

Its Not About Me

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[0 : 0 0] How many of y'all glad you came to church this morning? Would you slip your hand up? Yeah, awesome. Well, we're glad you're here too. Would you take your Bibles with me and turn to Ephesians, Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, the book of Ephesians.

We are gonna get through the first chapter today. We're not starting a new series on the book of Ephesians. We're just gonna stay in chapter one today, and in the future we'll be in other passages that have to do with the church, with us.

All right, so that is what we are doing every time we come here and we gather in this assembly, we are doing church.

If you have kids that normally be dismissed and you haven't done that yet, go ahead and send those kids off to children's church at this time. I believe that's four years old and under.

For children's church. All right, so Ephesians chapter one. This morning I'm reading from the English Standard Version. It should be very close to what you're reading. And let's get into it.

[1 : 1 0] Verse one, Ephesians one. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he's addressing the church in Ephesus. Now we know from the instruction all throughout Scripture in the New Testament, the Bible was not just written to its intended recipients at that moment.

It was written to all of us across all of time. It was God's love letter to mankind, God's instruction manual to mankind. And it is just as relevant to us today as it has ever been.

So we're gonna be studying throughout this passage and many more to follow over the next several weeks. What does it mean to be the church? We are the church. We call ourselves that.

It's out on our sign. We invite people to church. We say, I go to this church. And what does that mean? What does that entail? What exactly are we saying when we are saying that we are a church?

[2 : 1 4] So this is gonna be a study in practical theology. What is theology? It is the study of God, theos. It is a study of God. And so this is the practical side of theology, not just the academic side, not just the research side.

This is the actual everyday practical life application side of theology. This is the concept behind the sermon today and the series really.

We don't just go to church. We are the church. Would you say that with me now? We don't just go to church. We are the church.

We can do a better job than that. Here we go, ready? We don't just go to church. We are the church. Yes, we are. The church is not a building.

It is the bride of Christ. It is not just a place. It is a people. It's a gathering. It's an assembly. It's a called out body of believers.

- [3 : 16] So where do we get the word that we use for church? It comes from the biblical word, the Greek word, ekklesia. How many of you guys can read Greek?
- I figure there might be a couple people in here who could. You just never know. That's all right. There's the Greek version up there. And then you can see the English lettering below. Ekklesia. It means an assembly, a congregation, a gathering.
- This word would have been normal and understandable to those back in the day that it was written thousands of years ago. However, for us today, we understand it as a meeting together, a gathering together, an assembling of people.
- It's a congregation. So we are the church. The doctrine of the church is called ecclesiology. That's where we get that word from, ecclesiology, from the biblical word, ekklesia. Ekklesia. So it is the doctrine of that gathering, that assembling of believers in Jesus.
- We're going to be in Ephesians 1. And I had my new King James, and then I left it at home, so I grabbed my English standard. That was my backup in my office.
- [4 : 23] So that's what we're doing today. That's all right. So let's look at verses. Jump down. Tell you what, we'll just read it. We left off in verse 2. Let's pick it up in verse 3.
- We're going to pay special attention to verses 4 and 5. Verse 3, Ephesians 1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.
- Verse 5. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will. So we see in verses 4 and 5, God chooses us.
- So the idea here is it's not about us, it's about God. We didn't merit God's grace and favor by some amazing feat that we performed or some sinlessness that we achieved.
- There is nothing like that. God chose us. We can't earn God's grace. There's nothing good enough that any of you or I could ever do to merit or earn the grace of God.
- [5 : 37] God chooses us. So let's jump back to verse 3. We'll see it in just a second here. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.
- Okay, now jump down to verse 7. We left off in 5, didn't we? Let's read 6, then we'll get to 7 and 8. Here we go.
- Verse 6. To the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. Now verse 7. Here we go. In Him, in Christ, in Jesus, in Him we have redemption through His blood.
- The forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. Verse 8. Which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.
- So the truth we're drawing from this is God freely gives to us. God chooses us and He freely gives to us. We couldn't earn His grace and we can't earn His favor.
- [6 : 43] We can't earn His blessings. We can't earn God's gifts to us. We couldn't earn the free gift of salvation which He offered to us.
- And we can't earn all the grace that He lavishes on us day in and day out. We can't earn His favor. Now verse 9. Making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on the earth.
- In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, not ours.

You catch that? He works all things according to the counsel of His will. He doesn't need to consult us on what to do. He's got it all figured out. He's got His will set, determined, before the foundation of the world.

And that's what He works things according to that purpose. Now verse 12. So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

[8 : 06] Verse 13. In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Check this one out. God saves us for His glory. We have no bragging rights. God redeems us, saves us, grants us that saving grace, that washing of our sins by His blood.

And friend, if you're sitting here this morning and you're not sure what I'm talking about, you need to get sure before you leave today. You need to come down, talk to us after the service, come talk, I will stop everything else I'm doing and talk to you about how God can save you, how God can forgive you, how He can redeem you.

That is step number one. And nothing else matters. All the songs, all the building, all the everything we do in church doesn't matter if you are not born again, the Bible says.

Saved. Becoming a child of God. That is number one. Or else everything else. is just distracting from that. Everything else is pretending that that's who you are and you're really not.

[9 : 27] So that is the most important step. And God saves us for His glory. He does it to glorify Himself. Jesus said, I glorify the Father.

The Father has glorified me and I glorify the Father. You and I have no bragging rights. There's nothing that we could do to earn God's favor.

Look over in chapter 2 and verse 8 real quick. Cross the page, chapter 2 and verse 8. By grace, you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God. Not of works. Not a result of works. So that no one may, what's that word? Boast. There's no boasting.

There's no bragging rights. Look at me. I'm a child of God. Well, that makes me wonder if you are. Because a child of God would understand that He didn't do anything to become one.

[10 : 29] He was adopted. That process was born of God. It was carried through by God. And it will be sustained by God alone. Now, let's pick it up in verse 14.

Who is the guarantee, the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory? Verse 15. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of His great might.

God works through us. You and I have no boastworthy accomplishments. There's nothing that we can boast in that we accomplish for God.

He does it all through us. That's why He gets the glory. In all things, He is to have the preeminence all throughout our lives.

[11 : 53] Pick it up in verse 20. The working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church.

Did you catch that? He put all things under His feet and gave Him, Jesus, as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Verses 20 through 23, the end of this chapter, teach us God is the head of all things in the church. He is the head of the church. He is the head of everything that's in the church.

He is the head of everyone in the church, everything else is under His feet. He is the head of the church. It's not about you and it's not about me.

[13 : 04] So that is the lesson for today. The church is not about me. The church is not about me.

Would you join me if you're able to in saying that with me ready? The church is not about me. Now we can say that and we might believe that, we might want to believe that, but sometimes it's hard to live that way.

We are the church, but the church is not about us. If you're taking notes this morning, jot this down if you would. My primary role in the church is to glorify God.

My primary role in the church is to glorify God. Back in Ephesians chapter 1, we read it a moment ago in verse 12. I like how the Revised Standard Version reads this.

They're all good. Sometimes the phrasing is just slightly different and I love how clear this makes it. Verse 12, we who had first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory.

[14 : 15] That's because the church is not about me. My primary purpose in this church and on this earth is to glorify God. Now this is a Baptist church, right?

The Baptists, our creed is the Bible. Our only creed is the Bible. Our only, you know, thing that we build our lives around, our foundation of all of our lives is the Bible.

There are other churches and denominations that will adopt confessions or creeds that take the Bible and kind of put it in their words and we say, this is what we hold to. And that's fine. I'm not judging them for that.

Actually, sometimes those can be very helpful summaries of biblical beliefs. And one of the most effective ones and long-standing ones is the Westminster Shorter Catechism and it says, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. You got to smile when you say that because you can't enjoy God. There's nothing wrong with that.

[15 : 21] Sometimes when you meet Christians who have been Christians for a long time, many, many years and decades and it just seems like they have a perennial frown on their face. Like, man, have you been enjoying God all that time?

Maybe you've been missing your chief end. Maybe you haven't been enjoying God as much because you haven't been glorifying God as much. So that is my primary purpose in this church is to glorify God.

Number two, I glorify God the most when I glorify me the least. That's a hard truth to accept, y'all.

We want to make ourselves look good. We put on our best clothes. We take a bath every once in a while or a shower. Those are more effective sometimes.

We put on smell good, you know. We try to wash our clothes and iron them and look good. Today, I wore waiters in the baptistry for the first time.

[16 : 28] These other baptisms that have happened, I brought a change of clothes. That's why it takes me so long to get back out here because I changed clothes and changed back into all the full suit and everything.

And I went out and got some waiters and so I wore those in and I forgot that the waiters don't cover your arm. So I'm thinking, man, I don't have to get undressed, you know.

I'm just going to put my waiters on and here we go. And you can't really see it but let me just tell you, this entire side of me is soaked from the waist up.

So I thought I would just come clean. Shane and Kadron, you know, they were back there with me and they're just trying not to laugh and be nice. Coming clean. Here we go. But you know, I was trying to show y'all look like I had it all together.

It's like if I keep my coat button then nobody will see. My shirt is wet. We try to put on the best version of ourselves. We try to present ourselves the best possible way and that's just how we are and there's nothing wrong with that.

[17 : 35] But listen, there's got to be a mind shift for God's people that says, I glorify God the most when I glorify me the least.

How do we know that? Is that in the Bible? Well, yes it is. John chapter 3 in verse 30. He must increase, I must decrease. Where's Harlan? Is Harlan in here?

There you go. What time is it? There we go. Some of them were a little shy but yeah, Harlan started teaching them that at VBS, Vacation Bible School and he said, what time is it?

And the kid would say, John 3, 30. He must increase, I must decrease. He's got them down with that. Austin does it sometimes. The other day, I was actually asking what time it was and Austin just busts out, he must increase, I must decrease.

John 3, 30. I was like, that's great man, but what time is it? I need to know what time it is. Anyway, that is a biblical concept. We glorify God the most when we glorify ourselves the least.

[18 : 39] Verse 31, the one who comes from above is above all. Do you sense a theme here? A trend? God is above everything in the church. He is above everything, everywhere, all people, each one of us.

God is above. He must increase, but I must decrease. The one who is from the earth is earthly.

That's us. That was John the Baptist. Speaks in earthly terms. That's all the prophets. That's all the great people that we read about in Scripture, all the heroes of the Bible, and that's you and me.

We are earthly. We speak. We think. We act in earthly terms, but the one who comes from heaven acts in heavenly terms, speaks in heavenly terms.

He is above it all, but he didn't just stay in heaven. He came down. He was born as a baby.

[19 : 41] He grew up. He went through all of the difficulty of life that you and I do. He went through all the temptation, all the struggle. He subjected himself to this sinful world, and yet he did it without sin.

He maintained his deity. He maintained his Godhead, but he took on flesh, humbled himself, became a servant, and set that as the example for us to do, to humble ourselves, to become a servant, to understand it's not about me.

It's about God. So we are the church. My primary role in this church is to glorify God. Glorify God the most when I glorify myself the least.

And then number three, I cannot glorify God if I'm holding a grudge. I can't glorify God if I'm holding a grudge because then God ceases to be God.

I'm allowing something else to take precedence over God in my life. So I cannot glorify God if I'm holding a grudge against someone else.

[20 : 58] God is forgiveness. God is all about forgiveness. He forgave the worst of us. He forgave the best of us who are actually the worst.

There is no one who is good. There is no one who is perfect. There is no one who is sinless. And God forgave all of it. So we have no excuse to hold a grudge and say, I won't forgive.

Romans chapter 15 deals with this. Romans 15 verses 5 and 6. Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another according to Christ Jesus.

Live in harmony with one another according to Christ Jesus. God can grant us the ability to do that. Verse 6. So that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.

Is God glorified if His people come here and lift their voices together and sing songs of praise to God together and then walk out these doors and fight and bicker and talk about each other behind our backs and run each other down.

[22 : 09] Can God be glorified? Because we're not of one mind and one voice. We might seem like we are when we're all gathered here in the sanctuary.

But when we walk out the world will see if we're glorifying God living in harmony with one another. So I cannot glorify God if I give if I hold a grudge.

Proverbs chapter 19 gives the entire book of Proverbs gives life advice to us and this is a particularly applicable one to this point. A person's insight gives him patience and his virtue is to overlook an offense.

It is a virtue to overlook an offense. God knows offenses will happen. You will get offended. Others will offend you and guess what?

You will offend others. You will offend others. And we always love when someone overlooks our offense. But it's hard for us to overlook others.

[23 : 22] Is that not right? But that shows your insight into God. That shows your insight your connection to the heart of God when we're patient with each other.

When we overlook an offense. Not everything has to get dealt with. Not every wrong has to get righted. Jesus took every wrong on himself.

And he didn't come with the hammer of justice and beat back the Romans who were oppressing his people. He didn't come and fix every injustice that had happened in this world.

But he paid the price for all the sin for all of us. because we're all equally bad. Maybe you and I haven't killed somebody like somebody else has.

Maybe we haven't taken advantage of a minor or someone who is defenseless. There are certainly degrees to sin in how bad they are. But the truth is it's all bad and it's all earning the same punishment.

[24 : 34] Which is eternal death in the lake of fire we call hell. God takes sin seriously. So seriously Jesus had to die for it.

He gave his own life. Who are we to say I won't forgive that sin. That sin that Jesus died for that sin that Jesus shed his life blood for cried out.

I love what Cajun said in the baptism that Jesus looked at his father and said my God why have you forsaken me? The torment the anguish that our Savior endured for that sin that's got you hung up.

Can't forgive it. Can't glorify God until we forgive it. You didn't think you'd see Buddy Hackett in church did you? Younger people don't worry about it.

He said don't carry a grudge while you're out carrying the grudge the other guy's out there dancing. There is a lot of truth to that isn't there? Sometimes we can carry a grudge for months for years for decades and the other person has long forgot it.

[25 : 48] The only person that's hurting at that point is us. But you know what there's more to that. The only person that's hurting is us and those we interact with those who love us those who care about us those who want to help it's affecting more and more ripples around us when we carry a grudge.

John Stott is one of my personal favorite theologians and he wrote this book called Basic Christianity and I like his application of it maybe a little bit better than Buddy Hackett's. He says most quarrels are due to a misunderstanding and the misunderstanding is due to our failure to appreciate the other person's point of view.

It is more natural to us to talk than to listen to argue than to submit. Many conflicts could be resolved if both sides first examine themselves critically and then examine the other side charitably.

Did you catch the difference there? Examine ourselves critically and then examine the other side charitably rather than our normal practice of being charitable to ourselves and critical of others.

Our outlook is one-sided. We exaggerate the virtues in ourselves and the vices in others. So my primary role in the church is to glorify God.

[27 : 08] I glorify God the most when I glorify me the least and I cannot glorify God if I hold a grudge. What are the takeaways?

Church is about God it's not about me. The church is for us. We identify as the church but it's not about us.

We are not to receive the glory. It is not established to promote us. It is not established to make us look good in this community.

it's not established for us to feel good about ourselves. The church is about God not me. I wrote down some thoughts and I want to share them with you before we leave.

the church is not a social club.

[28 : 18] The church is not a country club. The church is not a book club or a fan club or a secret club definitely not a night club and it's not a trophy club.

The church is a blood bought called out sanctified living breathing body of born again believers in Jesus who are set apart to love God to seek truth and to serve people by spreading the good news of salvation by God's grace through our faith.

We give them the gospel we baptize them we remember Christ's sacrifice at the Lord's supper and we teach them to follow Jesus according to the whole counsel of the word of God.

That's what the church is and the gates of hell will not prevail against it and if your idea of church doesn't fit that then I'm sorry but you've got the wrong idea of church it's not about you it's never been about you and it will never be about you it's always going to be about him in all things he gets the preeminence we get that from Colossians 1:18 which says Jesus is the head of the body the head of the church in everything he might be preeminent you want to know why you're unhappy why you're unsatisfied why you keep getting bent out of shape why people keep getting under your skin it's because you're flipped upside down God is not God is not in first place when it comes to your pet peeve your golden calf so to speak you've got your favorite pew your favorite class your favorite teacher your favorite song and nobody better mess with that or you'll make sure they know that they messed up aren't you just God's gift to God's people what on earth would this church do without you

I'll tell you what it might do it might grow the Holy Spirit might take over and have room to work if your spirit of pride and contentiousness ever got out of the way long enough for God to do something this goes for me and it goes for you every one of us it's not about us finally you know why the church isn't about you because your name can't break an addiction but the name of Jesus can your name can't put a family back together but the name of Jesus can your name can't forgive sins your name can't banish demons your name can't heal your name can't liberate your name can't wash me clean but the name of Jesus can to him who is able to do far more abundantly and beyond everything that we could ask or think to him be all the glory in the church forever and ever amen that's Ephesians chapter 3 and verses 20 and 21 church church is not about you it's not about me it's always about Jesus the leadership answers to God not you not even me the leadership answers to Jesus this church is accountable to congregation but we will answer to God someday for what we did with our leadership of this church so what are the takeaways my spirit will either help or harm

[32 : 09] God's work in his church my spirit will either help or harm God's work in his church would you bow your heads with me please quietly I'm going to ask these questions as our heads are bowed this is getting down to the nitty gritty of our everyday life here would you ask yourself with your head bowed would you silently in your own head ask yourself this question is my spirit helping or harming First Baptist Church of Henrietta we got visitors here this morning and I don't expect you to be able to answer that question right this moment but for our regular attenders and members I'd like to ask you that is your spirit helping or harming First Baptist Church the church is not about me it's not about you it's about Jesus am I glorifying God is there anything I'm doing that's bringing glory to God or am I glorifying myself am I scratching my itches am I making sure that everything is exactly as I want it and the minute it starts to get out of shape or something that I don't like

I'm going to fight tooth and nail to get it back to how I think it ought to be guys we can't have that if everybody started acting in that way we would be a church of nothing but strife contentiousness constant arguments and we're not that I thank God that we are not that kind of church but this is a continual reminder it is a continual struggle to say he must increase I must decrease the church is not about me it's about Jesus maybe you're here this morning and you don't know for sure that you are God's child you're in church we're grateful for that but you say I've never taken the step to put all my faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins for God to save me if that's you would you slip your hand up now no one's looking around but I'd like to pray for you thank you you can put your hands down let me ask this question how many of you would say

God is working on my heart and I need prayer about something it might be because I've been contentious I've been trying to make it about me and I know it's about Jesus it might be something else but would you slip your hand up now say I need prayer thank you guys all around the room would you put your hands down God you know every man and woman who raised their hand here today you know what's going on in their hearts you know you know intimately what's going on in every heart but Lord I pray specifically for the people that raised their hands that one they would be open and sensitive to the leading of your spirit in their heart and life that you would make them vessels of mercy vessels of your power that you would remind every man woman child in this room our primary goal is to bring glory to you to bring honor to you to praise you with our lives and that's got to happen in this church help us to set ourselves our preferences everything else aside and remember that as long as you are being lifted up that's what's most important it's in

Jesus name we pray amen on love that as long so ifodus and you then or