



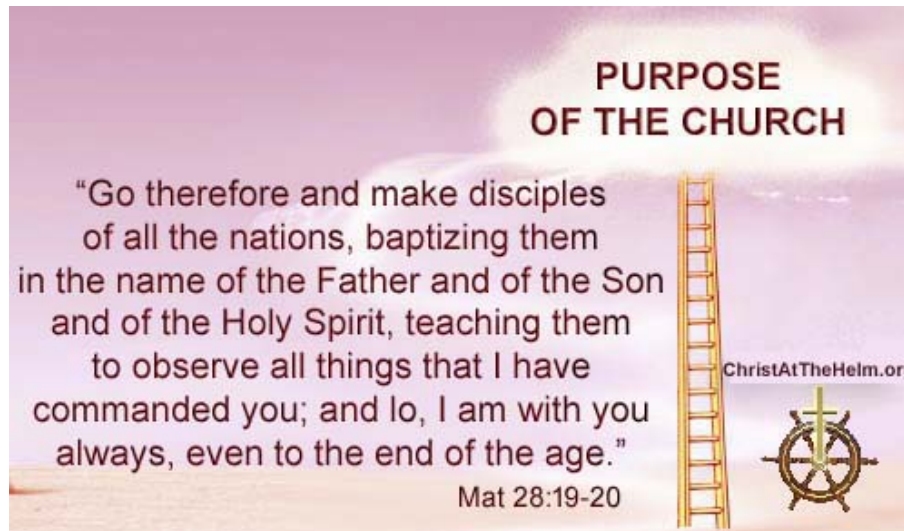
If we asked people to define what the church mean to them, we'd probably get as many different answers as the number of people we ask. Some would point to a building, others to a religion, then some to a denomination, and finally some might even label the church as a copout for weak minds.

Let's define, from the Word of God, what the church is. In Ephesians 2:20 Paul says that the church, “Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” In other words, Christ is the head of the church, and the church then becomes a body that was built upon His foundation, and established on earth through the apostles and all believers as a result.

The reason Paul explained in 1 Cor. 12:27, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” In Rom 12:5 he added, “So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Therefore, we can establish that the church is neither a building nor a religion, or even a denomination, but rather a body whose head is Christ. In essence, Christ is the only distinctive model believers must follow and mold their lives after. That's why the church is defined as the Body of Christ.

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In simple and clear command from Christ himself, the purpose of the Church is to go out there and share the good news of God, the message of Salvation, so people may know the truth and be saved. While our first responsibility is to grow spiritually in our faith, we must always remember that the global mission of the Church is to become useful members of the Body to reach out to the lost.

We may not all be called to be full time missionaries; we are however all called to reach out to the world around us as the Holy Spirit inspires us. The very reason Paul enjoined us this way; “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph 4:11-12)

The equipping of the saints has for purpose to first provide all of us the necessary knowledge to live the Christian life, then share the gospel through our personal testimony, be an active participant in seeking to reach out to the lost, and finally encourage fellow Christians in their daily walk.

So, as members of the Body of Christ, are we active participants in carrying out the important mission Christ gave us?

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Since the mission of the Church is to go into the world and preach the message of salvation to the lost, it goes without saying that the local church responsibility is to so equip Christian believers in the Word of God to do so.

The responsibility of pastors is therefore twofold: first, teach believers the pure Word of God, so they can live to honor Christ. Then, Christians must be taught to reach out and be His witnesses, whether it is in their own backyard, neighborhood, place of work, or anywhere else. That’s how we can all become productive members of the Body of Christ and not simply act as a social club.

Acts 20:28 gives a clear description of the duties of pastors like this: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Peter said: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” (1Peter 4:10-11)

Are we the true Church of Christ?

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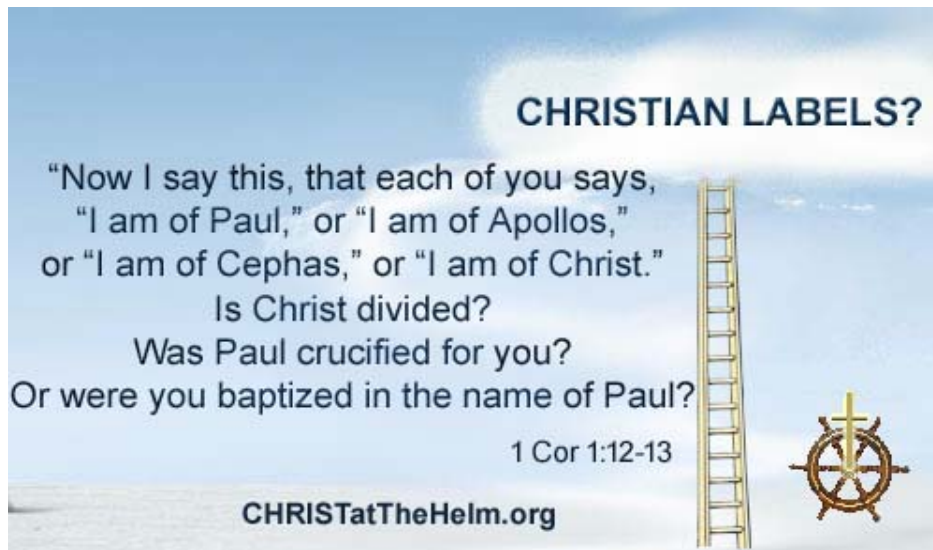
As Christians, we come to church to worship the Lord, and many are as well active in serving. Two important questions to ask ourselves are, “Are we simply busy going to church, or are we rather seeking to serve the Lord in all we do”? As well, “Do we attempt to serve God on His terms or do we choose to do it our way”?

Paul gave us a clear definition of our mission as believers in the church; “We are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *that is*, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love..” (Eph 4:15-16) In other words, we are not to seek to simply grow individually, or only within our local church, but as well together as a member of the Body of Christ as He appointed us, into the greater mission that glorifies Him.

That’s why in Col 3:2-3 Paul added: “Set your minds on the things *that are* above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Do we refer to what we do for the Lord as “my ministry”, or do we rather refer to it as “His mission” that He entrusts us with?

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Perhaps a most offensive reality for Christ is to see that the true Church, His Body, is divided. And it happens because we claim to possess better understanding and revelation of specific scriptures of the Word of God, more or less catering to human pride. (Note that I am not talking about false religions or prophets claiming to be Christians, yet are in it for the money and glory, or even deceiving messengers of Satan.)

As a result we become a laughing stock to the world. In disagreeing and following our ideology, aren't we feeding doubt into the minds of the unsaved as to why they should even consider Christianity? Didn't Jesus tell the Pharisees, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” (Mat 12:25)

Are we preaching and teaching the True Pure Word of God without any preconceived idea? “For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I *am* of Apollos,” are you not carnal? (1 Cor 3:4) Are we “PROUD” to be of whatever denomination, or are we rather humbled to belong to Christ? Let's choose humility as opposed to pride as the Word tells us that “Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Pr 16:18)

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Can we imagine the scene of someone coming face to face with Christ, and hear Him say, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Then the person proudly says, “Lord, I have prophesied, preached and even done wonders in Your Name”. And then Jesus says, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Mat 7:21-23)

Can we visualize the terror in the face of such person? Yet, Jesus tells us that it will happen and the reality is extremely serious. Let’s examine ourselves as to whether we are really in the faith, and if our heart’s desire is to serve God or our flesh. The apostle John said, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

Three very simple questions to ask ourselves are “Is my heart with Christ or with the world? Do I abide by His Word or am I simply picking and choosing scriptures that feel good? Do I sincerely highlight God’s Word to the world or am I seeking personal glory? It all comes down to the heart. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Mat 6:21

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