

BELONGING

JESUS | BAPTISM | MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP

The Nature & Mission of the Church

BELONGING is a sermon series happening the 5 Sundays in January, focusing on the gospel, baptism, and the church.

Opportunity to be baptized and to become a ministry partner (known as membership in some contexts) on Sunday, February 7th exists for those desiring to take that step of faith. The Baptism & Ministry Partnership Application form is available online and at our Welcome Centres.

BELONGING is about belonging to Jesus (responding to the gospel), belonging with Jesus in baptism, and belonging to Christ's body, the church. We will focus on the centre of our faith and the individual and corporate outworking of it.

OPENING COMMENT

The church is God's vehicle, chosen and designed by Him to carry the message of the gospel to the world. What we understand and believe about the church is critically important because it is such a significant part of God's plan to demonstrate His love for the world. The church is God's plan A ... and there is no Plan B! How do you fit into this plan?

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon?

READ THE TEXT: Matthew 16:13 - 20

"13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-



Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ."

PART I: NATURE

What IS the Church?

1. How would you answer the question "What is the Church?"
2. What do you *understand* and *believe* about the church?
3. Have you had / do you have any misguided ideas, thoughts or beliefs about the church? How did those thoughts impact the way you spoke of the church, or your involvement in the church?
4. From our text and what was presented Sunday morning, the church was broken down to four words: *Substance* (v18,cf. v16) "a group of people who belong to God ...called ... to be in the world, but not of it" - *Structure* (v18a) "the church belongs to Jesus ... everyone else (overseers, stewards, deacons)" - *Strategy* (v18a) "it's a process ... still being built ... fellowship ... demonstrates to the world the truth of the gospel of grace, forgiveness and reconciliation. *Security* (v18b) "... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it! ... we belong together on Mission"
5. How do these words describe the importance of your level of commitment, belonging and involvement as part of the church? Why is the church important to your walk with Jesus?

PART II: MISSION

What does the Church DO?

1. The four metaphors were used Sunday morning to describe what the church does:
HOUSE/BUILDING - 1 Peter 2:1-10; 1 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Peter 4:17
BODY - Colossians 1, Ephesians 3:10, Colossians 4:3
FLOCK - Acts 20:28-29, 1 Peter 5:1-4
BRIDE - 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, Ephesians 5:31-32
As you read the passages (and refer back to the sermon) identify what the common implications are, for all of these metaphors. What is the end result of the church's mission?
2. What implications do these metaphors have for you personally, for your LifeGroup, and for Central?
3. Discuss ways that you can pray for and protect the unity of the church. What practical steps need to be taken as a result?



CLOSING COMMENT

If you are not already, would you consider getting baptized and/or becoming a Ministry Partner at Central? Have you looked at the online form? Even if all of the members of your Life Group are already Baptized and/or Ministry Partners, encourage group members to spend time reviewing the online form and then discuss. This is a good opportunity to evaluate your commitment to the church and to hear each other's stories.

SHARE & PRAY

- Take some time to thank God for the church, pray for a movement of the Holy Spirit, pray for the protection of the unity of the church.
- Pray for gospel-advance in Chilliwack, Agassiz, and globally this year (Matt 9:37).
- Conclude by spending some time praying for one another, the growth in grace you want to experience, and the needs among you.

