

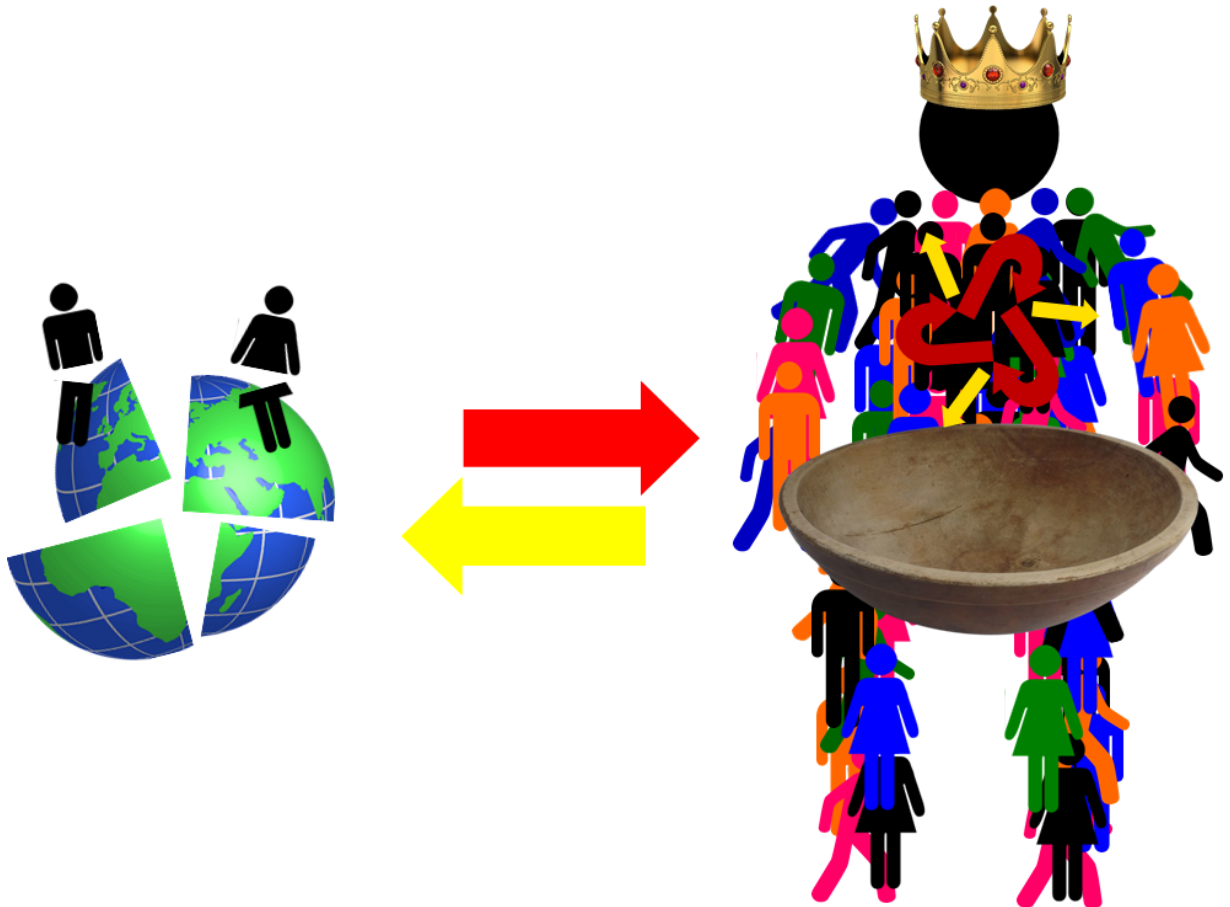
PICTURE THIS!

The Big Picture of Our Faith in Pictures!

*A study for all ages @ Gorrie Bible Fellowship!
September – December 2016*

Week #11 – The Church

Picture It!



Caption It!

The Church is the union of all true believers in Jesus Christ. As the body of Christ, the Church gathers for mutual encouragement and growth, and scatters to proclaim the Gospel and put the Kingdom of God on display.

Save It!

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

Picture It!

1. What is the Church?
 - a. In English, the word 'church' has come to mean a building where Christians meet for worship, but this is not the biblical meaning!
 - b. In the Bible, the word 'church' means 'called out ones.' It refers to followers of Jesus who have been called out and saved out of the world to form a unified group of believers (John 15:19). That is why there is a red arrow (a reference to the blood of Christ) coming out of the broken world in this week's picture.
 - c. The Bible uses the word 'church' in two different ways. First, the word 'church' refers to the total number of redeemed people from the Day of Pentecost to the present day (Ephesians 1:22). Often this is called 'the Universal Church' or 'Big 'C' Church.' But the Bible also uses the word 'church' to describe a specific congregation of believers in a specific location (Romans 16:16). This is often called a 'local church.'

2. Where did the Church Come From?
 - a. When He was here on earth, Jesus promised that he would (in the future) build His church (Matthew 16:16-18). This means that the church was something new that God was going to do in the world through the disciples of Jesus and their preaching of the Good News.
 - b. The Church began after Jesus had ascended to Heaven. On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the first followers of Christ and the Gospel was miraculously preached in many languages (Acts 2:1-12). On that single day, three thousand people were saved! (Acts 2:41).

3. Pictures of the Church!
 - a. The Bible uses several pictures or metaphors to describe the church and help us understand it:
 - i. The Church is the **Body** of Christ! (Eph. 1:22-23). Notice in this week's picture how the body is made up of many people. The 'body' metaphor speaks of:
 1. Christian unity – you can't dismember a body! (Col. 3:14).

2. Diversity – the church is made up of many kinds of people with different personalities, gifts and passions! (1 Cor. 12:14-24). Notice in the picture the variety in the colour and shapes of the people that make up the body of Christ.
 3. Christian service – every part of the body has a role and should be actively serving God in the church (1 Peter 4:10).
 4. Mutual care – each member of the body helps protect and provide for every other part of the body (1 Cor. 12: 25-26).
 5. Leadership – Jesus is the head of the church! (Col. 1:18). He provides direction for His people! In the picture, the head of the body belongs to Jesus who wears a crown!
 6. Christian mission – the church carries on the work that Jesus began in His human body on earth (John 17:18). In the picture the church carries the same servant’s bowl that Jesus carried, representing His servant nature in the world.
- ii. The Church is the **Bride** of Christ! (Eph. 5:22-32). This speaks of:
1. Relationship – the Christian faith is a relationship between Christ and His people!
 2. Love – Jesus loves the church and gave up His life for it! (Ephesians 5:25).
 3. Purity – the church is to be the holy people of God! (Ephesians 5:26).
- iii. The Church is the **Family** of God! (Eph. 2:19). This speaks of:
1. Relationship – believers have God as Father, Christ as brother and all other believers as faith siblings! (Mark 3:33-34)
 2. Responsibility – believers have family responsibilities to God and one another! (1 John 3:16-17).
 3. Unity – believers are called to live in family unity! (1 Corinthians 1:10).
 4. Character – believers seek to live by ‘God’s family values’! (Ephesians 5:1).

- iv. The Church is the **Temple** of God! (1 Cor. 3:16). This speaks of:
 - 1. Design – God is the architect of His church! (1 Cor. 12:18).
 - 2. Building – God has both built and is building up His church!
All believers are called to participate in the building process! (1 Corinthians 3:9-15).
 - 3. Strength through unity – the strength of the building comes through the fitting together of the living stones! (1 Peter 2:5)
 - 4. Purpose – the church is God’s dwelling place on earth, and believers are to serve as His priests, ministering to both God and humanity! (1 Peter 2:9)

4. The Purpose of the Church

- a. The purposes of the church are illustrated by the shape of the cross:
 - i. The Vertical Purpose:
 - 1. The Church receives life and salvation from Christ. He directs the Church’s purpose and empowers its mission.
 - 2. As a priesthood the Church serves and worships God.
 - ii. The Horizontal Purpose:
 - 1. The Church has responsibilities toward believers.
 - a. Believers are to love and serve one another in order to produce growth and maturity in themselves and others.
 - b. Every believer has been given spiritual gifts and natural abilities for the benefit of the church.
 - 2. The Church has responsibilities toward unbelievers. The church has been sent back into the world (John 17:15, 18) to proclaim the Good News and put the Kingdom of God on display through love and righteousness. This is why the picture has a glory arrow pointing back toward the world.

Panorama!

Since the beginning of time, God has had a plan to redeem sinners and remake them in His image through Jesus Christ. In this stage of history, all who find salvation in Christ through repentance and faith become part of the Church, the universal body of Christ that represents His Kingdom and proclaims His Good News in the world.

Selfie!

As a sinner I was separated from God and my relationships with others were often dysfunctional, but now in Christ I have been united with Christ and with all true believers in the Church. I have been given a spiritual gift to build up the church and I am to represent and proclaim God's Kingdom in the world.

Instagram!

It is a human longing and need to belong! God has provided for this longing through the church where all who come to faith in Christ become part of the family of God! All are loved and accepted. All have gifts and a purpose to serve God and humanity.

Key Story!

A Glimpse of the vibrant early Church – Acts 2:42-47

- The activities of the early church.
- The resulting growth of the early church.

Key Questions:

1. What do the red and gold arrows in this week's picture represent?
2. Why is the Body of Christ in this week's picture holding a bowl?
3. Who is the 'head' of the church? What does that mean?
4. What does the word 'church' mean? Why is it important to realize that a church is far more than a building?
5. Why is the unity of the church so important? What is the foundation of that unity? How can we promote unity both in our local church and in the broader church locally and around the world?
6. Which of the four pictures of the church is most meaningful to you (body, bride, family, temple)? Why?
7. Draw a diagram of a cross showing the vertical and horizontal purposes of the church as described in the notes.
8. Read Acts 2:42-47. How would you describe that first church? What was the result of their church life? How can we follow their example in our day?
9. Read John 17:15-18. What is the church's role in the world today? How does that role relate to the Kingdom of God?