

SERMON GUIDE

Ecclesia: Created for Fellowship

Genesis 3:8



SERMON NOTES

The word Ecclesia is the Greek word for church. In this series, we will study what God's design for the church is. Why is this necessary and needed? Because we live in a time when not only do unbelievers not understand God's design for the church, the sad reality is that most believers don't either. We swim in the waters of expressive individualism. It is the air we breathe. What that means is that we see the entire world through the lenses of ourselves. We are the main character in the show and everyone else is an extra.

The Enlightenment period of the 1500s and beyond really brought about this massive change in the world. Most people are born, live, and die and never travel beyond 16 miles of their homes. They learned the trades and skills of the parents, attended the church in their community, and married who their parents connected them to. Before the advent of expressive individualism, you didn't see yourself through the lenses of "me" and what I want. You belonged to a community, to a family. It wasn't about pursuing your dreams or aspirations but doing your duty as one part of a greater whole. But the Enlightenment changed all that. Rather than being held down by anchors external to us: family, the church, God's Word, people started following their internal desires and jettisoned the external anchors. Now we live life on our terms, seeking our dreams, following our own hearts, creating our own truth.

This is the air of 21st century Western civilization. We breathed daily without realizing it. And while many Christians recognize that as believers, we are called to deny ourselves and follow Christ, no longer making ourselves the anchors, there are still remnants where this thinking exists in our lives. And one of the biggest, even for Christians, is how they see and understand their relationship, commitment, and duties to the church. Most Christians view "the church" as a place to consume spiritual goods and services. It's about how the church is serving me. There's no true commitment to a church. Everyone sees themselves as free agents. I'll jump around churches until it suits all my expectations. This church is raising money? I'll leave. This church called out my sin? I'll leave. This church doesn't let me sing? I'll leave. This church is growing and getting too crowded? I'll leave. This church believes this thing over here differently than I do? I'll leave. Now listen, I'm not saying there's no reason to leave a church. We'll discuss all that in this series. My point is that we see ourselves as free

agents able to bounce around wherever we want. This was not God's design. So we need a recovery of a biblical understanding of the church, not a Western or American understanding of the church.

So the first thing we're going to hit today in this series actually takes us up to a 30,000 feet view to look at how we are created by God for fellowship.

Exposition

Genesis 3:8 – And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Adam and Eve hear the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. There is familiarity here with God's presence that they have. This is fascinating to think about. Prior to the creation of Eve, Adam knew fellowship with God because God approaches Adam with a job of naming all the animals. He had also instructed him on the rules of the garden and commissioned him to work it. Then after the creation of Eve (because it's not good for the man to be alone), we see there was fellowship with God in the garden with both of them. Take inventory here: mankind has perfect fellowship with God and one another. But then sin enters the world through their rebellion and disobedience to God. This gets them expelled from the garden and from the fellowship with God that they were made for. Mankind's fellowship with God is wrecked and so is mankind's fellowship with one another (Cain kills Abel).

This is a key theme from Scripture to understand: mankind is created for fellowship with God and each other. We are made by Him and for Him. But sin severs the relationship with God. It creates enmity, strife. Now this is really important to grasp about the biblical storyline. God comes to Abram in Genesis 12 and establishes a covenant with Him. God is entering a covenant relationship with Abraham and will give him offspring that will form His covenant people. These people became known as Israel. From Israel, the promise of a Messiah or Savior is given. This Redeemer will save Israel from their sins, but He will also redeem a people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. The Gentiles of the world can be reconciled to fellowship with God through this Savior. And that is the story of Jesus. The Gospels tell the story of Jesus' entry into the world, His sinless life. His sacrificial death, and His resurrection. Through trust and faith in Jesus, mankind can be saved. Mankind can know fellowship with God through Christ.

This fellowship with God is a relationship with Him. We speak to God through prayer. We hear from God through His Word, through His providence, and through His people. God is not an abstract idea or “force.” The Triune God can be known. The Father is a Person. The Son is a Person. The Holy Spirit is a person. And the yearning and desire of the human heart to know God and be known by Him. Even the person who denies this is attempting to plug this hole in their heart and life with other things: sex, money, status, achievements, and other things. I’m talking about knowing on two levels: mind and experience.

Now here's the key: Christ restores people to fellowship with God and one another. The church are the redeemed people. The true people of the covenant promise. Saved from our sins individually but saved into a body corporately. We join a people. These people are the people Christ has promised His peace, His help, His sustaining power, and His presence. We are individually given these promises, but we are given these promises as a people. The letters of Paul you read are written to churches. Jesus addresses churches in Revelation. There is an expectation that Jesus' people not just "go to church," but are identified as His corporate people. It is to His people that He has promised His presence. Where two or three are gathered in His name, He is among us (Matthew 18:20).

Being saved by Christ restores fellowship and community with God. We are reconciled and redeemed as individuals, but we are immediately joined to a body of people called the church. And it is the church that is called Jesus' bride. We are united to Him. We are branches that individually and collectively abide in Him as the true vine (John 15:1-5).

These people, saved by grace and redeemed by Christ, were given a name: the church. Ecclesia. We are the gathered people of God. We are born-again and made new. There are many reasons for this that we'll explore in this series. But the community we were created for, with God and one another, finds fulfillment in Christ and His Church. The people of God belong to Him and one another. We need community and while we can and should have friends outside the church. There is an important aspect of biblical community that many miss. It is in community, with our gifts, that we disciple one another to grow in holiness and Christlikeness.

Close

In 1674, a pastor in the Netherlands during the Reformation wrote a devotional book where he used a phrase that became a motto since then: *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*. It is Latin for: the church reformed, always reforming. What is meant by this statement? Well, the Protestant Reformation sought to recover the truths of the Bible and Christian faith that had been distorted over centuries of false teaching. The 5 Solas were developed as pillars of doctrinal distinction over and against the prevailing teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther and the Reformers sought to reform the church. They wanted to correct the church and call it back to true doctrine. Reformed faith became shorthand for Protestant doctrine. The "church reformed" refers to true doctrine and "always reforming" highlights the need to keep going back to the Scriptures to make sure we are walking on the path God has revealed instead of following our own ways.

The church in America today is in need of *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*. But this ultimately comes down to our own hearts as well. The people of God need a recovery of biblical doctrine and to have our minds and lives transformed and reformed in alignment with truth. My prayer for this series is we would align ourselves with God's purposes for His church and people. And perhaps we would start this year off with a heartfelt desire to our own fellowship with God and others draw closer. It's what we're made for.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read Genesis 3:8 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
 - Additional Scripture

- Psalm 42:1-2
 - Psalm 63:1
 - Matthew 18:15-20
 - John 15:1-5
 - Acts 2:42-47
 - Hebrews 10:15-25
 - Revelation 21:3
- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
 - What did this teach you about God?
 - What did this teach you about man?
 - What did this teach you about salvation?
- **DISCUSS**
 - Why is it necessary to understand God’s design for fellowship in today’s world?
 - How have social and cultural movements affected our view of fellowship?
 - What does the passage reveal about sin’s effect on fellowship?
 - What role does the church play in the life of the believer?
 - What role do covenants play in Christian fellowship?
 - What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?
- **MEMORIZE**
 - **Hebrews 10:24-25 – *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***



- **BUILD UP:** How will you be built up this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
 - **Life Groups** are a time and place to connect and learn to better follow Jesus together while abiding in Him. Life Groups are the primary means of disciple-making at TJC. Our groups focus on connecting, learning, following, and abiding. Groups meet weekly on various days/times across Wilson County. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** How do you plan to be sent out to engage the world around you? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
 - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
 - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
 - **Pray for our staff:** Hunter Christian (Young Adult Director)
 - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
 - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons

- The Grays
- The Starks
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>