

## Open House: Living Out Your Christian Lives in Church

It seems somewhat strange that we need a BDG on living out your *Christian* lives in Church. After all, wouldn't even a hypocritical Christian live Christianly at church, of all places? Well, the real world is so very different from the Church that the Bible talks about. Tonight, we will discuss 2 things: (1) What is the Church, and (2) Difficult Issues in the Church.

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 4-10.

Suggested Outline:

1. Journaling
  - a. Why is church important? Why do YOU go to church?
  - b. What are some things that churches struggle with? What might WCAC struggle with?
2. In the Old Testament, going to church is how you worship God.
  - a. How does an average Joe worship?

*Simply put (and Jenn can elaborate a lot here), you'd first go buy your appropriate offering(s). Only men can enter the immediate Temple grounds. Women can only watch from a large balcony surrounding those grounds. The men will then present their sacrifices to the priests who will be the ones doing the actual offering. If you're average Joe, you can leave. The High Priest performs important sacrifices for the sins of the people once a year. Only he can enter the "inner sanctum" of the Temple, known as the Holy of Holies, where the actual Ark of the Covenant is kept.*

3. Check the Scripture reading for today.
  - a. How is Christ's command for us different? How is it the same?

*Notice that we're still to offer sacrifices to God, and that priests continue to be important among Christ's followers. The difference is what kind of sacrifices matter. For the ancient Israelites, buying the sacrificial animals is important. For us Christians, we're to sacrifice everything to God since everything really belongs to Him. By that, we don't mean burning everything you own including your clothes (please don't try this), but to be willing to give those up when needed. We're also to place our gifts and talents as offerings to God. For the discussion of priests, see 'c' below.*

- b. What does Christ mean by "living stones"?

*A few things important here. (1) St. Peter, who wrote this letter with the help of somebody, mentions that these living stones are rejected by the world, but chosen by God and precious to Him. These stones don't carry any value with them. Their value is imputed, or placed upon it. In other words, these stones are inherently worthless, but for some reason, God said, "Who said it's worthless? I think it's precious!" Thus, we are nobodies, but God considers us somebodies. (2) Stones are used for building foundations. Check out Japan's Himeji Castle, where the foundations are made purely out of stone. Today's skyscraper foundations are made of stone and cement! Here, Christ is talking about the Church as the spiritual house, which is built up with the members of Christ.*

- c. What does Christ mean by we being a "holy priesthood"?

*Check 4(a) below.*

4. What does it mean for us today?
  - a. Martin Luther's idea of "priesthood of all believers".
    - i. We all read the Bible and strive to understand God even more!

*In the 1500s, the only Church is the Roman Catholic Church. Since most people can't read, they rely on the priests (who can read) for their Biblical knowledge. Of course, if the priests are crooked or can't interpret the Bible correctly, then a lot of people are screwed. Luther's point is that in Youth Group, EVERYONE (including you guys) should know things like how to read the Bible correctly, how to think critically, etc., not just the pastor and*

counselors. So don't shy away from reading dense books like Systematic Theology. If you have questions, ask your discipleship mentor, Jenn, myself, or Pastor Ben!

ii. **We confront each other with struggles!**

*In the Roman Catholic Church, only the priest has the power to deal with sins. Luther says, "No—if you struggle with something, approach a Christian and deal with it together!" So if you see anyone in youth group struggling with, say, foul mouth, approach him/her and tell them it's not right!*

iii. **We spur each other on in Christ!**

*Nobody said being a Christian is easy. That's why we have each other (not just the pastors) to tell us to keep on going!*

Henry's final comments:

The Church is supposed to be united in Christ. On a small level (i.e. WCAC), we can't divide based on where we come from (Hong Kong, Taiwan, or born in the U.S.), or what we speak (Canto, Mandarin, or Chinglish). The danger with a Chinese church is that sometimes, little things like being Canto/Mandarin/ABC matter. It should NOT. Some of your parents lead excellent examples at WCAC on how to work together.

On a large level (i.e. worldwide), to divide based on denomination is theologically unbiblical, because that means the Church is not united. When people say 'Christian', they should not be thinking 'Roman Catholic', 'Orthodox', or 'Protestant'. However, this is the current state of our faith. We should, however, pray for and push for denominations to work together and see their similarities rather than how they differ. In my studying of Roman Catholic theology, I've found a lot of what we think of them turns out to be either false or something that we Protestants should adopt as part of our worship services.

And of course, the Church is chosen by Christ to preach the Gospel. That's why a great saint said, "Outside the Church, there is no salvation." A Church that does not care about reaching out is a dangerously dead church. So be a part of Missions! Join a short term missions trip! Help out with the Missions Conference! Pray for our missionaries!