

Identity – The Church

The vast majority of the teaching/sermons at Riverside focus on one passage (this is called “expositional” teaching). Occasionally we will teach from a topical perspective (one topic, various scriptures). This week was more of an overview of all the things/identities the church is called in the New Testament. Below is a sampling of some of the key identities and scriptures on the church. There are a few different ways a group could use this guide:

- Chose one passage, develop your own discussion guide for it and dive deep.
- Chose one set of passages/identity, develop your own discussion guide for it and dive deep.
- Read one passage, and ask “What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?”... discuss it for a while and then move on.
- Break up into smaller groups, have each group take a passage/different identity, spend 10-15 minutes looking at it (context, structure, meaning), and then come back together and have each group share.

Note: Make sure you move to application regardless of the approach you take to this discussion. This shouldn’t be a discussion on “the theory of how the church should look,” nor a bashing session “Yea, I hate how the church I grew up at missed...” This should be a “wow, what an awesome identity! How can we as the church/Riverside live that out?”

Note: All scripture below is the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Church

Note: the word “Church (Greek word is “Ekklesia”) literally means “Called-out ones” &/or “a gathering, an assembly” (TDNT, vol3, pg.501-)

Acts 20:28 - “So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his own blood - over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders.

1 Timothy 3:15 - ...so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Hebrews 12:23 - You have come to the assembly of God’s firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect.

Body of Christ

Eph 1:2-23 - I Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. 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.

Eph 2:11-21 - Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews...¹⁴ For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.¹⁵ He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. ¹⁶ Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death...¹⁹... You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. ²⁰ Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. ²¹ We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

Eph 3:6 - And this is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.

Eph 4:3-25 - ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future... ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ... ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He 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...²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.

Eph 5:23-33 (also under Bride section) - For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body.

As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

1 Cor 11:23-26 - For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.” In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this to remember me as often as you drink it.” For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again.

1 Cor 12:12-13 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

God's Household/Family/Temple/Building

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

2 Corinthians 6:16 - And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? 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."

Eph 2:19-22 - So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

1 Timothy 3:15 - so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Heb. 10:21 - And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house,

1 Peter 2:5 - And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

God's Flock

John 10:16 - I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

1 Peter 5:1-4 - And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

Bride of Christ

Rev 21:7-9 - And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. "But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

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New Israel:

Galatians 6:16 - May God's peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the new people of God.

Galatians 6:16 (New American Standard Bible) - And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

God's Army

2 Timothy 2:3-4 - Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them.

Chosen People/Priesthood/Holy Nation

1 Peter 2:9 - But you are not like that, for 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.

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Pray for Riverside church, that we may be able to live out our identity in powerful ways through the power of the Spirit.
- **Respond:** Meditate on your role in the Riverside Church body... pray about your place and next step.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (5/16/2010) will focus on 1 Peter 2:11-12 & Philippians 3:17-21. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.