple ways will help us to reclaim this, rather than trying to strategize to further fill up buildings.
- Being the people of God is a life together. Yes, part of that is gatherings and we want to see what Scripture says on that but the main thrust of our life as the people of God is not the gathering.

The Church Gathers

- **Hebrews 10:24–25** (ESV): And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- Have we assumed what this "meeting together" looks like based on culture or the Bible?
- **1 Corinthians 14:26** - this looks much different than our church gatherings in the prevailing model of church.
- **Acts 2:38-47** - How many of these things the people of God are doing can happen in a larger gathering?

Summary:

- The church isn't primarily a service or ceremony a few individuals preside over but a group of people operating as a family where everyone participates.
- Our gatherings are often based on tradition rather than the Bible.
- Everyone participates and has something to contribute
- Teaching doesn't dominate the meetings in the New Testament
- When our church meetings are complex only a few, gifted and trained people are capable of orchestrating them

3 Ways "church" is used in the New Testament

- **Universal church:** All the people across all time and places who follow Jesus—the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the household of God, the elect, etc. (see Matthew 16:18, Hebrews 12:23)
- **City church:** An extended family of all the followers of Jesus in one area of the world (see Acts 20:17, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, Revelation 2-3)
- **House or simple church:** A spiritual family gathered in a home or other space to function as a church, which means it aims to equip its members in loving God, loving each other, loving others, and making disciples in obedience to Jesus their King. (see Acts 2:46, 5:42, 8:3; Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2)

What do you do with the church meeting in the temple courts?

- Acts 2:46; Acts 5:42
- It's the only example we are given - it's never mandated
- It's short lived - this isn't the norm by Acts 8.
- This is the place where they were used to meeting
- These were the very people who just killed Jesus - meeting in the heart of the place where there are people who just killed Jesus. Like Paul who went into the synagogue to show the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. More evangelistic.
- They did not have the Bible (what we consider the Bible) so they had to go to someone to teach them the Bible orally. We have the written Word so we don't need to gather at the apostles' feet to hear their teaching.

Summary:

- We see church on 3 primary levels: Global, City, Simple / House
- We are part of all 3 levels of church simultaneously.
- Meeting in the Temple courts is not a similar comparison to us meeting in a brick and mortar church today.
- Larger gatherings can be helpful depending on context and situation but are not necessary.
- We need to address the addiction we have to gathering in larger way.
- When the church gathers in simple ways, often in homes, the principles of a church meeting can easily be accomplished.