

The Life Changer

Study Series

The Real Church

Most times when we hear the word church we think of an old building with faded icons on the walls and graves in the garden. But surprisingly, Jesus used the word “church” long before there existed a Christian building. In this lesson we explore the real meaning of the church. You may be surprised.



Lesson 14

① Q1. What was Abraham called to do? Read Genesis 12:1-3.

A. _____

The New Testament was written in Greek and the word often translated as “church” is the word “ekklesia.” This word comes from a verb that literally means, “to call forth.” In a very real sense Abraham’s experience of leaving his father’s land and “coming forth” illustrates what church is all about. Hebrews 11:8 says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not understanding where he was going.” Abraham had to trust God to provide him a new community. From Abraham’s seed, God promised to grow a special people that would be different from the nations around them.

The word “ekklesia” was used in the Old Testament Septuagint translation a few hundred years before Christ for the congregation of Israel. But this “ekklesia” expression gets expanded in several ways beyond that in the New Testament.

In the time of Jesus the word “ekklesia” came to be used for a congregation or community connected to the synagogue. However, as time passed and it became clearer that the nation of Israel would reject Him and God’s plan for the salvation of mankind, Jesus began using “ekklesia” as a term to describe a new community.

② Q2. What was Jesus’ new plan for expanding the kingdom of God? Read Matthew 16:18.

A. _____

Did you notice in Jesus’ words that He claims total ownership of the community. He says, “my church.” Secondly, we see that even hell itself would not be strong enough to fight against this new community of Jesus. In ancient times the government or ruling power was represented by the gate. An illustration of this is our very own Ottoman Empire

which referred to its own seat of government as Sublime Port, “the lofty gate.” Similarly when Jesus says “the gate of hell will not prevail against the church” He is really saying something like, “Satan’s rulership and the power of death will not overcome God’s people.” That’s good news.

Ⓚ Q3. Who are the constituents of the church? Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

A. _____

The church is the group of people who are saved from sin and are in a right relationship with God. This community of redeemed individuals find their commonality not in religious title, or ethnicity, nor even circumcision. Rather their unity is in explicit trust in the effectiveness of Jesus’ blood for qualifying them to meet God. The church is a community of those who are at peace with God, through trust in Jesus.

Ⓚ Q4. How did Jesus obtain the church? Read Acts 20:28.

A. _____



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



“I am just thankful he is still alive,” said Mehmet.

The day before, Fatma’s deceased husband’s brother Ekrem had been in a bad car accident and was hospitalized. A taxi driver speeding through a red light hit Ekrem while he was making a left turn. It hit his car with great force and spun his old Tofaş around, leaving the front right panel and door totally ruined. On the impact Ekrem’s head had hit his own door window and he went to the hospital for some stitches to his scalp and an examination.

“Yes,” Fatma said, “We must remember Ekrem and Filiz in our prayers. They say there may be some signs of brain trauma. If you

have time to visit them this week, I am sure they will appreciate it.”

Yusuf said, “Let’s give them some love!” Everyone remembered last week’s study and smiled at Yusuf’s zeal. “I mean we are a body right? So if Ekrem is hurting we all are hurting?” Ece put her hand on Yusuf’s hand.

Gül thoughtfully said, “Mom, could we read something I found in the Bible? It’s in James 5:14 and 15. Gül read loudly, “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.” Then she said, “Maybe we should send some people to lay hands on Ekrem and anoint him. What do you think?”

Mert pondered out loud, “Gül, it says, ‘Elders of the church.’ We are not a church.”

Mehmet said, “I am not sure if you can come to that conclusion quite so quickly.”

Afife listened to Mehmet and then threw up her hands and said with a bit of sarcasm, “Fatma, bring out the candles and bells!”

Fatma smiled, “We have something better than candles. Simple prayer. Thank you Gül for wanting to pray for Ekrem. Let’s pray together for our friend right now.” They knelt together and several of the group prayed with all earnestness for Ekrem.

When they finished, after sitting back in their seats, Fatma said, “Now I have a bit of good news. Reşat and Afife you weren’t here last Thursday, but I told the group last week that I ran into my customer who had given me the Fate Changer series we have loved so much. I asked her if she had anything more because we had finished all she had given me, and she said yes. So I have good news for you all tonight, new guided lesson topics! Tonight’s subject is on church.”

Then squinting her eyes and looking penetratingly at her daughter she said, “However, I am curious, did you you sneak a peek into this envelope of lessons and read ahead to find that text in James?” Gül smiled, she had been caught. “My girl, I may have to discipline you for cheating on these tests!” (To be Continued)

- ⑤ Q5. The word “church” is never used in Scripture as a building. Rather it is a group in harmony with one another. What made the “church” a harmonious group? In other words, what was the unifying point of the people that made them a “church?” Read Acts 2:46, 47.

A. _____

The word “church” was originally synonymous with the community of believers, but over time, the sense of unity, love and sharing lost it’s place to the tangible brick walls, stained glass and steeple, and other physical aspects of a church building. In the Bible, the word church always refers to a group of people, never to a physical building, which shows us that people filled with God’s Spirit are the real “church.”

We see two uses of the word "church" in the Bible: a) the church universal and b) the church local. There is also a use of the word that is not in the Bible: the church in the denominational sense.

What is the church universal? The universal church refers to all the genuine believers in Jesus Christ. They may be located in various denominations or may be quite invisible to others because they live in a place where to declare their faith openly would bring immediate death. They are hidden. The universal church is mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:15 which says, “But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” This text is referring to all the entire family of God, that is, all who have received the Spirit of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In addition to the universal church, we see local churches in Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 we see mention of the local church at Corinth, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” In a local church there may be true believers and false believers. A person can be baptized, they may have their names registered as church members and yet they have never truly believed in Christ or maybe after having believed they have forsaken Christ. Jesus described true believers as “wheat” and false believers as “tares” in one of His parables. In Mathew 13:30 Jesus said, “Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

In our day we see the Christian world divided into many denominations. We are confident that there are true believers in most, if not all of these denominations. They are part of the universal church of God. But one day, Jesus will gather all true believers together into one group. Jesus said, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Thus the universal church and the visible local churches and denominations are not the same. Not everyone in a church is a true believer.

② Q6. What will God accomplish through the church? Read Ephesians 3:10-11.

A. _____

The “love” of church members for one another and the life of faith by grace in the gospel is a testimony to all the universe that Satan is a liar. The church community is the strongest evidence that God’s laws, when obeyed, yield happiness. God’s wisdom is seen in the trusting relationships in the church that defy class, education, and race. In it’s

ideal, the church members love one another and selflessly serve each other. The church surmounts difficulties through faith and prayer together.

⑦ Q7. 1 Peter 2:9, 10 gives four unique descriptions of the members of the community of faith as well as a “mission statement.” What are the descriptions and what is the mission statement?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mission statement: _____

Why does it call the members of the community a “royal priesthood?” This language is taken from Exodus 19:6 which God Himself spoke after taking Israel out of Egypt. It says, “And all of you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” God wanted to rightly establish their new identity. No longer were they to think of themselves as slaves nor treat one another as such. Instead He gave them a royal identity and a spiritual identity. One of the privileges of a priest was to be “near to God.” That is your privilege now. Also priests had prayer work to do and the work of helping people be free from sin. No they couldn’t forgive people, but they did assist people in appropriating God’s forgiveness. Now this is also our work. Read Matthew 28:19, 20 and 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Abraham was called out to go to another land. According to 1 Peter 2:9, 10 what are we to come out of? That’s right, we are called out of darkness. True followers of Jesus are different; we have a heavenly vision. We do not attempt to blend in with the manners, behavior and customs of the those who are content with the fighting and perversions

of this earth. You have been called to obey the commands of Jesus and that fact alone makes you totally different from those around you.

As the church we should be a unique people who love our enemies and pray for them. We should consider it more blessed to give than to receive. We should put God first in everything we do, say, or feel. In our dealings with others, our behavior should be filled with humbleness and meekness. Everyday, our goal should be to become more Christ-like through the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work. In a world filled with money-hungry, fame-grabbing, materialistic souls, we should strive to be like Jesus in both word and deed. If we do these things we will be a unique people scattered all across the globe and worthy of being called 'Jesus' church' or 'body'.

❓ Q8. What activities did the early church do together? (The “early church” refers to those who lived soon after Jesus' resurrection). Read Acts 2:42-47 and 5:42.

A. _____

❓ Q9. Where did the church meet during this era? Read Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Colossians 4:15.

A. _____

❓ Q10. Where were the group of believers first called Christians? Read Acts 11:25, 26.

A. _____

Many tourists come to Turkey to see one of the “seven churches” mentioned in the book of Revelation. However, notice from this verse that the church was about ‘teaching.’ It wasn't a building so much as a seeking group. It was a group interested in learning and bound by a conviction that there was truth to be known and lived.

❓ Q11. How does the Bible say a church should choose leaders? Read

Acts 14:23.

A. _____

❓ Q12. What are the responsibilities of an elder? Read Acts 20:28, 29 and James 5:13-15.

A. _____

There are several words used for the leader of a church group. The titles “overseer” or “elder” are commonly used for the one given the leadership role in a group. Typically they are chosen because they have gifts of discernment and wisdom. Often that position is shared by a team of responsible men or women. The position of elder is not the only one we see described in the Scriptures. We also see someone who is called a deacon, and this term is given to helpers in the group who have gifts of service. We’ll look at several texts describing these functions.

❓ Q13. What are some of the qualities that a person should have in order to be an elder? Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

A. _____

An elder’s role is much like that of a shepherd. A shepherd both feeds and protects a flock. The elder’s role is to teach the Scriptures, to set an example in holiness, and help others to use their spiritual talents for service to God. We learn from the examples of Scripture that an elder carries a very important position that requires humility. They may serve people at times of sickness through prayer, and at times of personal grief or heartache. The elder’s role is to humbly lead the church community with love and wisdom. Ideally a group of elders work together as it is a spiritual safeguard against conceit and problems that come with individual power and control. The role of thoughtful correction and restorative discipline also come under the responsibility of the church’s elders.

The Apostle Paul (the author of the book called 1 Timothy) notes that

it is good for a believer to set an aim or aspire toward leadership in the church. However before becoming a leader a person must match up to certain qualifications in character, manner, and habit. The appointment of someone as an elder is a very serious calling and not to be taken lightly.

Another role in the church is that of deacon. In the book of Acts we are told that the deacons were godly men who were given the very practical duty of dividing up help for the poor widows in the church. Seven deacons were chosen at that time. You may wish to read the story in Acts 6:1-7.

② Q14. What are the qualifications for a deacon? Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

A. _____

The Kutsal Kitap translation of the Scriptures used the expression “kilise görevlisi.” Sometimes we use the word diakon from the Greek word diakonos which means servant or attendant. Even though the position is to serve in practical duties notice that almost all of the qualifications are spiritual and moral. The deacons not only serve in practical duties but they are examples of right character for the believers.

② Q15. Are the roles of elders or deacons paid positions? Read Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:1.

A. _____

In Scripture, the roles of elders and deacons are volunteer positions. These are roles that men and women have taken because of conviction of truth and noble aspirations of love for God. If a person proves himself of noble character and a church sees a man or women taking an inordinate amount of time in ministry tasks, the church body may vote to compensate some of the expenses of that person from offerings given by the local body. Read 1 Timothy 5:18, 19.

*Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)*

“So we are a church!” Mert said surprisingly.

“Well, at least we can say we are one in the making,” Mehmet agreed.

Türkan, the oldest member of the group, looked at everyone and said, “But we have no elder.”

The room was silent for a moment as everyone was mentally comparing the list of qualifications for deacons and elders to their own situation and those around the room. A hush fell over the room for a moment.

In the silence of her mind, Fatma, starting from her left scanned the whole room looking momentarily at each person and thinking about the qualifications of an elder from 1 Timothy they had just read. “Yusuf someday might be in that role,” she thought, “but he hasn’t even read completely through the Old Testament yet. He certainly fell into the ‘new convert’ category. Mert may also be an elder someday, but he was still young. Mehmet could be an elder. He was ‘able to teach’ and was ‘not given to drunkenness.’ His wife was certainly not a believer though.” Fatma looked at Reşat, “Yes, God will use this man. But he too needs humility, and his love for money could stand in his way from being a great man for God. And oh, how he must learn to discipline his children!” For a moment Fatma thought about Ekrem who was at that moment in the hospital. “Oh, if only he were more consistent. Certainly he would be a fine leader, with such strong character and a good heart, but he must apply himself to the Word of God with more earnestness. His casualness about our group will never do. Indeed we are a young group and have a lot of growing to do. None of us are even baptized yet! And nobody is perfect, certainly not me.”

Her thoughts were her own, and she offered them up in a second to God as a prayer. Then she smiled at the group, and laughed out loud and said, “Well praise God we have a church! Not a building, not a place, but a community of love.” She placed her arm around Yusuf.

Afife whispered kindly, “And Fatma you are our elder.” In many senses it was true.

That night after the study Mert and Yusuf were preparing for a university exam together in the privacy of Mert’s room. Mert said, “What did you think about the group study tonight?”

Yusuf looked up from his books, “When I read that description of a deacon I thought, that’s what I want to be.”

Mert smiled, “Me too!”

Yusuf recited the description from the Bible, “...men worthy of respect, sincere, not pursuing dishonest gain, and they must keep the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.”

Mert said with conviction, “Let’s strive together for that target, friend.” They clasped hands together, and then thought a moment about the path of prayer, Bible study, and service ahead. Mert said seriously, “You know Stephen was a deacon and they stoned him for his integrity. The one who speaks the truth is chased away from 9 villages.”

Yusuf replied, “Our first duty as deacon “want-to-be”s is to go visit Ekrem tomorrow and pray for him.”

Mert said, “Good idea friend. But let’s make that our second duty. Our first duty is to ask Jesus to make us worthy to be deacons. We need to be filled with the Spirit of Christ.”

Call to commitment through prayer.

RUHLAR DÜNYASINA YOLCULUK



"Kabul et Morneau, kendi kendinin efendisi değilsin. Keşke öyle olsaydın, ama değilsin. Ruhlar sana bütünüyle sahipler ve bunu ne kadar çabuk kabul edersen o kadar iyi durumda olacaksın." Roland hızlı zemini adımlamaya, ellerini ovuşturmaya başladı. "Sana söyleyeceğim şeyi kadim bir dostumdan ziyade bir düşmana söylemeyi tercih ederdim."

O esnada oda sıcak olmamasına rağmen çok fazla terliyordu. "Morneau, günlerin sayılı – seni efendiden uzaklaştırmaktan sorumlu olan o genç çiftin de öyle.

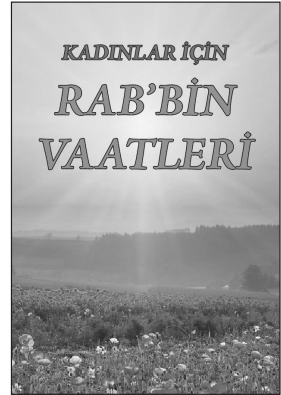
Benimle birlikte başrahibi görmeye gel. O, ruhların hoşnutluğunu yeniden kazanmanı sağlayacak ve her şey yoluna girecek. Böylece hiç kimse zarar görmeyecek."

İşte Roger Morneau'nun satanizmin dehşet verici dünyasından ilahî müdahaleyle kurtuluşunun öyküsü.

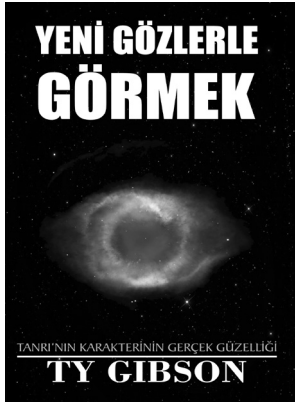
KADINLAR İÇİN RAB'BİN VAATLERİ

Tutulmayan sözler ailelerin dağılmasına, evliliklerin yıkılmasına, arkadaşlıkların bitmesine ve hayatların mahvolmasına neden oluyor. Fakat insanlığın verdiği sözleri tutamamalarının meydana getirdiği kargaşa içerisinde, sözünü kesin olarak tutan Biri var. Allah!

Bozulan bir ilişkinin, dostluğun, kariyerin, veya mahvolan bir yaşamın etkilerini hissediyorsanız, bu kitabı açın ve Allah'ın sizi sevdiğini, sizin için en iyiyi istediğini ve O'na güvenirseniz hayatınızdaki bozulan şeyleri düzelterek hatırlayın.

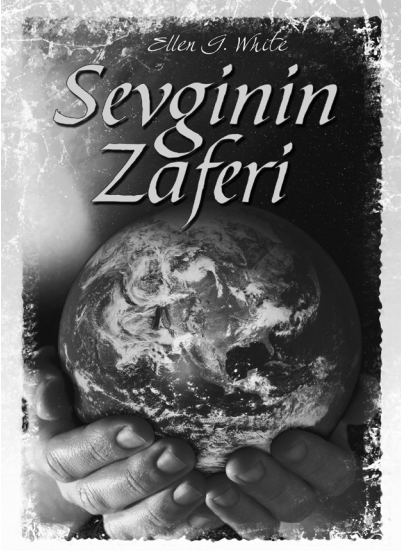


YENİ GÖZLERLE GÖRMEK



Pek çok şeyi görebilmek için, kişinin gözleri açık olmalıdır. Fakat Allah ile öyle değil. Gözlerinizi çok fazla açarsanız ya da çok fazla yakından bakarsanız, O'nu gördüğünüzü düşünürken aslında O'nu gözden kaçırabilirsiniz. Pek çoğumuz tam da bu hatayı yaparız. Allah'ı görmeyi umarak insanlara bakarız. Dinlere bakarız. Hatta aynaya bakarız. Kaçınılmaz olarak da hayal kırıklığına uğrarız, zira İlahî Kişi'nin daha güzel bir resmini ummuştuk. Sayısız insan Allah'tan dönmüştür, çünkü O'nu bir kişide ya da bir toplulukta gördüklerini sanmışlar... ve açıkçası gördüklerinden hoşlanmamışlardır. Elinizde tuttuğunuz kitap Allah hakkındadır.

SEVGİNİN ZAFERİ



Kötülüğün kaynağı, henüz çözülememiş bir sırdır. Neden kötülük var? Nereden geliyor? Kötülüğün bir sonu olacak mı? Bunlar yanıtlanması gereken çok önemli sorulardır.

Büyük mücadele, görünen dünyayı, görünmeyen dünyadan ayıran perdeyi aralamakta ve bu dünyanın tüm sakinlerinin dahil olduğu doğüstü savaşı gözler önüne ermektedir.

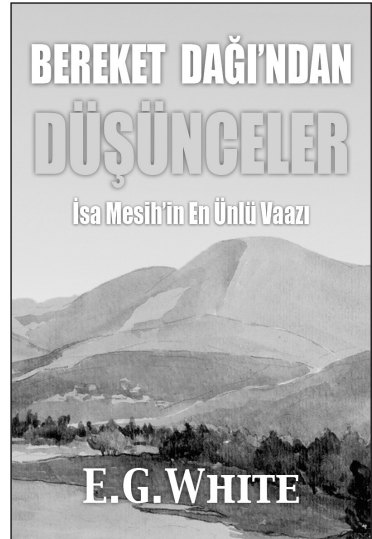
Kitap, uğrunda savaştıkları şey için çok önemli olan iki tarafın, iyinin ve kötünün arasında geçen evrensel savaşın nasıl başladığından ve nasıl sonlandırılacağından bahsetmektedir. Geçmişten, şimdiki zamandan ve gelecekte söz etmekte, çok dokunaklı bir ricayla ve ciddi bir uyarıyla sona ermektedir. Bu kitabı okurken, sanki Tanrı ile röportaj yapıyormuş hissine kapılacaksınız.

Güzel olduğu kadar şok edici bir yolculuğa çıkmaya hazırlanın. Okuduktan sonra artık aynı kişi olmayacaksınız.

BEREKET DAĞI'NDAN DÜŞÜNCELER

İncil'de imanın temel değerlerini oluşturan ve özetleyen iki klasik kabul edilebilecek metin vardır. Dağdaki Vaaz ve Rabb'in Duası olarak bilinen bu metinlerin ikisi de Matta İncili'nin başlarında bulunur. "Sağ yanağına tokat atana sol yanağını da çevir," "Düşmanlarınızı sevin, size zulmedenler için dua edin" gibi sarsıcı ve dünyevi değerlere ve durumlara ters düşen öğretiler İsa Mesih tarafından Dağdaki Vaaz'da dile getirilmiştir.

Günlük hayatta, edebiyat eserlerinde, filmlerde sıkça karşımıza çıkan Dağdaki Vaaz ve Rabb'in Duası, Ellen G. White'in kaleme aldığı Bereket Dağı'ndan Düşünceler adlı bu kitapta detaylı bir şekilde açıklanıyor. Bu kitabı okuduktan sonra Dağdaki Vaaz ve Rabb'in Duası'nı anlamakla kalmayacak aynı zamanda Rabb'in Sözü'nü temel değerlerini de kavramış olacaksınız.





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. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-5)



©2017

www.kaderidegistiren.com

This study series is a continuation of the Fate Changer series
and a product of Istiridye Medya.