



The Church He is Building – The People of His Habitation

Spiritual Exercise

“Hold Us Together” by Matt Maher (Love with bind us together into a shelter from the storm.)

Introduction

The rebellion of Adam and Eve was devastating to mankind, and costly to God. The Creator lost His reign in the hearts of mankind; He lost His relationship with them; and He lost His habitation among them. This all happened in the first three chapters of Genesis. The rest of the Bible is the story of Him getting it all back – culminated in the last three chapters of The Revelation. It is a beautiful story of love, rescue and restoration.

Discovering true purpose in life – purpose founded in the Truth – is an adventure into the heart of God. It requires intimacy with God and submission to His reign in the Lord Jesus Christ. The desires that He intends to give us are also His desires. They become His purposes and the good works He prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Over the next two weeks, we are going to explore God’s purposes in light of our relationships with others – particularly those with whom He has given us influence.

This week we will discuss the last of the losses – His habitation with and in His children. As we discovered with reign and relationship, there is a part for us to play and a blessing that comes from pursuing God’s intentions in His habitation. The New Testament refers to God’s habitation as the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ and the Church. Here are a few verses about this wonderful mystery.

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. John 14:23

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, “*I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” 2Corinthians 6:16

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:14-19

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

Moreover, we will see that God’s habitation is found in a plurality of people (more than 85% of the “you” pronouns in the New Testament are plural). There are no lone-rangers in the kingdom of God.

Purpose in Fellowship (continued)

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)

What is this Church that Christ is Building?

Church (*ekklesia*): from *ek*, "out of," and *klesis*, "a calling", was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens "gathered" to discuss the affairs of State; a gathering of citizens called out from their homes; an assembly.

Vine's Expository Dictionary

Revelation 19:6-8

Revelation 21:1-3

What is His Purpose for His Bride?

Ephesians 4:11-16

Acts 2:40-47

The "One Another" Fellowship

John 17:20-22

Fellowship: *koinōnia* (Greek); fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse; intimacy; a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship.

BlueLetterBible.org Outline of Biblical Usage

Acts 2:42

1Corinthians 1:9

1Corinthians 10:16

Ephesians 3:8-9

1John 1:7

Mark 9:50

John 13:34-35

John 15:12

Romans 12:4-5

Romans 12:10

Romans 15:5-7

1Corinthians 6:7-8

1Corinthians 12:23-26

Galatians 5:13, 26

Ephesians 4: 1-3, 25, 32

Purpose in Fellowship (continued)

1Thessalonians 5:11

Hebrews 10:24-25

James 5:9

1Peter 3:8-9

1John 1:7

1John 4:11-13

The Consequences

John 18:36-37

James 4:4

John 15:19

2Timothy 3:12

Ephesians 6:12

2Corinthians 10:1-6

Mark 3:6

John 19:15

Acts 8:1-3

2Corinthians 5:20

Assignment

1. Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. Share the ones that are most meaningful to someone you are discipling.
2. For the "one another" verses, identify three to five that you feel the most need for the Holy Spirit's work of transformation. Ask the Father, in Jesus' name, to direct the Spirit do this work.
3. How do you define church? Do you believe that your fellowship includes every area of church life? What if our paradigm was such that our activities in the institution were but a subset of church God's way?
4. Why do we call our congregations, denominations and institutions "churches"? How is this potentially confusing to those outside (and some inside) the ekklesia?
5. Make spiritual exercises of the following devotions.

Purpose in Fellowship (continued)

Devotion

From John Eldredge: *Waking the Dead* (pp. 190, 191)

When he left Rivendell, Frodo didn't head out with a thousand Elves. He had eight companions. Jesus didn't march around backed by legions of angels, either. He had twelve men – knuckleheads, every last one of them, but they were a band of brothers. This is the way of the kingdom of God. Though we are part of a great company, we are meant to live in little platoons. The little companies we form must be small enough for each of the members to know one another as friends and allies.

Who will fight for your heart?

How can we offer the stream of counseling to one another, unless we actually know one another, know each other's stories? The reason counseling became a hired relationship between two people was largely because we couldn't find it anywhere else; we haven't formed the sort of small fellowships that would allow the stream to flow quite naturally. Is it possible to offer rich and penetrating words to someone you barely know, in the lobby of your church, as you dash to pick up the kids?

Where will you find the Four Streams?

The Four Streams are something we learn, and grow into, and offer one another, within a small fellowship. We hear each other's stories. We discover each other's glories. We learn to walk with God together. We pray for each other's healing. We cover each other's back. This small core fellowship is the essential ingredient for the Christian life. Jesus modeled it for us *for a reason*. Sure, he spoke to the masses. But he lived in a little platoon, a small fellowship of friends and allies. His followers took his example and lived this way, too. "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (2:46). "Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house" (1 Cor 16:19). "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house" (Col 4:15).

From Chuck Colson : *How Now Shall We Live?* (pp. 303-304)

The new millennium is a time for Christians to celebrate, to raise our confidence, to blow trumpets, and to fly the flag high. This is the time to make a compelling case that Christianity offers the most rational and realistic hope for both personal redemption and social renewal.

But if we are to have an impact on our culture, the beginning point must be to take our stand united in Christ, making a conscious effort among all true believers to come together across racial, ethnic, and confessional lines. In His high-priestly prayer, Jesus prayed fervently that we would be one with one another, as He is one with the Father. *Why? So that the world will know that He is the Christ* (see John 17:20-23). The unavoidable implication of Jesus' words is that Christian unity is the key to evangelism and cultural renewal. Much of the church's weakness can be traced to its inability of unwillingness to obey the command to strive for unity in Christ.