

Note:- These are the outline notes of the Bible study series on **The Church of God** delivered at *City Revival Ministries, Kuala Lumpur* on 30/04/2016 7PM. Praying that this will minister to you and may these notes be a blessing to many. *In Christ, Donny*

Bible Portion for Meditation

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Matt 16: 18

Introduction

We have started a new teaching series on the subject Church of God. It is a very important topic and I am sure this study will help us get more close to Jesus and will help us to be actively involved in the great work in the Kingdom of God. Are you excited about this? Yes, Jesus is calling you to be a part of this great project on earth, it is nothing but building the Kingdom of God.

This study is mainly focused on helping the readers to explore by themselves on what the scripture says. It is the Holy Spirit who is the Guide, and Jesus is the one who will be teaching us, and the text-book will be the Scriptures (The Bible). Are we ready?

Why is it important to study the scriptures?

Jesus warned us

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. Matt 22

Many times, we are mistaken because of this reason

1. Either we do not know the Scriptures
2. Or we do not know the Power of God
3. Or we do not know both

In order to live a life pleasing to God and lead a life, led by the Holy Spirit, one should diligently search the scripture with a hunger and thirst for God. Listening to sermons, or messages or reading books aren't enough. We need to get back to the scriptures

to see whether what we hear and read are true according to the scriptures. This is what the people at Berea did when Paul preached the Word to them. They verified everything from the Scriptures.

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17

Many times, wrong teachings spread because, we do not verify what we hear. We blindly believe. It is not only dangerous for us, but as we spread the wrong teachings, we are seriously causing damage to other believers. Let's come that later. Now we are ready to start?

Read, hear, search, re-search, understand and obey the Scriptures

You **search** the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. John 5: 39

Then opened he their **understanding**, that they might understand the scriptures Luke 24: 45

Jesus said to them, “Have you never **read** in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes’? Matt 21:42

Blessed is he who **reads** and those who **hear** the words of this prophecy, and **keep** those things which are written in it; for the time is near. Rev 1: 3

Then you will be blessed indeed!

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are **able to make thee wise** unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Titus 3:15

Knowing the scriptures makes us wise.

So, we are going to start the study on the Church of God. Our approach is this – we will examine the words of Jesus and whatever is written in the scriptures, and we will seek the help of Holy Spirit to open our minds so that we may understand the depths of the Word of God, and we will be truly inspired to obey and keep those things written in the scriptures.

What Church is not?

Before going to the definition of Church, let us first take some time to unlearn the wrong concepts of church, which is already in our mind. This is the teaching methodology adopted by Jesus. He first taught them how not to pray, before teaching them how to pray. Unlearning is more difficult than learning. So let us pray to God to remove all the wrong concepts in our mind, contributed by our families, societies and cultures. Let us open our hearts and minds to understand what the Lord wants to share with us.

What Church is not?

From the school days, we have been taught in the text books that church is a place of worship or a building where Christians gather to worship Jesus Christ. And the first thought which comes to our mind, is the beautiful building with a cross, and people coming wearing nice clothes, and the bishop or pastor stands at the pulpit, and the choir singing beautiful songs. But is that what church is?

The way we look at the word church really matters, because this word was first used by Jesus and it is very important to learn from Jesus what He really meant, else we may be continuing our preconceived thoughts about church, which can prevent us from exploring the Word of God in the correct way.

Church is not a BUILDING, or a RELIGION or a DENOMINATION or a CLUB/ORGANIZATION.

Church is something more than that. What is church?

In order to understand what church actually is, we need to open the scriptures and learn what Jesus taught about it, what Apostles taught about it, and what the first century church practiced. The only way to find these things is to read the Bible. Forget about all the traditions and stories outside the Bible. Let us purely concentrate on the Word of God, given to us in printed form, in our own mother tongue. So nice of God, to make it available for us in a readable format. How amazing God is! He really loves us. And that is why He gave us the Bible, for us to read and understand what God has in store for us.

Jesus used many figures, parables and symbols to explain what church is. Paul and other apostles also taught about church in the Bible. So I have collected few symbols or metaphors about church, and here are they.

Church is

1. The **Body** of Christ, and Christ is the **Head** of the Church
2. **Tree**, and Christ is the main **stem**
3. **Sheepfold**, Christ is the **Good and Chief Shepherd**
4. **Kingdom of God**, Christ is the **King**
5. **Spiritual Building**(Temple of God), Christ is the **Corner Stone (or the Foundation)**
6. **Bride**, Christ is the **Bridegroom**
7. **Field**, Christ is the **Gardener**
8. **Family**, God is the Father, Christ is the **Elder Brother**, and we are all Sons and Daughters

Church is not the building we see, but it is the people who makes the church. Yes, the body of believers. All who follow Jesus Christ everywhere in the world constitute the church. Wherever followers of Christ gathers, they are the church.

Jesus Christ died on the cross for this very purpose, to make a Kingdom of God out of people from all parts of the world, and we are extremely privileged to be chosen by God to be a part of the Great Project, led by Jesus himself.

Are you excited about this?

Smallest unit of Church

The smallest unit of church is a believer of Lord Jesus Christ or a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are many terms used for those who are the believers of Jesus. For example, through the New Testament, words such as Saints, Christians, Brothers, Servants, Slaves, Converts, Followers etc are used.

The mostly used word is Disciple. It is used 233 times. The word Believer is used only 6 times. What is the difference between Believer and Disciple.

Are you a believer or a disciple?

Believer is one who believes in Jesus and His principles, but a disciple is one who takes the next step to commit His life to follow Christ, and to walk in His foot steps. Doesn't it make a huge difference.

As I taught this in church, one of the brothers came to me and narrated this famous story, which I would like to add here, because this is the perfect illustration of what real faith is!

The amazing story of Charles Blondin, a famous French tightrope walker, is a wonderful illustration of what true faith is. Blondin's greatest fame came on September 14, 1860, when he became the first person to cross a tightrope stretched 11,000 feet (over a quarter of a mile) across the mighty Niagara Falls. People from both Canada and America came from miles away to see this great feat. He walked across, 160 feet above the falls, several times... each time with a different daring feat – once in a sack, on stilts, on a bicycle, in the dark, and blindfolded. One time he even carried a stove and cooked an omelet in the middle of the rope! A large crowd gathered and the buzz of excitement ran along both sides of the river bank. The crowd “Oohed and Aahed!” as Blondin carefully walked across – one dangerous step after another – pushing a wheelbarrow holding a sack of potatoes. Then at one point, he asked for the participation of a volunteer. Upon reaching the other side, the crowd's applause was louder than the roar of the falls! Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience: “Do you believe I can carry a person

across in this wheelbarrow?” The crowd enthusiastically yelled, “Yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. We believe!” “Okay,” said Blondin, “Who wants to get into the wheelbarrow.” As far as the Blondin story goes, no one did at the time! This unique story illustrates a real life picture of what faith actually is. The crowd watched these daring feats. They said they believed. But... their actions proved they truly did not believe. Similarly, it is one thing for us to say we believe in God. However, it's true faith when we believe God and put our faith and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. (Source: inspire21.com)

Bible clearly tells,

¹⁴What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷**Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Yes, satan also believes that there is one God!

It takes a courage to take a step of faith to fully trust in Jesus as a Saviour and to become a disciple. Unfortunately, there are more of believers and less of disciples in the churches today. This is call for disciples. Jesus is calling you to commit your life 100% in following Christ, that's when the true journey starts as a disciple and let me tell you, it is an exciting journey, because the Master is going ahead of you, the Holy Spirit besides you, Father watching over you and you will be slowly and gradually marching on towards the glorious destiny, which is the eternal Home which Jesus is preparing for us. Are you ready to take that step.

Don't wait for another opportunity. Right now as you are reading this, say from your heart,

Lord, Jesus, I commit my life to you. I accept you as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive all my sins and wash me with your blood, which

was shed on the cross for me. I believe you died on the cross for me. I am willing to follow you the rest of my life. Please help me. Give me the Holy Spirit. In Jesus Name, Amen.

If you have sincerely prayed that prayer, I believe God has heard you and now you are a part of this journey. Come read and explore more of what God has planned for you.

Disciple is expected to become like the Master

- The standard definition of “disciple” (noun) is someone who adheres to the teachings of another
- It is a follower or a learner (Greek: *mathetes* means to learn)
- It refers to someone who takes up the ways of someone else.
- Applied to Jesus, a disciple is someone who learns from him to live like him — someone who, because of God’s awakening grace, conforms his or her words and ways to the words and ways of Jesus.
- Disciple is expected to become like Christ

Therefore, being a disciple is a call for becoming like Christ, in the way we think, talk and live. Yes, God will help us. All we need to do is to stay close to Jesus, and do what He says, rest He will help us.

How to become a disciple?

Jesus calls Mathew

As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “**Follow Me.**” So **he arose and followed Him.** Matt 9:9

Jesus calls Peter and Andrew

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 They

immediately left their nets and followed Him. Matt 4

Jesus calls James and John

21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. Matt 4

Jesus calls you! Are you willing to follow Him? If you respond to that call, you become a disciple. That’s it!

Call+Commitment=Disciple. Church are the “called out” people from the world.

Where is the word ‘church’ mentioned in the Bible?

There is no mention of the word church in the Old Testament, and it was first used by Jesus himself. Therefore, we can easily understand that this is great project started by Jesus.

*The word church is mentioned 117 times in the Bible (KJV). The word church is mentioned only twice (Mat 16:18; Mat 18:17) in the gospel books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). The Greek word used for church is *ekklēsia* which means called out.*

What did Jesus say about church?

This is the portion where Jesus speaks about church

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” 14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you

that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. Matt 16

Before introducing the concept of church, He called His disciples and asked them what they thought about Christ. You know why? Because in order to understand and to be a part of church, we need to understand who Christ is. Jesus wanted to introduce this idea of church to His followers, and He wanted to tell more about it to them.

Peter did the ice-breaking! He proclaimed it, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Amazing revelation! Jesus appreciated Peter, and told him, “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” Yes, the true revelation of Jesus comes from the Father. I pray that, as we read this, may God, the Father open our hearts to understand the great mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

Then He finally introduced His idea – the church.

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

This was not a mere statement but was a true proclamation of His divine plan, the mission statement of Jesus Christ for the ages to come.

4 fundamental truths from this statement

1. **I** (Jesus is the Founder, Savior, Builder, Head of the church)
2. **will build** (Ongoing process till Second Coming)
3. **My Church** (Jesus owns it- His own body)
4. The devil **cannot prevail against** this project (Enemy is there)

There might be more mysteries in this verse, you can pray and explore. God willing, we will cover each in detail in the coming days.

Church belongs to Jesus, and He is the One who will lead till the end. Victory is already made on the cross. Jesus the Master builder is currently building His church all over the world. Sometimes we may think, if the church is declining or failing, but the truth is that the church is growing and multiplying, in such a way that no statistics can really record the true numbers. Only the Father knows! And you are blessed indeed to be a part in it.

Church is You! You cannot go to a church because you are the church. If you don't go to the church, 'somebody' is missing, and the 'somebody' is you. Jesus has a great plan and task for you, which only you can do. Yes, even the small things we contribute to the 'church' matters! Now, do you understand how much valuable you are in the sight of God?

Till now, what we have seen is this:-

Church constitutes of **disciples**, Christ being the Founder, Savior and Builder.

If two of you agree

The next portion in the Bible, where Jesus speaks about church is in Matt 18. We will derive the remaining part of the definition from the last two verses

15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the **church**. But if he refuses even to hear the **church**, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 **“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My**

Father in heaven.**20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.**” Matt 18

Note the underlined words,

‘Two of you’, ‘agree’, ‘anything they ask’ ‘will be done for them’ ‘My Father’ ‘wherever’, ‘gathering’, ‘in the Name of Jesus’, ‘Jesus present in their midst’

Let’s take one by one

1. Two of you – minimum number of members in church is TWO DISCIPLES
2. Agree – There should be an agreement between them (which is very difficult, but when Christ comes it becomes easy)
3. Anything they ask – It shows there is prayer offered
4. Will be done for them – It shows there is power in prayer as a church, and answers are granted
5. My Father – Father is involved in church
6. Gathered – The disciples should gather on a periodic basis
7. Wherever – Anywhere in the world
8. In the Name of Jesus – Gathering should be in the Name of Jesus Christ
9. Jesus present in their midst – Jesus is present in the church.



Hope you now got a basic idea about church. Jesus continues to teach about the Holy Spirit in John 14, 15 and 16. We will come to this point later.

We will continue the teaching in the next part. God bless you.

Let’s pray

Father, we rededicate our lives to you as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Make us more like Jesus in every walk of life. Help us to understand the scriptures and to obey it. Continue to use us in your divine plan – the church, and let us edify other disciples in the Body of Christ. Help us to love one another. Help us to be prepared for your coming. Forgive all our short comings and cleanse us with your precious blood. Thank you Jesus for hearing our prayer. In Jesus Name, Amen.

All references are from NKJV version

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Your brother in Christ,
Donny Thomas Kurien