

From Rick Sinclair's Sharing
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What is the church?

It is that company of people, washed in the blood of Christ, redeemed from their sins, in whom God dwells by the presence of His Spirit. They are the men and women, young and old, from every walk of life, every vocation, every background imaginable, who have in common that they have been made alive by the regenerating work of Christ: they were once dead, but now are alive to God.

The Bible calls the church the pillar and ground of the truth, meaning that by her very existence the church declares the wisdom and kindness of God in redeeming a people who were not a people.

It is by the church that principalities and powers in heavenly places understand the wisdom of God.

The Bible calls the church the assembly of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.

The Bible calls the church the one who is loved by Christ, the one for whom He gave His life, and refers to her as a bride, the one who is betrothed to Christ Himself.

The Bible declares that God has placed everything under the power of Christ and has set him up as head of everything **for the Church**.

The Bible tells us that the Church is his body, and in that body lives fully the one who fills the whole wide universe.

The bible calls the church Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

It was the church, this Mount Zion, this city of the living God, this heavenly Jerusalem, that the prophet Isaiah saw when he declared that in the latter days the mountain of the LORD's house would be established on the top of the mountains.

It was the church Isaiah saw when he described a mountain with all nations flowing to it.

It was the church he heard as the people said to one another,
“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths.”

There are more than 100 references to the church in the New Testament. Some are references to what we refer to as the “universal church” — that invisible company of people through the ages who, through the atoning work of Christ, stand as the evidence of God’s redemptive love and mercy and who will forever proclaim His manifested glory. In this broad sense, the church includes all believers throughout all times and in all places.

But most of the references to the church in the New Testament are to what we refer to as the “local church” — recognizable, tangible, identifiable groups of believers who are living out their lives in ongoing relationship with other believers, sharing their lives, and together displaying the purpose of God. The local church is the theatre displaying His character to a watching world. We were formed for God’s family, and we fulfill His purposes as we relate to one another in these tangible relationships of love and commitment, demonstrating the love of Christ in genuine, practical, and meaningful ways.

Excerpts from Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren:

You were formed for God’s family.

God wants a family, and he created you to be a part of it...

When we place our faith in Christ, God becomes our Father, we become his children, other believers become our brothers and sisters, and the church becomes our spiritual family...

You are called to belong, not just believe...

We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family, and none of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves.

The Bible knows nothing of solitary saints or spiritual hermits isolated from other believers and deprived of fellowship. The Bible says we are put together, joined together, built together, members together, heirs together, fitted together, and held together and will be caught up together. You’re not on your own anymore.

While your relationship to Christ is personal, God never intends it to be private.

In God’s family you are connected to every other believer, and we will belong to each other for eternity.