

WHAT IS...

God's  
Purpose  
— *for the* —  
Church?

A brief introduction  
to the church  
and to the biblical way  
for Christians to  
meet together

# Preface

On the road to Damascus, Saul saw a vision of Christ, a vision that blinded him, so that he needed to be led by the hand into the city. His blindness continued for three days, until another brother came and laid hands on him. Only then could he see again and rise up to serve the Lord (Acts 9).

So many believers are like this today! Yes, they have seen something of Christ, and that vision has blinded them to the things of the world. But, they have not yet seen God's purpose in Christ, nor how He plans to practically carry out this purpose in the local churches. Thus, they wander, unable to serve the Lord as He truly desires.

This pamphlet is intended to help such ones, by providing a brief overview of God's purpose for the church. It may be downloaded from our website in both screen and print format. The screen and 12-page print versions are identical in terms of content; the 4-page version omits this Preface, the suggested readings, and back page.

May the Lord bless this small booklet for His sake!

David Canfield

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GodsEternalPurpose.org

# What Is the Church?

The church is the heavenly, mystical Body of Christ,  
that is, the fullness of Christ, and as such is  
His expression on the earth today.

*Ephesians 1:22-23*

This Body is composed of all its many members,  
namely, all those who ever have or ever will  
believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

*Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13*

These believers in Christ have been born anew  
with the divine life and nature of God  
to become the real, genuine children of God.

*John 1:12-13, 3:3-8, 2 Peter 1:4*

Thus, they are now called into the church  
here on the earth as God's family and  
the fellowship of God's Son.

*Ephesians 2:19, 1 Corinthians 1:9*

This one unique church exists practically  
in the many local churches as the golden lampstands  
to be the testimony of Christ in this dark age.

*Revelation 1:10-13*

# The Church & God's Eternal Purpose

## In Eternity Past, the Church Was...

- The pleasure of God's heart. *Eph. 1:10*
- Planned by God. *Eph. 3:10-11*
- A hidden mystery. *Eph. 3:5-6*

## In this Age, the Church Is...

- The reason Christ died for us. *Eph. 5:25*
- The issue of God's divine life. *Eph. 3:8-19*;  
*cf. Gen. 2:21-23, Eph. 5:30-32, John 12:24, 19:34*
- The Body of Christ; the one new man; God's family;  
God's dwelling place; His corporate warrior;  
the kingdom of God. *Eph. 1:22-23, 2:15, 19, 20-22,*  
*6:10-19, Rom.14:17*
- The fellowship of God's Son and the testimony of  
Christ in the local churches. *1 Cor. 1:9, Rev. 1:10-13*
- Building itself up in love, and being sanctified  
by Christ to be prepared as His spotless,  
holy Bride. *Eph. 4:1-16, 5:23-27*

## In Eternity Future, the Church Will Be...

- The New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ. *Rev. 21:2*
- God's ultimate expression. *Rev. 21:11; cf. 4:3*
- The eternal dwelling place of God and man.  
*Rev. 22:3-5*

# The Lord's Purpose

*So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Ephesians 3:10-11*

God's eternal purpose is to have the church built up to be His expression, His Body. This purpose could never be fulfilled by individuals, nor by any Christian sect, but only by believers coming together in the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ. How precious is this church to God!

True spiritual warfare relates mainly to the building up of the Body of Christ, and standing against Satan's efforts to divide the saints and frustrate the building work, for it is the believers built up in the local churches who will ultimately defeat Satan (Rom. 16:20; cf. Eph. 6:10-20).

# The Lord's Promise

*“And I also say to you that you are Peter,  
and on this rock I will build My church,  
and the gates of Hades shall not  
prevail against it.”*

*Matthew 16:18*

As soon as Simon declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord revealed something more to him. First, He changed his name to “Peter,” meaning “a stone,” and then He told him that He would build His church upon that “rock” which is the revelation of Christ given to men. This shows that the Lord viewed Peter as a living stone for the building up of the church.

Like Peter, once we’ve received the revelation of Christ, we must go on to see the vision of the church and of ourselves as stones for God’s building (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-5). Only when we see God’s desire to build up the church can we know the meaning of our Christian life, or what the goal of our salvation and Christian service must be.

# The Lord's Prayer

*“That they all may be one,  
as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;  
that they also may be one in Us,  
that the world may believe  
that You sent Me.”*

*John 17:21*

Here the Lord prayed for His believers to be one in such a way as to cause the world to believe the Father had sent Him. That is, He was praying, not only for a mystical oneness, but for a oneness that would be manifest on the earth.

The Lord surely knew, even as He prayed, that His believers would eventually become divided. Still, we must believe that despite all the sad divisions today among God's children, eventually this prayer will be fulfilled; the Lord will indeed call some of His believers out of the sects and back to the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ as a testimony of the grace and the salvation we have received in Him.

# Which Denomination?

Some years ago two Christians, until then strangers to each other, were traveling together on a train. After some conversation about the Lord and His interests, one leaned forward and said, “May I ask what denomination you belong to?”

“Well, that is a common enough question,” replied the other, “but will you first say what you think is to guide me in my path as a Christian?”

He agreed at once that it was the word of God alone that could with certainty direct him.

“Then,” said his fellow-traveler, “if you will allow me, I will answer your question by proposing another, that is, what denomination does the word of God put me into?”

After some silent thought he answered, “Why, none at all.”

“Then I can’t belong to one at all,” replied the other; “for if I did (upon your own showing), I should clearly be *in a position where the word of God had not placed me.*”

Adapted from “Are You A Member? And of What?,”  
by George Cutting, circa 1900.

# A Brief History of Oneness

Soon after the close of the New Testament age the church as a whole departed from the Lord's testimony. Even so, small groups of believers have remained faithful. Since the Reformation the Lord has used the Moravian Brethren in the 1700s, the Plymouth Brethren in the 1800s, and the local churches raised up in the 1900s through Watchman Nee and Witness Lee to recover the saints back to His desire, developing His work in stages as time went on. While these groups have mostly left their original standing, the Lord's work of building up His church will, nonetheless, continue until He finally has the testimony He desires.

*The Pilgrim Church*, by E.H. Broadbent, is a classic book on lesser-known Christian groups that have stood for the Lord's testimony.



In the 1700s the Moravians, led by Count Zinzendorf, pictured at left, stood for the Lords's testimony.

# The Ground of Oneness in Locality

Today new believers often feel that they must join a church. However, in the New Testament there is no such thing. The moment we believe in Christ we become members of the one unique church, the Body of Christ. We are brought, not only into Christ Himself (Rom. 6:3), but also into His one Body (1 Cor. 12:13) to partake of “the fellowship of God’s Son” (1 Cor. 1:9), the organic life relationship of all who are in the Triune God (John 17:20-23).

Still, in this age the believers can’t all meet together in one place. Thus, we must consider, how can we form different churches without dividing ourselves into different sects?

The answer, of course, is in the Bible. Here we see that the only way churches are ever designated is by their city: the church in Jerusalem, in Corinth, in Ephesus, etc.; there is no exception to this rule. Thus, the biblical way for us to meet as Christians is to simply come together as the church where we live. Others may separate themselves into sects and call themselves by other

names, but by standing on this ground and meeting simply as Christians, we ourselves can still keep the oneness.

This basis, this ground, of meeting, may be called “the ground of oneness in locality.” This ground does not make us one; if we believe that we will become a sect of “The Local Church.” However, it does keep us in the oneness we already have in the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-6), for if we stand on this ground we avoid any exclusive fellowship and are thus one with all the believers where we live. And as we keep the oneness in this way we will receive God’s blessing of life (Ps. 133); grow together for the building up of the Body (Eph. 4:13-16); defeat Satan (Rom. 16:20); and fulfill of God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 1:10, 3:10-11, Rev. 3:8-10, 21:9-11). This is why the proper ground is so crucial.



*Recommended Reading:*

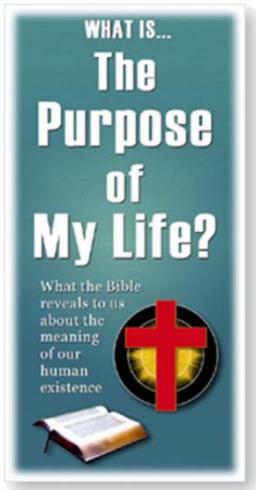
*The Normal Christian Church Life,*  
*by Watchman Nee*

*The Life and Way for*  
*the Practice of the Church Life,*  
*by Witness Lee*

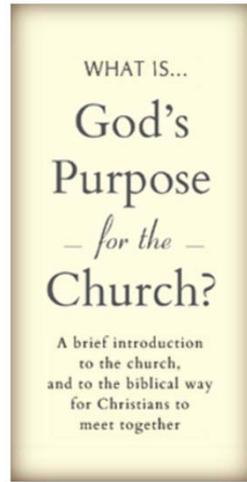
— WHAT IS —

# God's Purpose?

For  
My Life



For  
the Church



— GodsEternalPurpose.org —

Visit us online to download this pamphlet, as well as “What Is the Purpose of My Life?” You can also watch our set of gospel videos, “The Salvation Series.”

You can contact us by email via our sister website, at [notes@thechristianfaith.org](mailto:notes@thechristianfaith.org).

