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**Try Church- *The Identity and Task of the Church***

This series is a brief overview of what the Bible says about the identity of the church (who we are) and the task of the church (what we are to do). It is based on chapter headings taken from *Know The Truth*, Bruce Milne, Intervarsity Press, Leicester, 1991.

In considering the identity of the church, we look at five metaphors for the church – all but four of which are taken from the Old Testament. In terms of ministry, the headings are worship, fellowship, ministry and witness.

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| **15/4** | **The People of God 1 Peter 2:4-12**  “Biblical religion is inescapably corporate” (Bruce Milne, Know the Truth, p209)  Central to the understanding of the Old Testament is God working to establish a relationship with his people. God’s covenant with Noah (Genesis 9) is followed by covenants with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12, 15, 17). These covenants are applied afresh to Israel at the time of Moses (Exodus) and David (1 and 2 Samuel) and are the basis of God’s dealing with his people.  Jesus, through his death, establishes a new covenant in his blood (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). Through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, we become part of the people of God. | **CH** |
| **22/4** | **The Body of Christ 1 Corinthians 12:12-31**  Paul uses this image of the church to speak about how belief in Christ draws us together with other believers.  Christ is the whole, of which we are part, and we must play our part, recognising the privileges and responsibilities that this brings (Rom 12:3-8; Eph 1:3-14; 1 Cor 12:12-31) and submitting to Christ, who is the head of the church (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18, 3:19) from whom our life flows. | **CH** |
| **6/5** | **The Bride of Christ Ephesians 5:25-27**  This powerful image of God’s love for and longing for his people is found throughout the Old Testament, particularly amongst the prophets (Isa 54:5-8; Jer 2:1-3:5; Eze 16; Hosea).  The New Testament writers pick up this imagery, particularly Revelation (Rev 19:6-9; 21:1-4) | **David Knowles** |
| **13/5** | **The Temple of God Ephesians 2:19-22**  In the Old Testament, God’s dwelling amongst his people was symbolised by the tabernacle (Ex 25:8; 29:45-46) and then the temple (1 Kgs 8).  The New Testament picks up this imagery, but changes our thinking of God’s presence being in a building. Instead, through the Holy Spirit, God’s presence indwells each of us through Jesus, and God’s presence is with the church, the body of Christ. | **CH** |
| **20/5** | **Pentecost: The Birth of the Church Acts 2:1-41**  The promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marks an incredible moment in which 3,000 people are added to the 120 believers Luke mentioned in Acts 1:15.  It is a key event in the birth of the church, and the beginning of the fulfilment of the Great Commission. | **CH** |
| **27/5** | **Worship Colossians 3:16-17**  A vital task of the church is that it should glorify and honour God by worshipping him.  While the New Testament is insistent that this is a task of the church it is not prescriptive about what our times of worship should look like.  Worship includes praise, reading the word of God, and the offering (Acts 2:42; Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16-17, 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; Heb 13:15; 1 Cor 16:1-2). The Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:7-23; 1 Cor 11:7-34; Acts 2:42-46) and Baptism (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:41) are other vital elements of Christian worship. | **Colin Adams** |
| **3/6** | **Fellowship Acts 2:42; Romans 12:9-13**  Key to church life is that our life in Christ is something we share together. That fellowship should lead to love and devotion to one another (Rom 12:9-13)  Our shared life in Christ is expressed practically in self-giving love for each other and includes gathering together (Heb 10:25), hospitality (Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9), practical provision for each other’s needs (Acts 2:42-47), bearing one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2), encouraging one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13), and praying for each other (Eph 6:18-20).  This rich communal life, as well as being a major encouragement and commitment for each of us, should be one of the outstanding attractions of Christianity to those outside the church. | **David Knowles** |
| **10/6** | **Ministry Ephesians 4:1-16**  Acts of service are part of the way that the church brings honour and glory to God.  Jesus himself set the great example for us in his self-giving love (Matt 20:20-28; John 13:1-17).  The Holy Spirit gifts each Christian special gifts and ministry (Rom 12:1-8; 1 Cor 12:1-11; Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11) | **CH** |
| **17/6** | **Witness Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8**  Witness is a key task of the church: to testify to what God has revealed and accomplished in and through the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ.  The great commission (Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) is given by Christ to His church: first to the apostles, then handed down to each generation of believers, that God’s plan to bless all nations (Gen 12:3) | **CH** |