



**What is the church?**  
**Eph 3:2b-11**  
**#1683 January 24, 2010 pm**  
**Pastor Ben Wright**

- Intro: Since 2005, hundreds if not thousands of books published on the Church.
  - Almost all of these books point out problems in churches today
  - Haven't read most of them, but friends have, and from what I can tell most of them are pretty good at pointing out problems.
  - Not so sure whether they're as good at proposing solutions
  - One that intrigues me most is "They Like Jesus But Not the Church"
    - Can you do that? Can WE do that? Can we like Jesus, but hold his Church at arm's length? Do we need a church to be a Christian?
    - If we're going to help each other think about those questions, we need to make sure we're talking about the same thing.
    - In order to make sure we're talking about the same thing, I want us to see how the Bible describes the Church, and how it doesn't describe the Church.
- What it isn't (what God doesn't say; not arguing; feel free to follow up)
  - This building
    - Some groups have called this a "meeting house"
    - Not trying to get you to change your vocabulary, but to know what you mean when you call this a church
  - Service—we're still the church when we're not meeting
  - Merely Christians together—not merely "2 or 3 gathered together in Jesus' name"
  - Family worship—public aspect; intent to expand and reproduce
  - Para-church ministry—campus evangelistic ministry or homeless shelter
  - Denomination
    - Protestants differ from RCC; church is not a single visible hierarchy
    - Baptists & others differ from Presbyterians & others
  - Merely a local church (Heb 12:22-24—background Israel at Sinai)
    - Local churches are essential. They put feet to the Great Commission. They're the largest living organisms that God has created to accomplish his objectives on the earth.
    - Local churches are the visible substance . . . the tangible manifestation . . . of the body of Christ.
      - Jesus was God made flesh. He put the image of God perfectly on display in this world.
      - Now God has ordained local churches to serve as the primary display of his wisdom and glory.



- Related to one another as family: fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters (1 Tim 5:1-2)
      - Fulfill family roles (Titus 2:1-8)
      - Fulfill mutual obligations (Gal 6:10)
      - Provide for those who need help (1 Tim 5:3-8)
    - Ephesians passages (above) tie the two together
    - Relationship
  - The church is a Building (1 Pet 2:4-10) dwelling
    - Dwelling place for God (Eph 2:20-22)
    - Foundation is Christ (1 Cor 3:7-11)
    - Christ builds it (Matt 16)
  - The church is a Bride (Eph 5:22-27) union
    - Union: Relationship to Christ (Eph 5:22-24)
    - Union: Made ready for Christ by Christ (Eph 5:25-27; Rev 19:6-8)
    - Union Invites others to come (Rev 22:16-17, 20)
    - Jonathan Edwards sermon: “The creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse, towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature, and to whom he might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love and grace that was in his heart, and that in this way God might be glorified.” [repeat]
    - Why would he say that? Because that’s the climax of the story of the Bible
      - Rev 21:1-14
      - City (2) that’s a bride (2) married to the Lamb (9) that’s connected to the 12 tribes (12) and the 12 apostles (14)
      - Notice how so many images come together:
        - Mystery of Jews and Gentiles together
        - Family as God dwells with his people (3)
        - Building—eternal, majestic city
        - Bride—married to Christ
- Two appeals
  - Be the church
    - Flock: Follow the shepherd. Trust the shepherd. Trust his servants.
    - Mystery: Praise God for how he has brought many nations together here at HPBC. Let your jaw drop in wonder at what God is doing here around the globe. Learn about it. And then build bridges to other cultures.
    - Family: Love unconditionally, even when it inconveniences . . . even hurts you. Especially when it hurts you.
    - Body: Fulfill your unique role in the body. Do what others can’t. Have hard, messy conversations to heal the hurting parts of this body.
      - Recommend WIAHCM—Anyabwile + 3 free copies
    - Family
      - Vertical: Kill this world’s idols that dwell in your heart. Set your affections above—on the inheritance that awaits you alongside Jesus
      - Horizontal: Realize that this church family is ours for eternity. In an eternal sense, our bonds to one another are closer than flesh and blood.
    - Bride: Yield to Christ as he cleanses you. Rejoice that you are being cleansed. Look for evidences that Jesus is cleansing lives all around you. Spend one minute each day just thinking about what the gospel means for you today and for eternity—freedom from guilt, slavery to sin, and hope for eternity.
      - Shut off your ipod, your car radio, your TV, your Nintendo Wii, close your laptop, power down your cell phone. Just ONE MINUTE.

- Love the church
  - Can you really love Jesus but not the church?
    - What if someone said to me, “I like you, Ben, but I really can’t stand your wife.”?
    - Not a way I’d recommend to get our friendship off to a flying start.
    - What should we say to the people who . . .
    - What should we say to ourselves
      - when we get frustrated with what our church isn’t doing
      - or how it’s not meeting our needs
      - or when some well-meaning but prickly person (maybe like me) is tough to put up with?
  - 4 bad reasons to love the Church from Josh Harris (ironically, found them on a blog called “Pure Church”)
    - Don't love the church because of what it does for you. Because sooner or later it won't do enough.
    - Don't love the church because of a leader. Because human leaders are fallible and will let you down.
    - Don't love the church because of a program or a building or activities because all those things get old.
    - Don't love the church because of a certain group of friends because friendships change and people move.
  - 6 reasons to love the church
    - Love the church because of who shed his blood to obtain the church.
    - Love the church because of who the church belongs to.
    - Love the church because of who the church worships.
    - Love the church because you love Jesus Christ and his glory.
    - Love the church because Jesus is worthy and faithful and true.
    - Love the church because Jesus loves the church.
  - “You cannot care for me with no regard for her. If you love me, you will love the church.”

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 Website: <http://www.hpbcglobal.org> Email: [info@hpbcglobal.org](mailto:info@hpbcglobal.org) Phone: 512.837.7725.