

We Are the Church

Lesson 04 of the series "Identity"

A. We are all priests.

"What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God... you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:5,9 (NLT)

1. Through Christ we can ALL have direct access to God. "Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. " Ephesians 3:12 (NLT)
2. Through Christ we can ALL bring God's Word to people. "...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. 1 Peter 3:15-16 (NLT)
3. Through Christ we can ALL intercede with God on behalf of people. "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth." 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NLT)

WARNING False identity. I'm not qualified. Only ordained pastors and church staff can do "real" ministry. "It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God." 2 Corinthians 3:5 (NLT)

B. We are the temple of God.

"For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people." 2 Corinthians 6:16 (NLT)

"We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord." Ephesians 2:21 (NLT)

1. The Church is not a religious institution, denomination or building but is made up of all people everywhere and in every time who have surrendered their lives to Christ.

"Sir," the woman said, "...why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?" Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem... indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:19-24 (NLT)

"For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them." Matthew 18:20 (NLT)

WARNING False identity. The Church is a place we go NOT who we are. "And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple." 1 Peter 2:4 (NLT)

2. God wants His church to spread all around the world.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

"The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house." 1 Corinthians 16:19 (NIV)

C. We are the body of Christ.

"God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself." Ephesians 1:22-23 (NLT)

1. Christ is the head of his body.

“...Christ, who is the head of his body, the church... makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.” Ephesians 4:15-16 (NLT)

2. Together, we make up the body of Christ.

“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NLT)

“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.” Romans 12:4-8 (NLT)

WARNING False identity. I’m not necessary. I don’t have much to offer our church. “The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ... If the foot says, ‘I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,’ that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, ‘I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,’ would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it... The eye can never say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ The head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’ In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.” 1 Corinthians 12:12-25 (NLT)

Connect Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the funniest experience you have ever had at a church meeting/activity?
2. Did you grow up going to church? If so, what was your experience like? If not, when did you start getting involved in church? What made you decide to get involved?
3. Discuss the following paragraph on the Church taken from Centerpoint's Statement of Beliefs: "The Church is the body of Christ, created by His Word and Spirit. The Church is not a religious institution, denomination or building but is made up of all people everywhere and in every time who have surrendered their lives to Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God, and to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth. All members of the church are called to ministry and service." Does it matter what we believe about church? Why? Why not?
4. Read I Corinthians 12:12-31. Why do you think Paul compares the Church to a human body? Using Paul's analogy why is it important for church members to have different functions? How essential is each part of your body?
5. Read 1 Peter 2:5-9. Have you ever thought of yourself as a priest? Why? / Why not? Based on your understanding, what did a Priest in the Old Testament do? What would it look like if we all embraced our roles as priests?
6. Discuss the following statement: We are not called to go to church - we are called to be the church.
7. At Centerpoint we gather for worship in conference centers, gymnasiums, storefronts and living rooms in multiple locations at multiple times. Why don't we just meet for worship in one place at one time?

Quotes to Ponder:

"I do not think the devil cares how many churches you build, if only you have lukewarm preachers and people in them. " Charles Spurgeon

"On the most elementary level, you do not have to go to church to be a Christian. You do not have to go home to be married either. But in both cases if you do not, you will have a very poor relationship." R. Kent Hughes

"Jesus is the head of the church. He expects his body to cooperate." Jack Wellman