



Week 9: The Church

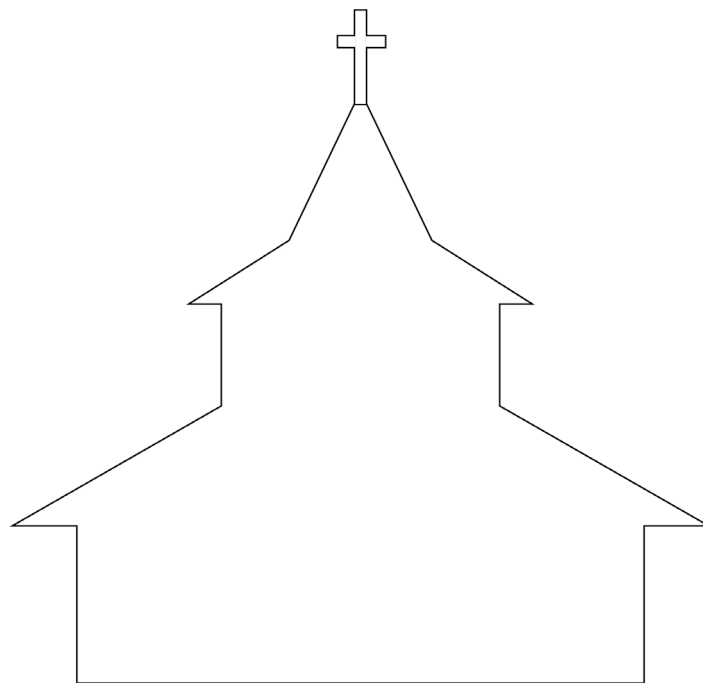
Day 1 Reflection

TRUTH

The Church is Jesus's best plan to save the world. Despite persecution, and perhaps because of it, the Church has lasted over 2,000 years and will indeed exist until the marriage supper of the Lamb. For an account of the early church, read Acts 2:42-47. On the church illustration below, list the activities of this fellowship of believers, their characteristics, where they met, how often they met, how they showed love to each other.

What did God do as a result of their vibrant fellowship? Why would this vibrant fellowship bring about such amazing results? Why would they garner favor with all the people? Who are "all the people"? How does this passage speak about Jesus's plan to save the world?

How closely does your church experience line up with the Early Church as described in this passage? In what areas would you like to see growth? Take some time to ask God how He can use you to help your local fellowship in these areas. And take some time to thank God for your local church. Write out a pray that you can keep and use to regularly pray for your church, its leaders and the fellowship of believers represented therein.



Day 2 Reflection

TRUTH

The early church that we studied yesterday was a unified body of believers. Using what you learned about this church, what is your definition of unity? Note your answer. How can it be achieved within the church? Read Philippians 2:1-8. Whose example can we follow to be of one mind? What are the characteristics of a people who want to follow His example? List out all these characteristics. Have you experienced this kind of unity? How can you help create a church environment such as described in this passage? Perhaps your prayer can start with something like this, "Lord, let it begin with me!"

EVIDENCE

While researching what evidence we could look at today, I came across an interesting article by J. Warner Wallace. The line from the article that kept me reading was this:

"Our unity as Christians is the most important evidence we can offer to an unbelieving world"

In the Truth section you've just finished the question was asked about what characterizes unity in a church and how this type of unity can be achieved. How about reading this article to further support the need for striving for the characteristics of a unified church as taught to us in the Bible, so that the unity amongst Christians within the church becomes a powerful apologetic for faith in Jesus!

<https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-best-piece-of-christian-evidence-unity/>

Day 3 Reflection

TRUTH

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10. What does this verse urge all brothers in Christ to do? Does this mean we never disagree or have a dissenting voice in our Body? Why or why not? Do differences of thought always mean division? Why or why not? What are some issues that can divide us?

Justin Taylor's Gospel Coalition article, Levels of Doctrine, gives some helpful guidance on how to think about these varying issues.

The ability to discern the relative importance of theological beliefs is vital for effective Christian life and ministry. Both the purity and unity of the church are at stake in this matter. The relative importance of theological issues can fall within four categories:

- absolutes define the core beliefs of the Christian faith;
- convictions, while not core beliefs, may have significant impact on the health and effectiveness of the church;
- opinions are less-clear issues that generally are not worth dividing over; and
- questions are currently unsettled issues.

These categories can be best visualized as concentric circles, similar to those on a dart board, with the absolutes as the "bull's-eye".

Write 3 beliefs that you think are absolutes that define the Christian faith.

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TACTICS

It was probably the title that really intrigued me when I found this article – Unity and the Church: A lesson from The Avengers.... Mmmm, ok Sean McDowell you've got my attention with the title, let's see what you have to say...

<https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/unity-and-the-church-a-lesson-from-the-avengers>

What tactics does Sean present for unity in the church?

Perhaps you would like to pray for unity in churches across our country right now. I'm sure many of you have sung this hymn before and it came to me as I was preparing this day. Read through the words again. Look at the third verse.

1 Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!
Christ, the royal Master,
leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
see his banner go!

Refrain:

Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!

2 At the sign of triumph
Satan's host doth flee;
On, then, Christian soldiers,
on to victory!
Hell's foundations quiver
at the shout of praise;
Brothers, lift your voices,
loud your anthems raise! [Refrain]

3 Like a mighty army
moves the church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
where the saints have trod;
We are not divided;
all one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
one in charity. [Refrain]

4 Onward, then, ye people,
join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices
in the triumph song;
Glory, laud, and honor,
unto Christ the King;
This thro' countless ages
men and angels sing. [Refrain]

Lyrics: Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924)
Music: Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900)

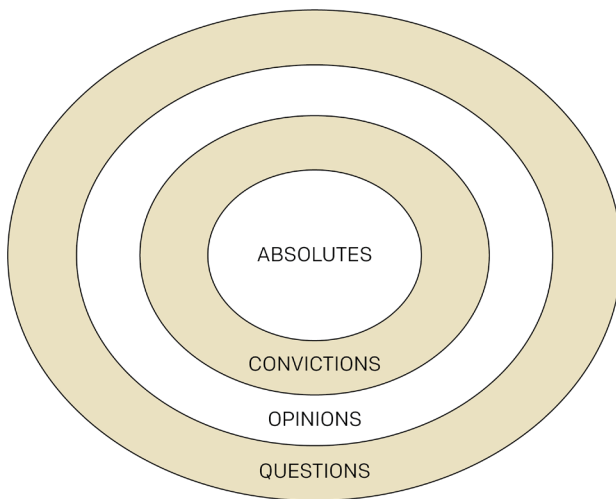
Day 4 Reflection

TRUTH

Reread yesterday's four categories of theological belief. Label the dart board with some of the examples of each category listed below.

*Trinity - 1 God- 3 Persons *inerrancy of Scripture *how to baptize
*women's role in church *use of tongues in church *Salvation through Jesus only
* type of worship songs/style of worship *when will Church be raptured
*predestination and or free will *how to celebrate communion *translation of Bi-
ble to use *Add any others you can think of.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10 again. How can thinking about the levels of importance of these beliefs help unify the Church and keep us from divisions?



CHURCH HISTORY & ALTERNATE WORLD VIEWS

Today Pastor Nate blesses us with a lesson on the topic of Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses.

You will find this teaching here:

What stood out for you? What was something new you learned?

Day 5 Reflection

TRUTH

Read Ephesians 5:22-32. What is the imagery that this passage gives concerning the church and Christ? Label the drawing accordingly. What does the passage say Christ does for His Bride? What does the Bride do for Christ? List out your answers near the drawing. How does this relationship consummate? Read Revelation 19:6-10. How can the image of a marriage encourage the Church to persevere until the End?

DIGGING DEEPER

We thought it would be enlightening to explore the topic of persecution. There are areas in the world where being a Christian and gathering as a church are still extremely dangerous. Here are some resources that provide deeper insight into this, and we encourage you to read one of these articles and pray for the Christians in these countries, the churches gathering and the missionaries serving:

- The 50 Countries Where It's Most Dangerous to Follow Jesus in 2021 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/christian-persecution-2021-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>
- Next you are directed to the Open Doors Website. From their website:
 - Open Doors USA is dedicated to the radical idea that every Christian belongs to one Church and one Family
 - For more than 60 years, Open Doors has worked toward a simple goal: strengthening Christians, wherever they are threatened for their faith in Jesus.
 - In more than 60 countries, Open Doors is on the ground, bringing support and help, wherever we're needed most. Working through local churches and Christians of every culture and language, we want to live out the command Jesus gave His followers: to be one.
 - Whether believers need long-term or emergency aid, Open Doors is there.
 - When Christians don't have access to Bibles or Christian resources, Open Doors is there.
 - When believers are thrown out of their homes and forced to flee their families, Open Doors is there.
 - When Christians are persecuted, attacked, discriminated against and targeted because they follow Jesus, Open Doors is there.
- There are many stories on the Open Doors Website – spend some time exploring them: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/>