



#1 "I Love the Church"
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

I love Sundays because I love the church. The 'institutional church' has fallen on some hard times and has been abandoned by many. Religion, denominations and divisions among supposed believers was never God's intention. Even though organised religion has done some damage in our world, God still has a plan for HIS CHURCH. Through his word he declares that he will make the church "holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:26-27).

Through the next five studies we will discover why God is passionate about his church and why we should become equally as passionate about it, protect it and cherish it will all our hearts. The ensuing studies are based on five core principles that make up All Nations Church; the WARMTH of our caring, the WORK of our hands, the WORSHIP of our spirit, the WITNESS of our lives, and the WELCOME of our hearts.

1. **2 Corinthians chapter 3**, written by Paul, was in response to the many issues the Corinthian church had with false teaching, immorality and the invasion of the current culture into the church. In this chapter Paul compares the Old Testament dispensation, the law of death, to the New Testament dispensation, the freedom of grace. (A 'dispensation' is a period of time.) Understanding the difference between how God revealed himself in the Old Testament and how God reveals himself in the New Testament is a key concept in understanding the church. **Read this chapter before beginning your study**

- a. In 2 Corinthians 3:1-3
 - i. What does Paul compare the Corinthian believers to?
 - ii. What is used to write the 'letter'?
 - iii. Where is this 'letter' written?
 - iv. What is he alluding to when he talks about 'not written on stone'?

- b. Verses 4-6: What do you think Paul is trying to say here?

BACKGROUND: Paul is contrasting the Old Testament age (dispensation) of the Law with the New Testament age (dispensation) of Grace.

- c. Verses 7-10 What is it that brought death, and what is it being compared to?
- d. Verse 11 What is Paul expressing? What is transitory and what is permanent?
- e. Verse 12 What is the cause of our boldness?
- f. Verses 13-16: Who is responsible for bringing enlightenment to our hearts and minds? What happens when we turn to the Lord?
- g. Verses 17-18 Explain these verses in your own words.
- h. Try to summarise this entire chapter in a few sentences.

COMMENT: Having now established the Old dispensation of the law and the New dispensation of Christ's grace we can now explore the difference between where the Spirit of God resides in the old dispensation of the law and where the Spirit of God resides in the new dispensation of grace.

2. READ *Exodus 33:7-11* Where did Moses have to go to talk with the Lord?
3. READ *2 Samuel 7:5*
 - a. What is God asking David to do?
 - b. When God wanted himself to be known among his people in the Old Testament, where did his Spirit dwell? Can you give some examples?
4. READ *1 Corinthians 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*
Where does God's Spirit dwell in the new dispensation of grace (the New Testament?)
5. READ *John 3:1-17*
Explain in your own words how the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, comes to live inside a person.
6. The result of our spiritual birth is explained by Paul in *Ephesians 2:19-22*. Please read these verses.
 - a. What are we in verse 19?
 - b. What is our foundation? What is Jesus called?
 - c. Explain verses 21 and 22 in your own words. Why is the word 'joined together' important here?
 - d. Based on the above verses, explain the difference between an individual who has been born of the Spirit and a collection of individuals who have been born of the Spirit.
7. READ *Ephesians 5:25-37; 1 Corinthians 12:27*
 - a. Who is the 'church' in this scripture? (Hint see *Ephesians 2:19-22*)
 - b. What has Christ done for the Church?
 - c. What is His promise to the church?
 - d. What is the church compared to?
 - e. What does he do for his body, the church (vs. 20)?
 - f. Who are we in verse 30?
8. READ *Matthew 16:18*. The word Hades, or hell, represents the power of death. What promise does Christ make to his church?
9. READ *Hebrews 2:14-15*. Discuss this statement from Sunday's sermon;
"The church is God's power in the word to overcome death"
10. Based on our study what do you think our attitude should be towards the church, the body of Christ?
11. Discuss with your group something some of the potential actions that could be taken to demonstrate that you also value the church like Christ valued the church. Which ideas of the group's suggestions appeals to you? What action could you take this week to demonstrate your love for the church?

FOR FURTHER STUDY THIS WEEK

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 12. You may read few verses each day. Ask yourself in what ways is this scripture related to my obligations in the body of Christ, his church.

PRAYER REQUESTS

PRAISE:

- The Prete St, building has sold for \$690,000.00 + \$10,000.00 for various furnishings. The closing is April 29th. We have made an arrangement to keep daycare open thereby preserving the employment for the staff and a safe environment for the children.
- The Mission Studio Building has sold for \$146,750.00 and will close April 14th. The Studio will be moving into the flat roofed rectangular space at the back of the Family Centre building.
- Please continue to pray for sufficient capital campaign funds to cover the remainder of our construction loan.
- Please pray for wisdom for our leaders as we seek to understand how God would best have us care for our growing church family. It is our desire to make people feel welcome and find a way to help them grow in their faith and be connected as the body of Christ.

Please do your best to say hello to people you don't know on Sundays. The few moments we each take to welcome people will go a long way to making them feel like our home is their home.