

# Upright Woman



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## Introduction to the Church

by Carlie Bond



The words of Jesus echo through the ages, “on this rock I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18). We know many things about this church Jesus promised to build upon the foundation of His Own Deity. We know that it would be purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), that it would wear His name (Romans 16:16), that it would be under His headship (Ephesians 1:22), and that while it would be greatly persecuted (Acts 8:1), it would ultimately be indestructible (Matthew 16:18). Many think of the church of Christ as just another institution with a brick and mortar location. In the minds of many it is a place we go to worship God and to socialize with others. The common theory of church membership is that, after you’ve tried out a few, you find one that feels like your “church home” and suddenly you’re a member of the club! However, the Bible provides a very different concept of the church.

The Scriptures do not present the church as an organization we join, but as an assembly to which we are added (Acts 2:47). The gospel of Jesus Christ calls people out of darkness and sin and invites us to be united with Jesus and with all others who are united with Him (1 Peter 2:9). This unified body is made up of people who have heard about Jesus’ death on the cross, His burial and His miraculous resurrection (Romans 10:17), believed that glorious message (John 8:24), repented of their life of sin (Luke 13:3), confessed the Deity of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:37), and submitted to baptism (Acts 2:38). The church, which was purchased with the blood of Christ, is made up of those who have been washed in Jesus’ blood (Revelation 1:5). If I were to introduce you to the church, I would simply direct you to Christians because we are the church of Christ!

Jesus often painted word pictures to aid us in understanding spiritual concepts. He presented Himself as the door to teach us that access to God is only through Him (John 10:5-7).

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He described Himself as the bread of life so that we would understand that He sustains us (John 6:48). He declared that He is the way, the truth and the life to eliminate any thoughts that there could be multiple paths to heaven (John 14:6). Jesus also once pictured Himself as a vine with many branches:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (John 15:5-8)

The image of the vine with fruit laden branches extending in all directions is a beautiful picture of Jesus and His church! You see, the church is not composed of people who are connected to a religious organization that claims a connection to Christ. The Bible tells us that the church is made up of individual Christians who are connected to Christ! It is our connection to Him that keeps us from living dried up, fruitless, wasted lives. It is our connection to Him that enables us to be united with each other as a body. And it is only our connection to Jesus Christ that enables us to glorify God!

Many Scriptures provide us insight into God's purpose for His church, but none so concisely as the Epistle to the Ephesians. Right off the bat, the Holy Spirit establishes that the salvation in Christ and His church was part of God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 1:4). This letter alerts us to the fact that God focused His grace, love and mercy toward us because He desired to bring us into "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" with the express purpose of showing the greatness of His grace and kindness! It is the eternal purpose of God that His church bring Him glory (Ephesians 3:21). The purpose of the church then is not to satisfy the felt needs of its membership, promote social justice in the community, or facilitate social interaction! As the body of Christ, all efforts, plans and programs must be sifted through the filter of the lofty purpose of bringing glory to God. All religious bodies must be sifted in the same manner. God's glory is not set on display simply by religious practices or talk (Matthew 7:22-23). Only those who do His will demonstrate His glory!

In the midst of the abundant confusion offered up by various religious groups about the church, God's Word provides us a beautifully clear picture of a spiritual body, Christ's church, which is characterized by fervent love (John 13:35), sincere worship (John 4:23-24), abundant generosity (2 Corinthians 8:3-5), and such a heartfelt devotion to Jehovah God that we strive to keep His commandments (John 15:14, 1 John 5:3). Have you been added to Jesus' church?

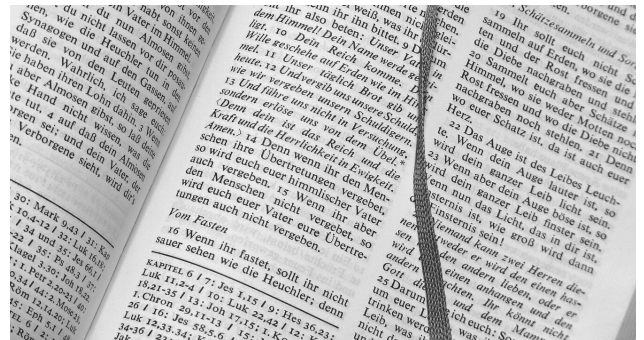
## Blessings of the Church

by Grace Cox

For weeks I have pondered how to write this article. I have questioned how to convey the blessings of the Church. I asked myself, "how would I tell people about the blessings of the Church as someone who has been outside of it?" Then, I realized I needed to show you instead.

Imagine with me for a minute; you are going to a woman's retreat, an event which typically sparks excitement and the joy of seeing, meeting, and connecting with sweet sisters in Christ. Instead, all you feel is nervous. You walk in through the front doors of the retreat to be greeted by a sea of people, all avoiding eye contact. You sign in and sit down, and unless you came with a group of people you already knew, you will be alone this weekend. No one there knows your name, and no one cares to.

Imagine going to a congregation and asking every member what they believed was essential for salvation, only to get a different answer from every person.



No one knows what they believe or why they believe it, and if you ask your elders questions, you will only receive questions with "I think..." and out-of-context verses. You would not have to imagine any of this if you were outside the Church and attending a denomination; it would be a reality.

The Church is undeniably special and unique, but why? What separates the Lord's Church from other denominational congregations? As people in the Lord's Church, we are blessed with so many things, we are blessed to have a common goal, we are blessed with edification and fellowship, but most importantly, we are blessed to be in Christ.

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## "Every day is a good day to be a member of the Lord's church!"

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The Church has a common goal. We all want to glorify and obey God in our lives, from saving souls and keeping souls saved to following the pattern shown in Scripture. We have the ability to know what we believe and why we believe it. We are blessed to be one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-14); a healthy body does not fight against itself; instead, every part works in perfect harmony together. The Church is special in how we are one with Christ as our head (Ephesians 1:22,23). While the world is in disunity, constantly fighting and hating one another, we are called to something greater as the Church.

Philippians 2:1-2 reads, "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

Notice some of these phrases, "in Christ," "like-minded," "same love," "one accord," and "one mind." All these phrases describe the Church. Of course, we are still humans who struggle from time to time, but ultimately, we are one, working towards a common goal, and this Christ-like attitude should be shown every day in the Church.

Edification and fellowship are two more blessings of the Church. Philippians chapter two continues in verses three and four to state, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." The world should know we are Christians by our love for people within and outside of the Church (John 13:35). Christians build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13), we show the love to one another Christ has shown us (Ephesians 4:32), and we encourage one another towards good works (Hebrews 10:24).

After three years of being a Christian, I have picked up on how some people who have grown up in the Church have no idea how blessed we are, and even I find myself becoming forgetful of how beautiful the bride of Christ is sometimes. Where else can one go on this earth to find the forgiveness, relationships, encouragement, forbearance, and support we find within the Church? It is the loneliest thing to walk through life without people surrounding you who love you and share a common goal.

What would you do if you were not a member of the Church and tragedy struck? Where would you go for encouragement, prayers, and support? One of the greatest blessings of the Church is the Church; there is a reason Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 reads, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls. For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

It is harder to get up from a fall alone. It is harder to keep warm alone. It is harder to win a fight alone.

Every day is a good day to be a member of the Lord's Church. The greatest blessing of being in the Church is being the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-9). Ephesians 5:25 is a beautiful passage, showing the love which ought to be between spouses and the love Christ has for His Church, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." What a beautiful privilege it is to be in Lord's Church. We are blessed with so many things—a common goal, edification, and fellowship, but most importantly, we are blessed to be in Christ.

# Getting to Know...

By: Carol Tisdale

## Amy Duhon

If you have not personally met our sister Amy Duhon – what are you waiting for!! Her face lights up our entire building and her sweet, friendly nature is ever so endearing. Our congregation is blessed that Amy is part of our “family” and here are a few things she was eager to share about herself.

Amy was born and raised in Beaumont, Texas and has five siblings. She graduated from Westbrook High School and continued her education, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Studies, an Associate degree in Applied Science and then a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Texas State University.



To be an actress in Hollywood was her dream as a child but she says that dream obviously did not come true and she thanks God for that!! Amy grew up in the Catholic church and another of her childhood desires was to become a nun. Could she have possibly come up with two more polar opposite ambitions!?

Amy’s first job was at the Dairy Queen while she was working her way through undergraduate studies. She progressed from that job to teaching people from all parts of the globe, in Asia for two years. She loved instructing them syllable accent stress and phonetics in English. Her minor in Spanish has been valuable in every job she has held and being an ESL teacher overseas as well as here in the States has brought her great joy. Amy believes she has also learned so much from all the students that she has taught in the past. She now works for the City of Austin Housing Authority and ACC. Whew! What a busy girl she has been, and she hopes to someday teach on the other continents, as well as do missionary work in Africa and Latin America.

A wonderful sense of humor is an attribute Amy possesses and oh that smile!! When asked if she has any beloved pets she responded: “I like pets...IF they belong to someone else!” Her pet peeve is not having her cup of coffee due to boil water notices and power outages because of severe weather in Austin – and can’t we each identify with that!

And as far as her job is concerned Amy says she is very organized, but in her personal life she is “flying by the seat of her pants”. She is being brutally honest (and we might giggle and relate to this a bit), when she says she is struggling with avoiding profanity while driving in Austin and when her computer crashes.

Amy shares with us that the most relaxing times she has ever experienced were at the hot spas and Thai massage parlors on the South Korean peninsula in Busan and Goeje Island. She currently unwinds by watching Spanish and Korean dramas on Netflix. And her hobby is to explore the Texas Hill Country discovering new places such as parks, restaurants and coffee houses which are off the beaten path.

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What adventurous endeavors has Amy attempted? Setting out on her own, venturing out into overseas provinces by bus, ordering coffee and food from menus that were in the Hangeul script. Perhaps that led to her having once eaten a dead baby octopus in spicy red pepper sauce???? Yikes!

In October, 2011 Amy became a New Testament Christian. She had been Catholic but when she was having to navigate through the rules and regulations of Catholicism while planning funeral arrangements for her grandmother, she was “done” and knew she needed to make a change. She wishes now that she had discovered the power of prayer years ago. And that she had realized earlier how the blood of Jesus impacts her life every day and just how vital it is to study God’s Word every day.

Just as each one of us as christian women in today’s society, our Sister Amy has struggles. She is working on how to deal with reducing stress and anxiety. We can encourage and help her work on this and we can ask Amy to help us as well. Amy is also finding it a challenge to pull back from friends who are secular and who find that the new changes in her are “holding up a mirror to them”. “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.” I Peter 4:4. Amy shares, “My conviction has grown tremendously and I am beginning to analyze things like I have never done before. I’m learning that I cannot share experiences with, for instance, friends who I know from grad school.”

Scripture brings Amy comfort and reassurance of God’s power and love and she cherishes passages in Psalm 65 and 91 and her list is growing to include the encouragement from Psalm 119 and Romans 8:28 “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

**"Love one another with brotherly affection.**

**Outdo one another in showing honor."**

**Romans 12:10**

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# Combating the World's Perspective

by Phyllis Siebert

I was raised in the church of Christ from birth. I count this as an enormous blessing; however, it does limit my perspective when considering how the world views the church of Christ. I only know one view, mine. I must try to put myself outside looking in—and perhaps more importantly—listening.

Case in point, I was eight or nine years old and playing with my neighbors, a boy and girl, both a bit younger than myself. I cannot remember the entire conversation, but it came down to me telling them they really didn't love God because they didn't go to the church of Christ. That did not go over well at all! Their mother called my mother and, from that time on, I was not allowed to play with them if I was going to say such things. Was I wrong? Very! I had my truth down but no love, no kindness, and no understanding of their perception. My behavior wasn't seemly; I was doing no good works there, and God was not glorified (2 Peter 2:12 ASV). We were just kids, but is this conversation happening today between the church of Christ and the world?

What does the world, including the immediate community around the church building, see? Do they see a pretty building? Do they see lots of activities like picnics, VBS, camps, workshops, ladies' days, lectureships, etc.? Were they even invited? When there is a need in the community, do they see the body of Christ at work? They certainly see activity among the denominations! "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Does the world see divisions? Do they see a unified body of believers, or do they see a pixelated version of Christ—one with little squares of beliefs that seem similar but don't exactly mesh? Sadly, since the time of the Restoration Movement, there have arisen two divisions: the Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ. Currently there are more than 100 issues that divide the church of Christ alone. An online article from Faithfacts.org proposed a view of the church of Christ that was most unfavorable. The doctrine presented was undoubtedly false but, unfortunately, the view of the church was somewhat correct. It noted there are as many as two dozen different groups claiming to be under the authority of Christ. This is what the world sees: division, not unity. Walter Scott asked, "Are we theoretical to a hair-breadth?"

What does the world hear? Is the sound from the church of Christ at all attractive? Does the world hear bible truth and not opinions? "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Does the world hear love and concern for all mankind and not just our own members? Does the world hear back-biting and name-calling and bitterness in our brotherhood papers, articles, sermons, and debates? Sisters, this ought not to be so! "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6).

Remembering the once popular acronym, WWJD (What would Jesus do?), I ask WDJD "(What did Jesus do?) in His time here on earth. Jesus healed many on some 20-plus occasions recorded in the New Testament. Jesus fed some 9,000 people on two occasions. Jesus was the Master teacher. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). Jesus taught with authority: "...for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:29). Jesus was no respecter of persons, teaching the very people the Jewish society despised (Matthew 9:10-12). Jesus did all of this from a motivation of love (John 3:16).

Creating a worldview of the church of Christ comes down to three things: Truth, doubt, and kindness. Truth: Do we say, "Well I think..." or "We teach..." These are very dangerous phrases. We must present the gospel as the words of Jesus, not our own opinions. Doubt: Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), fills the world with doubt. He clouds the truth with the noise of false teaching to create division and subsequently keep souls from salvation. God wants the opposite: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). The truth is easy to know and understand: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). "For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33)

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Kindness: Kindness is critical to the delivery of the truth. Perhaps we need to counter the noise of false teaching with the sounds of kindness. Good deeds that glorify God. Presenting the Truth in love, not sugar-coating the gospel to make it more palatable but having compassion on those we are trying to reach. May we meet them where they are and move them toward Christ—not toward our version of a Christian. In showing kindness, may we be seen as patient and as reflecting the love of Christ toward us. “Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Colossians 3:12).

<https://www.faithfacts.org/world-religions-and-theology/church-of-christ>

## **A Timeless and Worldless Church**

by Lisa Kennedy

As Christians we plead that we desire to be like the church of the first century, yet it can be difficult to see the church outside of our 21st century eyes. Furthermore, we recognize the worldwide nature of the church, yet as Christians living in America, it can be difficult to see the church outside of an American context. However, God’s plan for His church was not one that only exists in 21st century America. The church has a much greater context and reach than our local congregations or even those we connect with personally through mission trips. The church is a timeless and worldwide institution created by God for the salvation of His people and His glorification (Ephesians 3:20-21).

As we consider the timeless nature of the church, we cannot neglect that even before the foundation of the church recorded in Acts 2, the church existed in prophecy. God declared His plan for the church long before the apostles were inspired to preach the gospel message to those men and women who would become the first Christians on the day of Pentecost. Daniel, through God’s mercy in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, detailed the coming kingdom that would be set up by God, that would never be destroyed, and that would stand forever (Daniel 2:44). Isaiah prophesied that in latter days the Lord’s house would be established and that all nations would flow to it (Isaiah 2:2-3). Joel described events that would take place on the day when the church was established (Joel 2:28-32).

Consideration of the church in prophecy not only highlights the timelessness of the church, but also the worldwide nature of the church. The prophecies of Isaiah and Joel clearly identified that the church would be for all, not some. Isaiah stated that “all nations would flow to the Lord’s house,” (Isaiah 2:2) and Joel stated that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Joel 2:32). The words “all” and “whoever” leave no one out. Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, even directly quotes from Joel 2 during his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). Other New Testament writings also emphasize that anyone can become a part of God’s kingdom if one submits to His will, no matter one’s gender, ethnicity, location, or station in life (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). It is truly a blessing that we can be a part of the church of Christ regardless of when or where we were born.

God provided everything that mankind would need for one not only to be a part of His church, but also to serve Him, worship Him, and teach others about Him when He gave mankind His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). When Peter wrote that God gave us everything that pertains to life and godliness, the blessing was not just for the first century Christians to whom he was inspired to write (2 Peter 1:1-3). God’s design for the church allows the church to exist and glorify His name throughout the world without the necessity of a human head or human organization. I have been blessed with the opportunity to gather with the Lord’s people, not only across the United States, but on three continents across the world. These congregations of God’s people, and the others like them, are able to obey His will because He provided His will in His Word and gave the church the perfect Head, Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23; Matthew 16:18).

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Because God has given all of the world the same inspired Word, everyone can walk by the same standard (Philippians 3:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, we can all be unified in speech, thought, and doctrine no matter our location, culture, or language (1 Corinthians 1:10). God's plan from the beginning was for the church to be the true melting pot that brought together people from different backgrounds into His perfect family (Romans 1:16). While one may know this from reading the Scriptures, being able to teach the Bible in South America, worship with the church in Singapore, hold a ladies' day in Malaysia, or conduct a personal study on a front porch in Jamaica cements the notion that the power of God's Word is not stopped by any manmade differences. The church prophesied and realized has been in existence for nearly 2000 years. The church of Christ should be the same the world over. This is the power of the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11).

The ability for mankind to read God's Word, follow it, and teach it no matter one's gender, language, ethnicity, or position provides an opportunity for unity across the world unlike any manmade institution. Christians, whether Malaysian, Filipino, Mexican, French, or American, choose to submit to God through His Word and live lives according to His standard. It does not matter that one Christian worships in English while another worships in Tagalog. It does not matter that one Christian lives as a faithful wife in a home without electricity while another lives as a faithful wife in a home with every modern convenience. It does not matter that one Christian is a man and another Christian is a woman. As Christians we are all one in Jesus, because He has made us all heirs (Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Peter 3:7). Truly the church is comprised of all nations under heaven from whoever will call on His name (Acts 2:21). Paul exhorted the Christians in Ephesus to "walk worthy of the calling of which you were called. . . endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and directed their minds that "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:1-6). As Christians, we can be united across the city, the state, the county, and the world because these things are still true today. It is certainly a blessing that God's gift of salvation in the church is available to all and that Christians can be united across the world.

## About Upright Woman

The Upright Woman publication is intended to educate, promote, and encourage the women of the church to strive for righteousness in every aspect of life. It is the mission of this publication to provide women an opportunity to study the word and share articles about various issues and topics to encourage us to be upright women in an upside down world.

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**"FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE LOVES RIGHTEOUS DEEDS; THE UPRIGHT SHALL BEHOLD HIS FACE." PSALM 11:7**

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We pray that, with every issue and with every article, all glory is given to God.

