

Kingdom Family Dwelling

Ephesians 2:21-22

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NLT)

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. 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. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Hanging around teenagers I have seen a picture of myself and my OWN desires to “belong” and fit in.

- **We all long to belong...**

Dr. Karen Hall of Psychology Today writes that:

A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions.

—Karen Hall Ph.D., *Psychology Today*, March 2014

We all long to belong—we long for community.

In our passage Paul says that in Christ we are “**citizens of God's people**” and a part of a “**holy temple of the Lord**” and even “**God's Dwelling**”.

Paul is talking about the Kingdom Family of God—otherwise known as the CHURCH.

- many people have a skewed understanding of the Church.
- **Our culture seems to think that Church is outdated—it is irrelevant and unnecessary.**
- **Even some Christians have abandoned the concept of “Church” as being unnecessary...**

These skewed perspectives stem from a wrong understanding of what the church actually is...

- The church is not a building or an organization.

The Church is the chosen and redeemed children of God who gather to worship and grow, and scatter to bring the love of Jesus to every nation on earth.

- **The church is not a building that you go to, the Church is a *people* that you go *with***
- **Church is not a weekly event you attend, it is a family that you participate in.**
- We have seen that the Church is God's plan for gathering His Kingdom Kids to Himself as His family—The Church is God's Kingdom Family.

It is important for us to have a right understanding of God's Kingdom—His Church.

In our study over the last few last weeks and in today's verses, Paul has used metaphor to help us understand the nature of the Church and why the Church is important.

- We're going to spend a few minutes reviewing these metaphors as we build a foundation for the passage we are studying today.

We saw in v19 that to be a part of the Church means that you now have CITIZENSHIP in God's Kingdom.

- Citizenship is a BIG deal...you know this if you've ever flown abroad.
- Waiting to be processed by officials in a foreign airport is a reminder that you are NOT a citizen.
 - It's a reminder that you don't really **belong** there.

- As a non-citizen you don't have the same privileges or status or identity as a true citizen.

Paul reminds us that in Jesus, we are united in Christ TOGETHER as citizens in God's Kingdom—we BELONG with God as citizens.

So in this imagery we see of the Church is that it is really like an EMBASSY of God's Kingdom.

- **We are citizens of God's Kingdom who live in Ventura County.**
- **And the Church is like an EMBASSY of God's Kingdom here in Ventura.**
 - An embassy is a place in one country that is full of people from another country.
 - The people in the embassy operate under the authority and the laws of their home country.
 - The U.S. Embassy in Moscow is not bound by Russian laws or required to submit to Russian's leadership.

The Church is like this—it is an outpost of God's Kingdom in the middle of our culture.

- We live in this culture, but the Church operates under Jesus' authority, lives by God's laws, and represents God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Additionally, Paul helps us understand that the Church is also a household.

- We have seen that we are adopted into God's family as His children—KINGDOM KIDS.
- AND we are brought together as God's Kingdom Family.

But Paul isn't just talking about us being brought to God as a family—he is talking about us together as the church being members of God's HOUSEHOLD.

Every house has a particular, unique dynamic, and when you visit someone's house you have to learn the dynamics of that household:

- Who sleeps where.
- Who sits where at the table.
- Where the trashcan is & who's supposed to empty it?
- Who controls the remote?

The household dynamic of every family's home is different:

God's household has its own dynamic, shaped by the grace, love and fellowship of God.

- And each one of us *belongs* and *helps shape* the unique dynamic of God's household.

So what is a household?

We've all probably come to understand the difference between a house and a home/household.

- My kids have only ever known a household—we have NEVER moved since having kids.

Knowing this, you can imagine the drama in our home when whenever we've tried to talk about possibly moving to a different house...

I remember helping friends move—packing up their kid's stuff was SO HARD for the kids.

- By the time they were done packing their home felt like just a house.
 - It was without personality or form or purpose.

And the new house was worse because it was unfamiliar and empty...

- It took a week to get stuff unpacked and organized.
 - Pictures hanging on the walls...
 - Routines started...
 - Kid's started playing and chasing and fighting—familiar sounds.
 - Meals started happening around a table—familiar smells and feelings.

Slowly that house became their new home, and their household was reestablished.

- **A HOUSE can represent a lot of different things—wealth, poverty, prestige, etc...**
- **A HOUSEHOLD represents family, identity, security, belonging...**
 - This is what the church is meant to be—a household.
 - And households are shaped by FAMILY DYNAMICS—family relationships.

God's FAMILY or HOUSEHOLD is a good picture of the Church

- This idea of a household and a FAMILY is POWERFUL imagery for us to consider...
- Powerful because we all know that family relationships require HARD WORK!

And realistically, if we were to be completely honest we'd all admit that being part of a family is not always easy...or fun.

- Family is DIFFICULT, it requires WORK and it is MESSY, but isn't that what makes it so powerful to us?

If my siblings were not my siblings, I doubt we'd be anywhere near as close as we are.

- **There have been PLENTY of grounds to dissolve our friendships over the years.**

But the fact that we are FAMILY means that we work through any hard, complicated and messy situations TOGETHER—WHY?

- Because we are FAMILY.

And the depth of these relationships with my siblings is as deep as with any other relationship I have. —not because we're all easy friends with TONS in common...

—not because we are so similar that we “get” each other...

We are CLOSE FRIENDS after all these years because we are committed to this DIFFICULT, LABORIOUS, MESSY work of being family.

- And this commitment + our hard work has yielded a beauty and a richness that no other friendship or friend group could replace.
- We are FAMILY.

This illustration gives us a picture of the rich dynamic of the household of God to which we are called, in Christ.

It is good for us to be realistic when we think and dream about the idea of “family” and “Kingdom Family”

Because it is far easier and far more common to have a theoretical understanding of community and of Church than it is to give ourselves to others as FAMILY.

- It is FAR more difficult and rare to find people who are sincerely committed to living as FAMILY.

We should recognize that idealism kills authentic family relationships.

- Our desire to see relationships be just how we want them to be is the enemy of authentic relationship.

This is the reason the average American Christian will attend a church for an average of 3-5 years before moving on to another church.

- Idealistic expectations keep us from giving ourselves to the relationships and family community that would exist at EVERY church if EVERY CHRISTIAN would just abandon their idealistic expectations and give themselves to the people and the family that God is growing RIGHT THERE.
- Unrealistic family-expectations is NOT real family!
- **We need to embrace the Church as REAL, AUTHENTIC, FAMILY.**

Our expectations of what is “ideal” can be a real barrier for us walking together as Kingdom Family in Jesus.

People have told me that they don't fit in at Church because the Church should look and feel more like a HOSPITAL where they can get the attention & help that they want or need.

But the Bible doesn't describe or picture the Church as a hospital—it describes and pictures it as a HOUSEHOLD.

- This doesn't mean that we don't care for the wounded and nurse the weak...
 - This simply means that the care is RELATIONAL—it goes both ways.
- We go to a hospital to get cared for and then we leave.
- **In the Household of God's Kingdom Family, we receive AND give care in the context of a loving family relationship.**

God provides a HOUSEHOLD for us where He meets our needs as a part of His family.

- The reason for this is that part of our need is ALWAYS that we all have the need to care for others and not just be cared for.
- **We were made for the give-and-take of family relationship.**

God provides for us the Church—the household of God's Kingdom Family.

So we should expect and give ourselves to the difficult work—the messy work—of Kingdom Family relationships.

- When we start loving one another—through good times AND hard times...
- When we start forgiving one another...
- When we start INVESTING in one another...
- When we start caring for each other...

When we stop *expecting* and start *investing* into God's Kingdom Kids, then we will start to look like the Kingdom Family that Jesus died in order to create.

This is why we are re-launching Community Groups at the end of summer.

- NOT to get you more committed to RVTA...
- NOT to keep our people busy with good things...

We want to see vibrant, healthy Kingdom Family community formed in houses throughout the week because that is the model of the Church that we see in the N.T.

- Big weekly family gatherings on Sunday & house-to-house gatherings throughout the week.
- Worshipping, growing, ministering, reaching OUT...TOGETHER as God's Kingdom Family.

We don't JUST gather in here on Sundays—we NEED to walk and pray with and encourage and grow with and go OUT ON MISSION with other Christians!

- We were made for friendships that are as deep and committed as family.
- We were made for Kingdom Family community

Paul takes this idea of HOUSEHOLD a little deeper by saying that we are not just the HOUSEHOLD of God, we are also the TEMPLE of God.

Ephesians 2:21

We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

We, in Jesus, are the Temple... what does that mean?

In the OT we learn that the Temple is the dwelling place of God.

- It is where God manifested His presence.
- In the OT, if you wanted to be in God's presence you go to the Temple.

This all changes in the NT—the NT temple can seem confusing because it is described as a WHO:

- **Jesus refers to Himself as the Temple.**

John 2:18-22 (NLT)

18 But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

19 "All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 "What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?" 21 But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

- Jesus refers to His resurrected body as the Temple.
By this we learn that JESUS is the dwelling place of God.
 - *His name is Emmanuel, which means, "God with us"*

SO...

In the Old Testament, if you want to be in the presence of God you go to the Temple in Jerusalem. After Jesus' resurrection, if you want to go to the presence of God you go to Jesus.

Jesus is the NEW TEMPLE—the dwelling place of God.

- **Our own bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit"**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

So who is the Temple?

Is it Jesus?? Is it Individual Christians??

There is a 3rd description of the Temple:

- **We the Church are the Temple of God.**

Ephesians 2:21-22

We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

How are we to understand this?

- Is Jesus the Temple?
- Are we as individuals the Temple?
- Is the Church the Temple?

Look at our passage again more closely:

Ephesians 2:21

We are carefully joined together **in him**, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

IN Jesus.

This is the key to understanding the presence of God AND for understanding the Church today.

- JESUS is the Temple of God—He is God with us.
- We are also temples because Christ is IN US
- Collectively, those who are IN CHRIST are the Temple of God because Jesus is in us!
- And as we dwell IN CHRIST and are formed into this Temple, we start to take on the image of the Cornerstone.

God dwells WITH His people and WITH His people—AS Kingdom Family—the Church.

This truth that we are the Temple of God is not just a Theological reality for us as Christians, it is also a check for us as we consider WHERE and TO WHOM our allegiance lies throughout each day/week/month.

We are NOT a people who worship at OTHER Temples.

- We do not go to OTHER Gods
- We do not worship MONEY or TREASURE or POWER or SECURITY or COMFORT...
- We ARE the Temple of God.

Now, Money and treasure and power and security and comfort are not the problem...

- Giving ourselves to idols—to powerless ideals—is the problem.
- We may have money and even enjoy wealth, but our allegiance is to Jesus.
- We all have a form of security that most people in the world will never know, but we must not put our hope and trust in the security of our culture or government—our hope is in JESUS.

Our lives are our sacrifices and are our offerings to Jesus.

- ***And we—both individually and more clearly collectively as the Church—we are His Temple.***

This is a good time for me to point out that this building is NOT the Church—WE are the Church.

Technically you don't GO to church, you ARE the Church

- AND You gather on Sundays AS the Church
- AND You leave from this place AS the Church—both individually and as family.

God's presence is IN US!

- God's presence is in us as we gather and He is in us as we scatter.

We ARE the Church—God's Temple.

We are God's DWELLING.

In our passage we see the structural design of this dwelling:

Ephesians 2:20-21

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.

This Temple is build on the foundation of the Prophets—reference to Scripture.

- The prophets—people who spoke God's words to God's people throughout history.
- The words of these prophets are Scripture—God's Word.
- SCRIPTURE makes witness of Jesus and is the foundation for God's Temple.

A building is only as good as its foundation.

Christian community without Scripture as the foundation is like a building without a foundation.

- God has given us a GOOD foundation!

Isaiah 40:8 (NLT)

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.”

Scripture is the foundation, but Jesus is the CORNERSTONE.

- Scripture points us to Christ because He is the one with all authority.

Dom taught last week that Jesus has TORN DOWN walls of hostility and is now RAISING UP a new Temple with Himself—Jesus—as the cornerstone.

- Jesus is not building with stones and timber, but with people and relationships.
- Jesus is the one building the church!

Matthew 16:18b (NLT)

...I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

The Church is Jesus’—He is the cornerstone, His Word is the foundation, He is the builder... And in v21 we see that WE are the building materials...

Ephesians 2:21

We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

This is the architecture of God’s dwelling place:

- Scripture is the foundation
- Jesus is the cornerstone
- We are the building blocks

And God’s dwelling is being built by God Himself.

God has laid the foundation, set the cornerstone, CHOSEN his building blocks, and chooses to DWELL in this Temple—this HOUSEHOLD.

This is the Kingdom Family Dwelling of God:

We ARE the Temple of God AND we dwell with God together in the HOUSEHOLD of God as the Family of God.

And everyone is included!

Look at v22:

Ephesians 2:22 (NLT)

Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

- It doesn’t matter where you are from or where you have been...
- It doesn’t matter if you feel near to God or far from God...
- It doesn’t matter what you have done or what you have not done...

God is drawing ALL PEOPLES to Himself, and the Temple of God is being built by God to include ALL people groups, all nationalities, all ethnicities, all races, wealthy, poor, young, old...

- Even GENTILES!! (those furthest from God)
- God does dwell in us by His Spirit.
- He constructs His Temple by His Spirit
- He goes out to bring in more building materials by His Spirit...

Today God is building and He is dwelling in His Temple.

- He is IN US—bringing us together as His Kingdom Family.
- He dwells WITH us.

He is drawing every tongue, tribe & nation—even Gentiles—to Himself and engineering us all together in Jesus.

We TOGETHER in Jesus, on the Word of God, joined together BY Jesus; we are God's DWELLING

- **We are His Holy Temple!**

This is MASSIVE, Church.

- The Temple is where people would go to be near God.
- The Temple is where people could make sacrifices and be made right with God.
- The Temple is where people would come to God for forgiveness and blessing.
- The Temple is what IDENTIFIED God's people and is what formed their culture and calendar.

God is now doing all of this work of intimacy and access through His people—His Kingdom Family.

- Brothers & sisters, YOU—WE are the Temple of God!
- We are to GO and bring the peace of God and forgiveness of God and the love of God WITH US. God is IN us and WITH us, and we now GO to all peoples and bring the presence of God TO them.

Church, we are God's Kingdom Family, and God dwells in us.

- We are the Dwelling place of God.