

## **The Church You Can Read About in the Bible**

### **The Nature of the church: The church is the Household of God**

**Intro:** This year one of our themes is "The church you can read about in the Bible." Now we are looking at the question, "What did God intend that the church be and do?" What was His purpose for establishing the church? What is its nature? What is its mission or work? One way to answer that question is to look at the way the church is described in Scripture.

*In our first lesson we saw that it is described as the temple of God.*

*In our second lesson we saw that it is described as the body/bride of Christ.*

*In our third lesson we saw that it is described as the kingdom of God.*

### **The church is the household of God.**

*"but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15d, NASB)*

*"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household," (Ephesians 2:19, NASB)*

***Here Paul uses the word household in the sense of a family. The church is the household or family of the living God. As the family of God it has these salient features:***

#### ***God as Father***

*For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. (1 Corinthians 8:5-6)*

#### ***Jesus Christ as the Son over the house***

*but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. (Hebrews 3:6)*

#### ***Christians as children of God***

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)*

#### ***Christians as brethren to Jesus & one another***

*For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise." (Hebrews 2:11-12)*

***Keep in mind that such a description of the church makes a powerful statement about who is saved.***

*All of God's children are in God's family.*

*God's family is the church.*

*All of God's children are/must be in the church.*

***But what does God want to say about the church by describing it as the household of God?***

**The church as the family of God enjoys all the blessings and privileges of a relationship with the heavenly Father.**

*Who among us would not affirm the real blessing of being a part of a family where there was a loving attentive father? Yet as Christians we have the most wonderful Father of all!*

He is a Father who always loves us.

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. (1 John 3:1)*

He is a Father who guides us.

*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Romans 8:14)*

He is a Father who provides for us.

*Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (Ephesians 1:3)*

*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)*

He is a Father who corrects us.

*Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. (Hebrews 12:9-10)*

He is a Father who protects us.

*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)*

He is a Father who gives us His inheritance.

Could you appreciate someone who was the child of a rich man? How much more to be a child of the God of heaven and to inherit His riches!

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:3-4)*

**The church as the family of God must fulfill the responsibilities of family membership in God's family.**

***Imagine a child that said, "I want to enjoy all the blessings and privileges of being in this family; but don't expect me to do anything!" Oh, you have a child like that?! That's what we would call a "spoiled brat." God's family has no "spoiled brats!"***

***We must be obedient to Him.***

*By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10)*

God is justifiably angry with "children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6).

Do you come to the table when the Father calls you? Attend worship like your Father commands?

Do you study your Bible in order to grow in grace and knowledge as the Father commands?

Do you try to teach others the gospel as your Father directs?

Are you an obedient or disobedient child?

***We must be holy like him.***

Just as a father has a right to expect his children to follow in his godly footsteps, so we must be holy like our Father!

*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

***We must love and communicate with Him.***

Imagine a child who had such a loving father and who never said, "Hello Daddy" when he came into the house. Or said, "I love you for who you are and what you do for us." Or, "Thank you Daddy when a gift was given."

Yet I've heard of Christians who admitted that they went for days without speaking to their heavenly Father and thanking Him for His blessings.

*Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*

This is not merely a duty, but a privilege.

***We must be respectful of Him.***

*And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:17-19)*

When we go through times of suffering and difficulty we must not allow our attitudes to become bitter or to resent the chastisement that suffering may bring. Instead we must accept His discipline with respect, knowing that he seeks our best interests at all times.

We must have the attitude of Paul who in his sufferings said:

*Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)*

**We must wear and respect the family name.**

*"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14-15).*

How privileged we are to wear the name of Christ, to be known as a Christian. The name implies that we are Christ-like in our conduct. Are you a Christian? I did not ask, "Have you been baptized?" Are you what the name "Christian" implies? Does the name "Christian" fit you? You have been honored to wear the name of Christ; how are you wearing it?

**We must love our brethren as He loves them.**

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, (1 Peter 1:22)*

Every time we say "brother" or "sister" we ought to be reminded that we should treat one another as family.

Do you pray for them and help them when they are sick or in need?

Do you seek to help them overcome their spiritual problems?

***We sometimes do not hesitate to speak about how difficult our children might have been to us. But let's ask ourselves, "What kind of children have we been to the heavenly father?"***

**Conclusion: The church as family helps us understand the nature of the church. As someone well put it, "The church functions like a body, is as pure as a bride, submits like a kingdom, praises like a temple, and loves like a family." What a picture God has given us to live up to!**

**Surely the blessings of being a child of God should make us want to be a part of God's family, the church. How does one become a child of God?**

***One becomes a child of God by being born again.***

*Jesus told Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3,5).*

***This new birth is effected through the preaching of the gospel:***

*"being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).*

***We become a son of God through faith in Christ Jesus.***

*"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26,27).*

In summary, one becomes a child of God by hearing the gospel, believing it, repenting of sin, confessing faith in Christ, and being baptized (immersed) in water for the remission of his sins. When he does this, God adds him to his family, which is the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15).

*God has no children today who did not become children in this manner. Those who imply that there are children of God in all of the denominations imply that there are a multiplicity of ways of becoming a child of God, an idea not revealed in the pages of God's word and contrary to the teachings of Christ. There is but one way for men to be saved through Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Those who have not met the conditions for salvation are missing all of the spiritual blessings available to man in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). Are you a child of God?*