

TBLC Lesson 3 Church:

A distinguishing characteristic of God's people, the church, has always been His presence. (Foundation 4 His presence is His promise.) He chose to be present and dwell on earth with His people from the beginning. "I will be your God. You will be my people. I will dwell among you." So, what does it mean that God dwells with us? We see this throughout Scripture (Foundation 2, His Word is our authority) in the garden, then the tabernacle, the temple, in Christ Himself, then in us the church, and eventually in heaven.

- The Garden was the first sanctuary where God dwelt with Adam and Eve. However, through the fall, sin separated them from Him and they had to leave. Therefore, all of humanity became separated from God. (Genesis 1-3)
- The Tabernacle was God's dwelling place among His people during the Exodus. It is here where we again see, through physical separation of rooms, that we cannot have direct access to God. The Tabernacle was placed central to community life even though they had to move from place to place frequently. (Foundation 1, God is our reference point) (Exodus 25:1-2, 8-9; Exodus 40:34 (glory cloud); Numbers 2:1-2)
- The Temple was a more permanent dwelling place for God among His people in Jerusalem where the glory cloud could be visibly seen manifested. Again, we physically see separation between God and His people through the rooms and their inability to stay in the presence of the cloud. (1 Kings 8:11, 9:1-3)
- As promised, Christ comes and physically dwells with His people. The Word became flesh. John 1:1, 14. Jesus compares himself to the temple, saying that He will be stricken down and rise again after 3 days. John 2:19. Upon His death, the curtain is torn as he restored us to the Father by atoning for our sins. Hebrews 9:11-14; Romans 6:4
- Christ tells us that he must leave so that the Helper may come and dwell within each of us. John 16:7. He ascends and we become His dwelling place as the body of Christ, the Church. This is individually in the body of each of us (1 Cor 6:19-20) but also corporately as a large body of believers. (Romans 12:5, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Cor 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:5.) Each individual believer is necessary to make up the full body of the church. In Acts, we see this first church as the Spirit dwells in them and gives each individual different spiritual gifts to be used to grow the church and glorify God. (Romans 12:4-6a) We are called to function together as one, making up one church through our unique and different gifts and callings. (Galatians 3:27-29) We also see this throughout scripture as we are commanded, over and over, to do and be many things to one another. Love one another, build up one another, admonish one another, forgive one another, serve one another, forgive one another, comfort one another, encourage one another, and pray for one another—to name a few. This is a benefit to being a part of a covenant community as we experience these things from other sisters to ourselves and receive provision and protection and growth; but, it is also a responsibility and a call to us to be these things and give these things to our sisters in Christ both in our local church and outside to the global church.
- One day, we will meet Christ eternally in Heaven and make up his glorious and global church as we worship Him forever. (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:2-4; 22)

Ephesians 5:25b-27 "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water and with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish." God reveals His character to display His glory, and He chooses to do that through the church, through us. (Foundation 3, His Glory is our Purpose). What does that mean for us as women in the church? It means that we must be present and involved in the body. That is as easy as showing up to the Sunday morning service and as hard as showing up to sit in silence as a fellow believer mourns a miscarriage. It is as easy as bringing breakfast to Sunday school and as hard as picking up another church members kids from daycare because she has to work. It also means that we must identify our gifts and skills and try to employ them in the church. This could look like teaching/leading a small group of women, volunteering in the nursery, hosting a missionary family while they're in town, organizing events for new moms, etc. Find where you can play a part with areas that God has gifted you. In doing so, we each place a piece of the puzzle to make up the beautiful picture of the church.