



The Church: Organism and Organization

This presentation explores the nature of the church, examining its role as both a living organism and an organized institution. We'll delve into biblical perspectives, theological concepts, and practical implications for church life.

How does a Spirit-filled Christian embody church life?

Acts 2:42–47 (ESV) 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.



What Are You Looking For in Church?

Expectations vs. Reality

Like marriage, church involvement may require letting go of some personal dreams.

Organism or Organization?

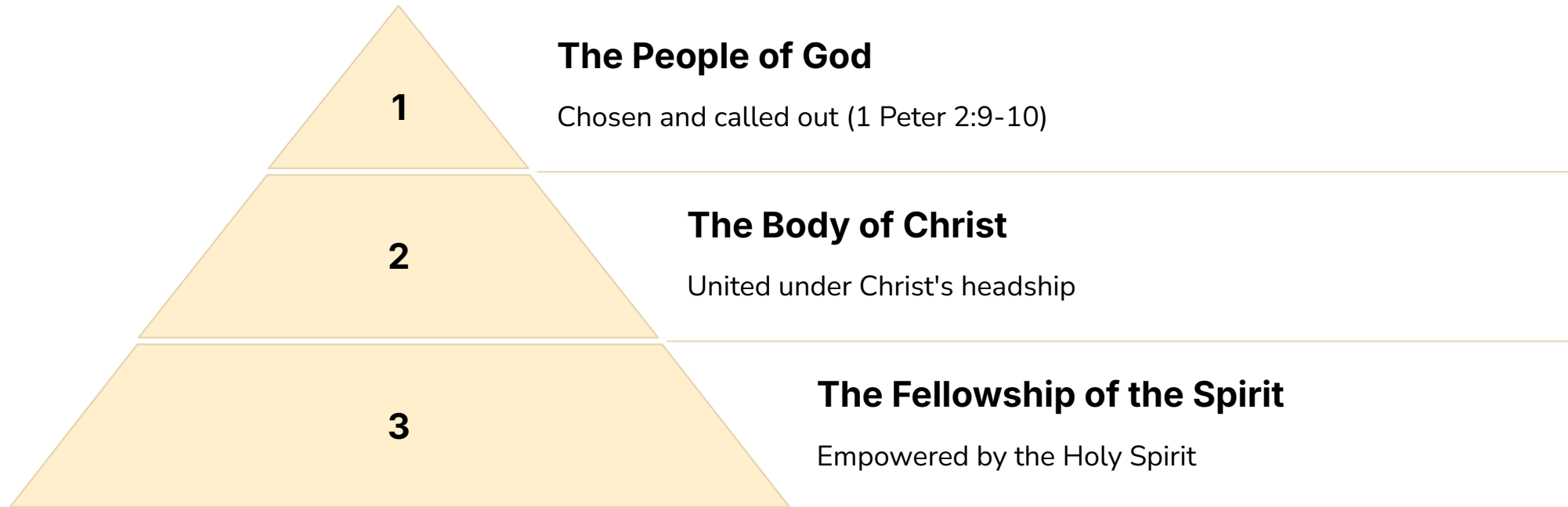
Consider: Do you view the church more as a living entity or a structured institution?

Acts 2:42 Perspective

The early church balanced both organic community and organized practices.



Jesus Building His Church



The People of God

1 Peter 2:9–10 (ESV) 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



Paul's Images of the Church



A Building

Must be built up and related correctly into Christ



A Body

Organically grows, connected to the Head



The Bride of Christ

Emphasizes relationship with Christ



What about denominations?

- Acknowledges the reality of denominations and the divisions they represent. There are historical and theological reasons for their existence.
- Emphasize the importance of focusing on the core doctrines of Christianity that unite believers across denominations, such as the Trinity, the incarnation, and the atonement.
- While recognizing the value of denominational distinctives, encourage dialogue and cooperation among different denominations, seeking common ground and working together for the advancement of the Gospel.
- We can appreciate different "kinds of churches" and their ability to reach different groups of people, acknowledging that God uses a variety of approaches to build his kingdom.



Church Growth and Unity

1

Equipping the Saints

Leaders given to prepare believers (Ephesians 4:11–12) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

2

Attaining Unity

Growing in faith and knowledge (Eph 4:13-14) 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

3

Speaking Truth in Love

Growing up into Christ (Eph 4:15-16). Ephesians 4:15–16 (ESV) 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The Church as a Living Organism

Christ-Centered

Built on the foundation of Jesus Christ
(Matthew 16:13-18)

Invincible

"The gates of hell shall not prevail
against it"

Christ's Life Within

Energized by Christ living in believers
(Galatians 2:20)

Marks of a True Church

Word

Faithful preaching of
Scripture

Sacraments

Proper administration of
baptism and communion

Discipline

Maintaining purity and order



Visible Church

All who profess faith and their children

Invisible Church

The elect, known only to God

Balance

Recognizing both aspects without neglecting either

The Church: A Place to Grow

Transforming Presence

The Church is not just a place we go, but a community where Christ is actively teaching and forming people.

Kingdom Outpost

A place where heaven and earth overlap, bringing heaven's reality into the present.

Discipleship Community

Its primary role is to make disciples, not just converts. Learn to live like Jesus and bring his presence to the world.

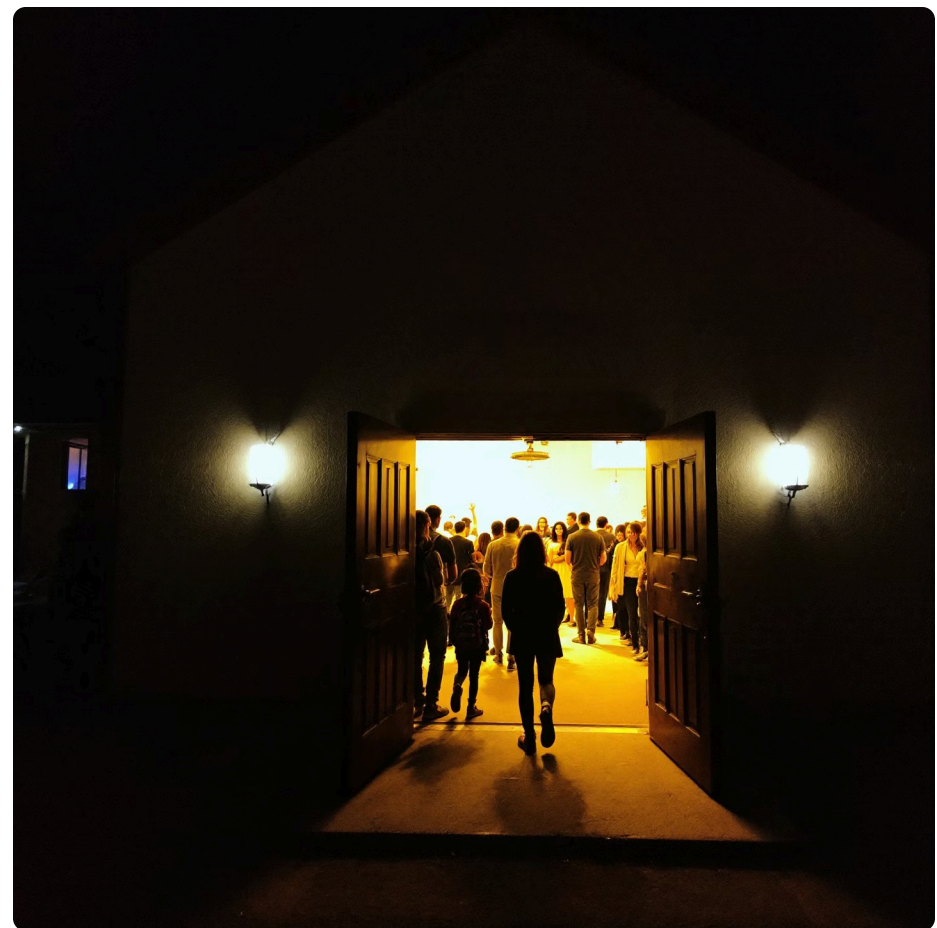
Character School

A place where we learn to live like Jesus through practice and community.

Dallas Willard

Perspectives on Church

- **The Church as Christ's Transforming Presence**
 - Not just a place we go, but a reality we live in
 - A community where Christ is actively teaching and forming people
 - The gathering of those who are learning to live in the Kingdom of God right now
 - A place where people are "being with Jesus, learning to be like Jesus"
- **The Church as Kingdom Outpost**
 - Willard emphasized that the church should be a "beachhead of God's Kingdom"
 - A place where heaven and earth overlap
 - Not just about getting people into heaven later, but bringing heaven's reality into the present
 - "The Kingdom of God is the range of God's effective will"
- **The Church as Discipleship Community** . The church's primary role was to make disciples - not just converts. He would say something like: "The greatest issue facing the world today is how to bring the gentle and pervasive presence of Jesus Christ to bear upon every aspect of human life."
- **The Church as Character School**
 - A place where we learn to live like Jesus
 - Where virtues are formed through practice and community
 - Where we learn to "live easily in the yoke of Jesus"
 - Not just about behavior modification but deep inner transformation



Church Organizational Structures

1 Hierarchical

Episcopal, Catholic, Lutheran
- structured leadership

2 Congregational

Baptist, Congregational - flat
leadership structure

3 Presbyterian

Governed by elders, with regional presbyteries



Christ and Culture - Richard Niebuhr

1

Christ Against Culture

Complete opposition and withdrawal

2

Christ of Culture

Adaptation to current cultural values

3

Christ Above Culture

Grace builds on nature

4

Christ and Culture in Paradox

Living in two kingdoms simultaneously

5

Christ Transforming Culture

Redeeming and converting culture



The Church's Influence: Gathered vs. Scattered



Salt

Preserving and flavoring
influence



Light

Illuminating and guiding
presence



Seed

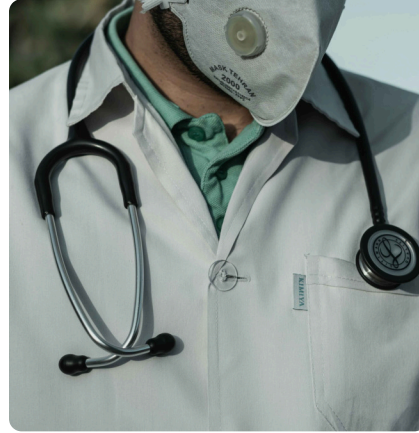
Growth potential from small
beginnings

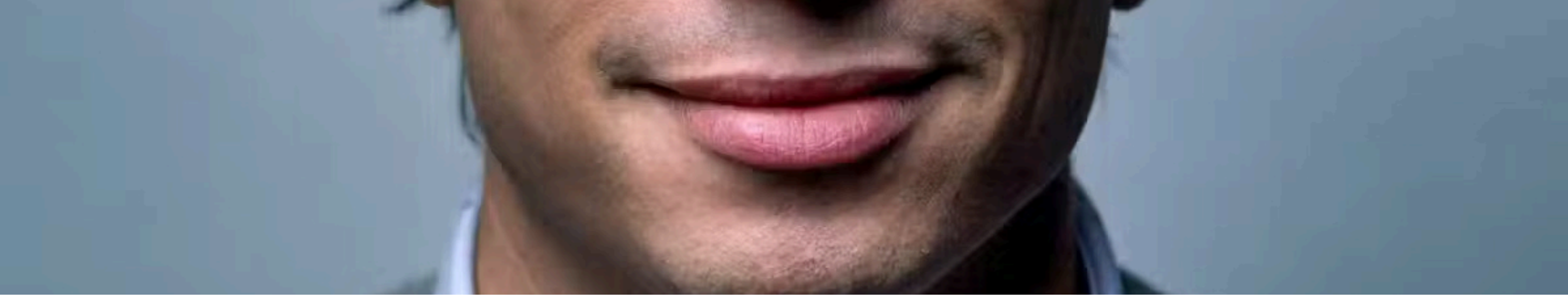


Yeast

Permeating and transforming
influence

The Church's Impact When Scattered





Case Study: William Wilberforce



Characteristics of Healthy Engagement (W.I.F.E.)

Worship

Genuine, Spirit-led worship

Instruction

Biblical teaching and discipleship

Fellowship

Authentic community and relationships

Expression

Outward focus and service



A Church Striving for God's Will



Respect Leadership

Honor those who labor in the Lord (1 Thess 5:12-13)



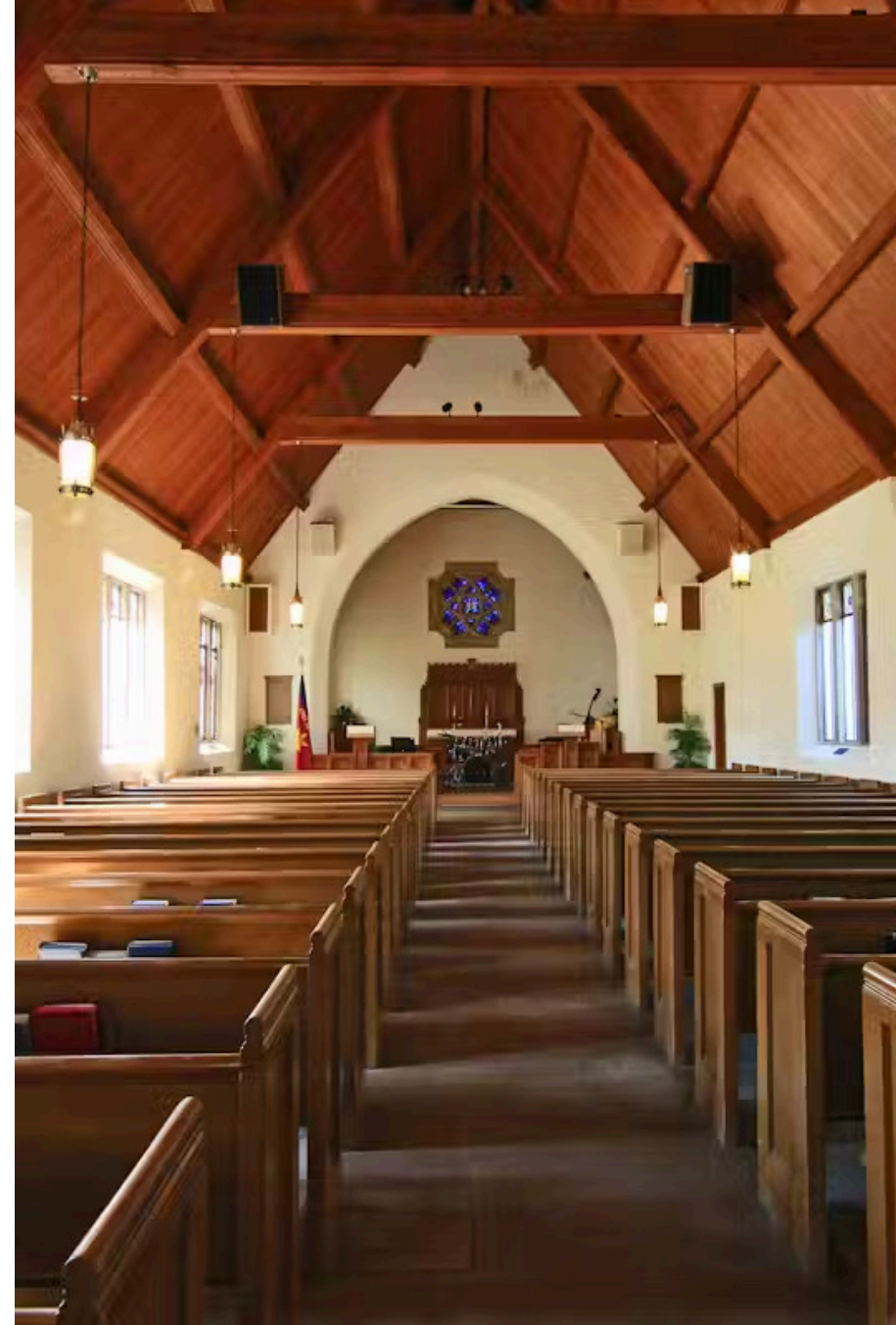
Care for One Another

Encourage, help, and be patient (1 Thess 5:14-15)



Spiritual Vitality

Rejoice, pray, give thanks, and discern (1 Thess 5:16-22)



What kind of church do we want?

1 Thessalonians 5:12–22 (ESV) 12 We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

