

WHAT'S THE POINT?

The church is a
people, not a
place.



1. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?



BRIAN

Brian sat in the parking lot for nearly twenty minutes. He'd already finished two cigarettes and a third twirled between his fingers. He watched people park their cars and enter the church, but felt increasingly sure he didn't belong. As he saw people walk in, smile, and wave to one another, Brian knew these people lacked the problems he couldn't escape.

Brian had always been wary about church. His grandmother had taken him a few times when he was young, but most of his knowledge came from what he'd seen on late-night TV.

Deep down, he knew church wasn't for him. But for some reason, he couldn't leave the parking lot. His newfound interest in Jesus urged him to stay. After a few drags on his cigarette, he pushed past his reasons to leave and took a seat near the back of the room.

STOP

What kinds of experiences have you had with church? What feelings did you have when you first visited one? Does Brian have any reason to think he could find help there?



'I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it' – Jesus (Matt. 16:18).

The church is not what it seems.

Most people think of it as a building or an event—or, if they come from a charismatic background, they may think they ‘had some church’ when Aunt Betty got filled by the Holy Spirit and ran a few laps around the pews.

While some use the word ‘church’ this way, it isn’t exactly correct. When Jesus says He will build His church, He’s not talking about building a physical building like the one Brian walked into. He’s talking about something much more amazing.

You see, the church is actually a people, not a place or thing.

The word ‘church’ means ‘assembly.’ It’s an assembly or gathering of people who believe good news about Jesus. They believe Jesus takes people who are far from Him and makes them His very own people by His grace. That means that as Brian sat there, he was in a ‘church’ building during a ‘church’ service, but he was also with *the church, the people of God.*



‘Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.’ – (Eph. 2:13).

The Bible tells us that everyone starts on the wrong side of God. We begin as rebels against Him. We’ve not loved Him or obeyed His commands. Because God is good, He will judge us. He will allow no evil, small or great, to be overlooked in His universe.

And yet, despite how we’ve treated God, He has provided a way for us to be forgiven. God sent His Son Jesus to live a perfect life, die on a cross to take the judgment for sinners, and then rise from the dead in order to give new life. In other words,

Jesus took the death sentence *we* deserved for our sins

and not only forgives those who trust in Him,

but also brings them into His family as those loved by God.

Though Brian didn't realize it when he walked into the building that morning, he'd stepped into a room of people just like him. Sure, they may have come from different walks of life. On the outside, they probably looked different from him. But every person there had one major thing in common: they were all in desperate need of God's mercy.

This is what makes the church so amazing. I've heard it said that the church is not a museum of people who have it all together, but a hospital where broken people receive help from God and one another.

STOP

If the church is a gathering of people who have been rescued from their sin, what do you think would make those people unique? How do you think they should treat each other? What do you think they would talk about when they spend time together?



ILLUSTRATION

I once lived in Texas. When I moved there, I expected to see a lot of cowboys and horses, which I did. But you know what I saw almost everywhere? The Texas flag. The star of Texas flew on flags, covered walls, and was even tattooed on bodies. Everywhere I went, I saw the red, blue, and white symbol that declared, 'You're in Texas.'

Full of people marked out as God's, churches should act similarly. They should show that they are His by being

worshipful,

holy,

and loving.