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Tell Me More Of The Church

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I. Often times we are asked to define things.
A. What is the Great Society?
B. Is alcoholism a disease or sin?
C. What is meant by planned parenthood?

II. I'm not surprised when one asks me "What is the church of Christ?"
A. How would you define it?

1. W.H. Griffith Thomas in "The Holy Spirit of God" page 169 "It is nothing less, it can be nothing more than the community of individual Christians."
2. Dr. Hort "The Church in its widest sense as the body of Christ is not the aggregate of particular churches but of individuals.'
The Christian Ecclesia Pg. 168
3. Paul tells how we got there.
I Cor. 12:13 "For by one Spirit are we
B. The Holy Spirit greatly functions in the church.

1. Abides in the church.
I Cor. 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple, Spirit abides there.
I Cor. 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body
a. We are temple, Spirit abides there.
2. Builds up church.
a. As living stones--added to spiritual house.
3. Administers the church in:
a. Worship.
Phil. 3:3 "For we are the circumcision, w
b. Witnessing.
Acts 1:8"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
c. Evangelising.

Acts 8:29"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."d. Missionary.

Acts 13:2"As they ministered to the Lord, and spake boldly in the name of the Lord, Priscilla and Aquila too, hearkened unto them, and launched them forth."
e. Fellowship.

Phil. 2:1"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any trust in the love of Christ, if any part of unction of the Holy Ghost, if any esteem, if any loving-kindness, if any bowels of compassion:"
f. New undertakings.

Acts 16:6-7"Now when they had gone through the region of Syria and Cilicia, they came to Antioch. And after they had preached the word there, to many thousands, they returned again to Caesarea, and communicated unto the church."g. Evangelising.

Rom. 8:14"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."h. Fellowship.

C. Various metaphors show what the church is. Shall we see some that describe those who believe in Jesus.

I John 5:1"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, the same is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."i. Unifies.

I John 4:15"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."j. New undertakings.

D. Here are 4, all start with B:

1. It is regarded as a Body.

Rom. 12:3-5"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not only to me, but also unto ye all, among the Gentiles, is Christ the Lord; and unto you that are at Rome, who are called to be saints:"k. New undertakings.

I Cor. 12:12-13"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."
l. New undertakings.

I Cor. 12:27"Now ye are the body of Christ; and all are members one of another."
m. New undertakings.

Eph. 1:22"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church:"n. New undertakings.

a. As head is to the body so is Christ to the church.
b. They are organically connected.
c. Church is an organism, not 2 parts in juxta position.
d. He is our life.
e. He is our thought and purpose.
f. He is our power.
g. Him we obey—we need Him for life, sensation and volition.
h. He needs us for expression and activity.
i. Each Chr. is a member and supplies something which all the body by joints and bands having knit together, increases the

Eph. 4:16 "From whom the whole body fitly

Col. 2:19 "And not holding the Head, from

(1) We need each other for nourishment, growth, progress, fellowship.

(2) He didn't call us to the solitary life.

Eph. 3:18 "May be able to comprehend with all the Saints

j. He wants unity.

Eph. 2:14 "For he is our peace, who hath made both one by

Eph. 2:16 "And that he might reconcile both

Eph. 2:18 "For through him we both have

k. In the body are various gifts.

2. It is a building.

a. Foundation.

Eph. 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation

b. Cornerstone—for coherence and stability of the structure.

Eph. 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation

I Cor. 3:11 "For other foundation can no man

c. Stones.

I Pet. 2:5 "Ye also, as lively stones, are

d. Character of:

(1) A temple.

Eph. 2:21 "In whom all the building fitly

e. It continuously grows.
Eph. 2:21 "In whom all the building fitly fit in:"  
3. It's the Bride. **espoused to one husband**... **chaste virgin**

2 Cor. 11:2 "For I am jealous over you with God.

Rom. 7:1-4 "Know ye not, bre., (for I speak a. This shows relationship of love.

Eph. 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.

b. We see unity. **that he might sanctify**

I Cor. 6:17 "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

c. We see duty. **Lord is one spirit**

Eph. 5:22 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

d. We see the future. **That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; which is the church of the Lord.**

4. It is a brotherhood. **ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowheirs of the saints and of the lakes of promise.**

Eph. 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowheirs of the saints and of the lakes of promise."

a. We are children. **as dear children**

Eph. 1:5 "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his own will.

Eph. 5:1 "Be ye therefore followers of God. **we are children of light.**

Eph. 5:8 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are light; **we are children of light.**

Eph. 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowheirs of the saints and of the lakes of promise."

b. Called saints--separated for him.

Eph. 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints. **we are children of light.**

c. The faithful.

Eph. 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, and an ambassador of Christ, even the good pleasure of God, to reconcile the world unto himself;**

d. There is peace.

Eph. 4:3-4 "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. **we are children of light.**

e. Also unity.

Eph. 3:15 "Of whom the whole family in he

5. Though they are not "B" words we might probe further:
a. Vine.
   John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

b. Flock.
   John 10:16 "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: I bring them also, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

c. Temple.
   1 Pet. 2:4 "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, firm foundation, a precious treasure, a sacred sacrifice acceptable to God."  

Rom. 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

II. We conclude with these observations.
A. It is an organism rather than an organization.

B. It, Christianity as Newman said "Came into the world as an idea rather than an institution."

C. Man may belong to a visible church without belonging to that unseen--He can be united with outward society without being spiritually united with Christ.

D. Conversely if a man is a part of the invisible he is also a member of the visible church.

E. A man in Christ joins himself to other men.

I. Christian living alone and working apart from brethren is unknown in N.T.
Here is some information taken from Christianity Today that will be of interest to members of the Lord's church. The language is in denominational terminology but we are happy to see the fact that the Churches of Christ still are noted as the fastest growing religious group in our nation today. The plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity is gaining momentum. May God help us to recognize our responsibility and go forward!

"Church growth is not quite keeping up with population growth, according to figures in the 1967 Yearbook of American Churches, published this month by the National Council of Churches.

"The data covers mainly calendar 1965, or denominations' fiscal years that ended in 1965. In this period 124,682,422 Americans belonged to some religious group, an increase of 1.4 million over the previous year. But in roughly the same period, the U.S. population grew by 2.3 million, to nearly 195 million. Church membership increased by 1.1%, while the general population grew by 1.3 percent.

"The rankings of major religious groupings were similar to those in the previous count:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Group</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>69,088,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>46,246,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>5,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Orthodox</td>
<td>3,172,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old and National Catholic</td>
<td>483,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>92,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The ranking of the largest non-Catholic communions also contained few surprises. The biggest numerical gains were posted by two conservative congregational groups, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Churches of Christ (the latter's figure, however, is a rough estimate at best). Large denominations losing membership over the year were, in order of losses: the American Baptist Convention, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The American Lutheran Church, and the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ).

"More startling is the fact that three of the top fifteen groups have actually lost members since 1956, despite the huge population increase: the ABC, the Disciples, and the United Church of Christ.

"In 1956, the National Baptist Convention of America reported the same figure it gives in the 1967 Yearbook, highlighting again the fact that the volume is no more reliable than the 251 denominations that supply the data. Another problem with figures is that Roman Catholics and other groups tally baptized infants, while the rest count only confirmed or adult members.

1. Southern Baptist* 10,770,573
2. Methodist        10,331,574
3. National Baptist Inc. 5,500,000

(continued on next page)