

Today we begin a short, topical series on **THE CHURCH**. The purpose is simple: TO ENSURE WE ARE PURSUING TO BE THE CHURCH GOD HAS CALLED **US** (TYUS) TO BE.

There is a great tendency for the church to be something it never was meant to be.

There's always a threat to God's plan & design. We see that from **GEN** to **REV**

For the Church, we see this tendency in each letter to each church in the NT.

IN EACH CASE - Wisdom, warning & correction is given to point to God's design.

So while we won't cover every aspect of the Church in this series,

We will get a good idea of **HOW IT IS - THAT TYUS IS TO BE - AS LOCAL CHURCH**.

HOW DO WE FUNCTION? HOW DO WE RELATE? HOW DO WE GO? HOW SHOULD WE BE?

You know this – BUT THERE ARE MANY POSSIBLE WAYS FOR A CHURCH TO EXIST & BE.

There's a **popular way** – a **more politically correct way** – a **country club way**.

There's a **consumer driven way** & honestly, a **much easier way**, doesn't require much.

But what we desire to be – is the **CHURCH GOD DESIRES & DESIGNED**.

To find this, we look to Scripture – It's there **WE FIND HOW THE CHURCH WAS THEN**.

From that, **we can see HOW THE CHURCH IS TO BE NOW**.

TODAY WE START with BELONGING – THE CHURCH IS A BELONGING PEOPLE.

STAND & READ EPHESIANS 2:13-22 (pg. 1344)

Deep at the heart of humanity is the desire to belong. **WE LONG TO BELONG**.

To be accepted & embraced by a group who loves & cares for you.

We search hard for that, make sacrifices for that, and then embrace & cherish that.

We long for **Floyd's Barber shop, THE BAR IN CHEERS** or the **Central Perks of the world**.

That's natural, that's by **GOD'S DESIGN** – shared by all people. **(ALONE IS NOT GOOD!)**

THE CHURCH IS THE WAY GOD DESIGNED FOR HIS PEOPLE TO BELONG.

I'm not gonna shame or say don't belong to anything other than the church...

BUT...I will say this **BELONGING (CHURCH)** is to be desired, embraced & guarded.

THIS BEGINS WITH UNDERSTANDING & WISDOM – **SO, HOW CAN WE BELONG?**

MAIN IDEA: COMMUNITY IS POSSIBLE WHEN OUR COMMON UNITY IS CHRIST.

1. **THROUGH THE GOSPEL, WE BELONG TO GOD** – Eph. 2:18, 22

Any hope of a church actually being the church God desires, begins with the Gospel.

THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE WHO FIRST BELONG TO GOD in & thru **CHRIST**. (Chief cornerstone)

GOD FIRST UNITES PEOPLE TO HIMSELF – HE DOES THIS IN CHRIST – BY THE SPIRIT.

So as Paul begins this letter to this church, he does so with its common unity.

It's the Gospel – **WHAT GOD DID FOR US IN CHRIST & BY THE SPIRIT - 1:15-23**

BEFORE YOU BELONG TO A CHURCH – YOU BELONG TO GOD thru **CHRIST**.

THE FIRST STEP TO BELONGING AT TYUS is to **BELONG TO GOD IN CHRIST (BAPTISM)**. THEN...

2. **THROUGH THE GOSPEL, WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER** – Eph 2:19-22

NOTICE v. 21 again – A STRUCTURE – JOINED TOGETHER – GROWS INTO a HOLY TEMPLE.
v.22 continues that...**IN HIM – We are BUILT TOGETHER...**

THIS WON'T BE EASY, IT WILL TAKE WORK – If you don't prioritize it, you won't be happy.
It's why the author of Hebrews warned us to NOT FORSAKE THIS ASSEMBLING. (10:24-25)

Only the Gospel could have created this bond – **Only the gospel will keep it together.**
We all bring our baggage & personalities & opinions in this ONE HOUSE & BODY.

V. 19, if you take strangers and aliens and put them in a relationship,
You better believe the GOSPEL must be present...

Which is why Paul would later say this in **Eph 4:1-3.**

BUT IT IS POSSIBLE – HOW? WHEN OUR COMMON UNITY IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

When the church gets this wrong, it's horribly unattractive & pushes people away.

BUT AS WE GET THIS RIGHT – WE BECOME THAT CITY ON A HILL – A SHINING LIGHT.

This BELONGING isn't built on our strengths, but on the mercy & grace Jesus provides.

WE ARE DISTINCT PEOPLE...BELONGING TO GOD IN CHRIST....

AND ON THAT FOUNDATION, we belong to one another.

A local community of believers who gather for worship & scatter for Witness.

SO, HOW CAN WE DO THAT AT TYUS? It's simple, but again, requires you walking in it.

1. Be present – Be involved – Put in the work. What if we put the same effort into church life & belonging that we do into the other things in our life?

I don't urge you to be involved for numbers, but because I take belonging seriously.

I DO THIS BECAUSE WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER – WE ARE ONE BIG FAMILY.

YEAS – WE ARE ALL MIXED UP & some a bit crazy. BUT WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER.

WILL YOU COMMIT TO THAT WHICH GOD CREATED & CHRIST DIED FOR?

In the GOOD – THE BAD – THE UGLY. Will you strive & walk with your family?

The Gospel makes true community & belonging possible.

It unites us to God & it joins us into one body.

Don't get frustrated in the process, Don't quit when it gets tough.

Don't isolate – Don't neglect – Don't make excuses....**DIVE IN & BELONG.**

THIS TAKES WORK – BUT THE KNOW THE GREATEST WORK HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.

NOW, We strive to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called.

HEADS BOWED – WHERE IS YOUR GREATEST BELONGING FOUND?

Follow the trail of time, passion, heart, desire, money – where does that end?

I'm not asking you to commit to TYUS today, but to GOD. **GET THAT RIGHT....**

And then, I'll never have to worry about you you BELONG here. **We just walk it out.**