

## CHAPTER 6

# Church

### KEY IDEA

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth.

### KEY VERSE

Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. — *Ephesians 4:15*

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

### LESSON

#### INTRODUCTION:

The word *church* is derived from the Greek word *Kyriakos*, signifying “the Lord’s” or “belonging to the Lord.”

- > In the NT, however, it translates a different Greek term, *ekklesia* “to call out, summon forth,”
    - < In its simplest meaning, *ekklesia* may be taken to denote the “assembly” or “congregation” of those who are the recipients of God’s heavenly grace.
  - > Jesus used this word only twice in the NT.
    - < Matt. 16:18} <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.
    - < Matt. 18:17 <sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.
  - > In apostolic writings it is used more commonly.
    - < To denote scattered groups of Christians over a wide area. (Gal. 1:2)
    - < References to the body of Christians dwelling in the same immediate locality. (Acts 13:1)
    - < Small company of Christians meeting together in a house for worship. (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 2)
  - > Interestingly, the word is never used with reference to a building in which public worship is conducted.
    - < The word *church* is applicable essentially to people
    - < In its broadest sense it is used to describe “the company of the faithful throughout all the world.”
- NOTE: The word synagogue too was used originally to denote not a building but an assembly of people gathered for a specific purpose.*

Jesus did not organize the church in the sense of laying down a constitution, but he did bring into being a new religious community when he chose his disciples.

*FROM Jesus and His Church by R. Newton Flew*

*The idea of Ecclesia as a community, on earth, indwelt by the Spirit of God, carrying the word of revelation, unique alike in its origin, its fellowship, its allegiance, its message, and its mission, is essential to Christian theology if theology is to be measured by the writings of the New Testament."*

> The church is essentially divine in its origin and is not a merely human institution.

A person becomes "a member" of the church simply by exercising faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

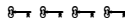
> The Church is seen in two different ways:

< The local church is defined as a local assembly of believers or a congregation that meets together physically for worship, fellowship, teaching, prayer and encouragement in the faith (Hebrews 10:25).

^ At the local church level, we are able to live in relationship with other believers—we share Communion, pray for each other, disciple, and strengthen one another.

< All believers are members of a universal church.

^ A universal church is made up of every single person who has exercised faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, including members of every local church body throughout the earth (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23).



**"The holiest moment of the church service is the moment when God's people—strengthened by preaching and sacrament—go out of the church door into the world to be the church. We don't go to church; we are the church." -- Canon Ernest Southcott**

The church, therefore, is not a place. It's not the building, it's not the location, and it's not the denomination. We—God's people who are in Christ Jesus—are the church.

> As the Church we are offered abilities that are for the purpose of building this Body and bringing us back into a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

> As the Church we are designated to bring the Gospel of Christ to the world.

JOHN 14:11-13 *"Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, **whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**"*

*This verse is packed with power. What does Jesus say His followers will be capable of doing?*

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*Do you believe this is true? \_\_\_\_\_*

*If you answered "yes" do you believe it is true for you?*

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These words were spoken by Jesus for us. As believers we have been given amazing capabilities. But do we use them? What is the secret to tapping into this power.

*FROM ENTHUSIAST, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee*

*Years ago, an issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Science reported that a supercolony of ants was discovered, stretching thousands of miles from the Italian Riviera along the coastline to northwest Spain. This was the largest cooperative unit ever recorded, according to Swiss, French, and Danish scientists who studied the phenomenon. The colony consisted of billions of Argentine ants living in millions of nests and cooperating with one another. Normally, ants from different nests will fight, but the researchers concluded the ants in this particular supercolony were close enough genetically to recognize one another.*

*Laurent Keller of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, summed it up: "Cooperation allowed the colonies to develop at much higher densities than would normally occur. This led to the greatest cooperative unit ever discovered."*

*Individually, we can never do "greater things" than Jesus, yet just like those early followers we read about in the book of Acts, who worked in cooperation and recognition among their brothers and sisters, we can indeed accomplish his works in great volume across the street and around the world.*



*KEY QUESTION: "How does God accomplish his purposes today?"*

**FOUNDING**

In the OT, God developed a relationship with the nation of Israel. It was through this special nation of people that he revealed his name, his character, and his plan to reconnect with the world.

> The OT scriptures regarding Israel point people to the first coming of Jesus.

> *From the very beginning God has had a vision to be with his people in perfect community. When the first two humans — Adam and Eve — rejected this vision and were escorted from the Garden of Eden, God began to unveil a plan to provide the way back.*

**GOD CALLS ABRAM TO BE THE FATHER OF A GREAT NATION**

*God's plan consisted of making Abraham's offspring into a great nation and then into the body of Christ through Abraham's descendants. Thus the story of Israel pointed people of all nations to the first coming of Christ — and through him to God's plan for the restoration of intimacy with him and others.*

*Genesis 12:1-4a*

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

*So Abram went, as the Lord had told him;*

Abram was called to separate himself from the corruption around him.

> These words from God set the agenda not only for Abram's life, but also for his descendants.

< This agenda continues with a divine blessing that will be mediated through Abram to all the peoples of the earth through the nation of Jews.

- ^ Through Abram people everywhere may experience God's favor.
- < The Messiah would come through the Jewish people. This is the reason for the universal blessing.

#### GOD ESTABLISHES A COVENANT

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. There are two types of covenants: conditional and unconditional.

- > A *conditional covenant* is an agreement that is binding on both parties for its fulfillment.
  - < Both parties agree to fulfill certain conditions. If either party fails to meet their responsibilities, the covenant is broken and neither party has to fulfill the expectations of the covenant.
- > An *unconditional covenant* is an agreement between two parties, but only one of the two parties has to do something. Nothing is required of the other party.

*Genesis 15:7-21*

*[The Lord] also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."*

*But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"*

*So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.*

*As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*

*When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates — the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."*

The covenant God made with Abraham is an unconditional covenant.

- > God made promises to Abraham that required nothing of Abraham. Genesis 15:18-21.
- > The actual Abrahamic Covenant is found in Genesis 12:1-3.
  - < Genesis 15 indicates the unconditional nature of the covenant.
- > The only time that both parties of a covenant would pass between the pieces of animals was when the fulfillment of the covenant was dependent upon both parties keeping commitments.
  - < In this covenant, God alone moves between the halves of the animals.
    - ^ It is a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, representing God, not Abraham, which passed between the pieces.
    - ^ Ancient Near Eastern contracts were usually shared by both parties walking between the animal halves.
- > This covenant is principally a promise by God. He is the one who binds Himself.

- < God caused a sleep to fall upon Abraham so that he would not be able to pass between the two halves of the animals.
- < Fulfillment of the covenant fell to God alone.

This first covenant was the beginning of the establishment of a body of believers committed to the one and only true God.

*The covenant with Abram resulted in God's long and complicated relationship with the nation of Israel.*

We see in Exodus where God establishes a written covenant with the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. These laws were given by God through Moses, the leader of the people from the Exodus out of Egypt to the re-entrance of the Promised Land. It is called the Mosaic Covenant.

> The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant that either brought God's direct blessing for obedience or God's direct cursing for disobedience upon the nation of Israel.

- > The Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the rest of the Law.

- > Deuteronomy 11:26-28 details the blessing/cursing motif.

*The Old Testament of the Bible contains the details of this covenantal relationship, but a new covenant was instituted in the person of Jesus.*

*As Jesus was nearing his crucifixion, he told the disciples about what was ahead and about their role in accomplishing God's ultimate vision for the coming kingdom. This exchange highlights that God's plan for believers is still in force; the vision is for a believers to come together in a community that continues to this day. And here Jesus speaks of the founding of that community.*

*Matthew 16:13-19*

*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

*"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

*Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

*After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God formed this community led by his disciples called the church. The story of the church points people of all nations to the second coming of Christ when he will fully restore the original vision of God. After Jesus' resurrection and right before his ascension back to the Father, Jesus visited with his disciples and gave them his final instructions.*

*FROM Acts 1:1-11*

*...I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ... he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Forty days after the resurrection Jesus ascended back to heaven. As he was preparing to ascend, he assured the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come to them. They were to wait for this coming.

> The Holy Spirit would bring them understanding, power to witness, and comfort.

> The story of the Holy Spirit's arrival (at Pentecost) is recorded in Acts 2. (See pgs. 84-86 in BELIEVE book.)

Every account written regarding Israel was intended to point people to the first coming of Jesus. But after Christ came to earth, did the work the Father sent him to do, died on the cross, defeated sin and death through the resurrection, and returned to heaven, God commissioned a new community.

> This new community was a blending of Jews and Gentiles sharing in a new life together, as a family called the Church.

> The Bible teaches us this Church is the primary — yet not exclusive — method to be used in accomplishing God's purposes.

< A vital mission in this body of believers is to point people toward the second coming of Christ.

> The person who embraces salvation by grace is inducted and integrated into the church as a full member.

**"While it is true a person expressing faith in Christ can gain salvation and never become an active member in God's church, this absence of community will create a hindrance not unlike a train with no track or a car with no wheels. The identity may be in place, but there's no purpose to the existence." - Randy Frazee**



*KEY IDEA: I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth.*

#### EXPANSION

*Jesus' commission to the first disciples in AD 30 was to spread the Good News and to build his church beyond Jerusalem to all of Judea and Samaria, and ultimately to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts records the fulfillment of that mission by chronicling the miraculous journey and rapid development of the church community.*

*FROM Acts 8*

*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ... there was great joy in that city.*

*... When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

*... After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.*

Acts 9:31

*Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.*

*On the day of Pentecost Peter announced to the Jews in Jerusalem that the door of the kingdom had been unlocked, he also used those keys to open the door to the Gentiles. (See pgs. 88-89 in BELIEVE book.)*

*Enters Saul, a man who persecuted the church, causing it to spread beyond Jerusalem to all of Judea and Samaria, who became the man God would especially use to take the gospel and the church to the Gentiles. Around AD 35, Saul personally encountered the risen Jesus in a vision on the road to Damascus. Saul surrendered his life to Christ and from then on devoted the rest of his days on earth to building Christ's church.*

*Saul, soon to be known as Paul, would embark on many journeys for approximately the next 20 years to spread the gospel and strengthen and build the church as it stretched toward the ends of the earth, just as Jesus had envisioned. Paul's first missionary trip began around AD 46, and in each city he visited, he used a skillful blend of history, theology and philosophy to declare the Good News to both Jews and Gentiles, who responded and joined the expanding church. (See pgs. 89-93 in BELIEVE book.)*

In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses language regarding the human body to describe how the body of Christ works to function and find its purpose:

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. I Cor. 12:12-14*

> Over the past few decades, we've seen a strong trend of young people walking away from the church when they left their parents' home and their home church.

< But we've also seen many coming back after "settling down" to family and career.

> Today we see a new trend — leaving and not coming back. Why?

*Okay, why? Why do we see people, especially young people, leaving and not coming back?*

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< The Church often doesn't look the way Christ intends it to.

^ Many have no problem with Jesus, but do have a problem with the Church.

< Many have such a busy life that they see church as another activity to add to their "to do" list and no longer see the relevance in this investment of time.

But regardless of the trends and statistics aside regarding the Body of Christ, there are wonderful benefits in being a part of the church.

## PLAN AND PURPOSE

*In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul explained God's great plan for the church, the new community of Christ. Along with reconciling individuals to himself as an act of grace, God has reconciled these saved individuals to each other. Through his death, Christ has broken down the barriers, uniting believers in one body.*

*FROM Ephesians 2:11-3:12*

*Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands) — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, ...*

*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

*... In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus...*

## WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD LOOK LIKE:

*FROM Ephesians 4:1-16*

*... Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ... So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

*FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE*



*Unity is not uniformity. Unity comes from within and is a spiritual grace, while uniformity is the result of pressure from without. Paul uses the human body as a picture of Christian unity in 1 Cor. 12, and he adapted the same illustration here in Ephesians 4.*

**Do you think that some people today attempt to unite Christians in a way that is not biblical? How?**

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continuing above quote: *...While not all Christians agree on some minor matters of Christian doctrine, they all do agree on the foundation truths of the faith. Unity built on anything other than Bible truth is standing on a very shaky foundation.*

Believers do not do not **create** unity but are to preserve the unity already established.

- > There is a profound spiritual unity of all genuine believers who are in Christ Jesus.
- < They are founded in one faith and one Lord no matter the denominational differences.

*FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY*

*Because we're all in this together and are all recipients of our Father's grace and kindness, there's no room to say, "We're better than they are," or, "I'm more holy than he is." Rather, there's one body, one Spirit, one home, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There's no room for dividing, for splintering, for saying, "We're more spiritual than you." No, we're to walk in unity.*

Although there is unity within the body of Christ, there is also diversity.

- > Not all of us can accomplish the same works and services in the kingdom.
  - < We have different personalities.
  - < We have different talents.
  - < We have different life experiences.
- > In our diversity, though, is how we accomplish the work of the Church in unity.

Paul touches on the Gifts of the Spirit in this letter to the Ephesians. (For more scriptures on the Gifts of the Spirit see: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.)

- > Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift not matter what natural talents or abilities they may (or many not) have.
- > This gift is given by God for the purpose of serving the Body of Christ—the CHURCH!

**Have you ever determined your Spiritual Gift(s)?** \_\_\_\_\_

***This does not mean your talents. Non-believers have natural talents. Your gift(s) is what you use your talents for in the building up of the Church. Take a look at the scriptures listed above in Romans and 1 Corinthians and see if you can determine your gift.***

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Paul sees the church on two levels in vs. 12-16.

- > First is the Body of Christ, made up of all true believers.

- < This Body grows gradually until it reaches spiritual maturity.
- > Second is the local body of believers.
  - < They are to minister to each other, grow together, and experience spiritual unity.

*FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE*

*Spiritual unity is not something we manufacture. It is something we already have in Christ, and we must protect and maintain it. Truth unites, but lies divide. Love unites, but selfishness divides. Therefore, we should "speak the truth in love" equipping one another and edifying one another, that all of us may grow up to be more like Christ.*

The Church is equipped with these gifts in order to help each other, but also to go out into the world to fulfill the Great Commission. (Acts 1:8).  
 > The Church is God’s extended hands.

*FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY*

*Our goal is to be like Jesus—and Jesus did not spend His life hanging out in the temple. He was out among people, impacting the world.*

Likely near the end of the first century, around AD 95, the apostle John received the visions from God contained in the book of Revelation. He addresses the book to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (in modern-day Turkey). John records letters from the risen Christ to those seven churches, in which he typically issues a word of commendation, complaint and correction. Christ’s message to them represents a report card on their progress. May it be both a word of encouragement and a challenge to the church today.

Revelation 2:7} *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

The Lord is in control of THE ministry—He must be in control of OUR ministry at First Church.

- > We can serve, sacrifice, and suffer for Christ and yet not really love Jesus.
- > We can become so busy maintaining our separation that we neglect the worship of Christ, and the commission to carry the gospel to all.
- > Labor is no substitute for love, purity is no substitute for passion.
  - < The church must have both love and passion if it is to please Christ.

FROM THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

*KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?*

**In the body of Christ, you belong to a family focused on all the things of God, which are good, right, and healthy.**

Paul writes these words in his letter to the Philippians:

*Brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy —*

*think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9*

Many people struggle with church.

... As we talk and delve into their lives, [we] typically find one of two things.

> First, they have never truly been a part of this level of community and relationship, so they don't understand what is available and can be added to their lives. ... you can't fully know what you're missing if you've never experienced it.

> Second, a community they've been a part of in the past tore them down and caused hurt. Even if they had contributed to the conflict, the experience created a physical and emotional avoidance, which is often difficult to overcome.

Yet, when the church functions as God intends, nothing else on earth works quite like it. ... It's not so much about the hype of programs, but the health of people. She's not a building, but a body. When submitted to God and serving together in true community, the church is a family that will surround people with strength and grace, while continually pointing toward the abundant life in Christ.

### **In the body of Christ, you will grow faster in your walk with God.**

Certainly we can grow spiritually on our own, but when we join in and get in step with a body of believers, it can accelerate our growth through accountability and synergy.

Accountability simply means everyone in the group has each other's back, and everyone is encouraged to grow and mature. ... You've joined a team with a clear goal and motivation for each individual member's success.

Synergy means the cohesion of the group is a greater force than the individual sum of its members. Together, they produce an overall stronger result than if each person works alone toward the same goal. As... Ecclesiastes (4:9-10) teaches:

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

### **In the body of Christ, you become a part of a movement larger than yourself.**

Studies of the Millennial Generation — those whose birth years range from 1980 to 2000 — reveal the importance and power of relationships. While these people represent the least religious generation in American history, they also deeply value service to others by working together. What at first glance seems to be bad news for the church may actually turn into a powerful motivator for involvement in ministry. Thankfully, God knows exactly the dynamics of each generation and also what it takes to engage them in his kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

If we wake up every morning focused on ourselves and wondering why the world isn't making us happy, this approach to life isn't going to be satisfying and fulfilling in the long term. But when we engage in the church and see ourselves as a part of a far larger plan and purpose, we are infused with the power of eternity. We can indeed accomplish those "greater things" Christ referred to.

In closing, what does God use as the primary vehicle to get his "Upper Story" intertwined with our "Lower Story"? The church.

So, to think like Jesus, you must **ask yourself this question**: "Do I believe I have a role and responsibility in the church for God to use me in accomplishing his purposes today?"

*So...do you believe you have a role and responsibility in the Church for God to use you today? What might that role be?*

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*You never discover unless you search.*