

## **What is God's View of the Church?**

**By Bob Young**

It is not uncommon to hear the question, "What is the church?" Answers often focus on certain biblical details or certain characteristics of the church. I am asking a different question, "What is God's view of the church?"

God's view of the church must be seen through the lens of God's purpose for the church. When we explain why the church exists, we must find ourselves firmly centered in what the Bible says about God's purpose for the church and God's view of the church. Ephesians is likely the New Testament book that reveals more about the church than any other book. Consider these thoughts from the first half of Ephesians.

God's eternal purpose is to gather everything together in Christ (Eph. 1:9-10). When God sees the church, he sees those he wants to gather together in Christ in communities of believers.

God sees the church as an overflowing fountain (Eph. 1:22-23). The water of life is made available to the world through the church. God accomplishes his saving, redemptive work only in Christ, and in the context of the church which is the body of Christ. No New Testament passages speak of God's redemptive work outside the context of the church.

God sees the church as a place of peace (Eph. 2:14-22). Diverse peoples and nations—Jews and Gentiles in the context of Ephesians 2—are brought together in peace and harmony, in mutual citizenship and sharing in the church, where God himself dwells through the Spirit.

God sees the church as a place of unity. It is through the church that God accomplishes his eternal plan to unite all people (Eph. 3:1-6; 4:1-3). In the church, the bonds that unite God's people as members, inheritors, and sharers together must be stronger than the things that divide.

God demonstrates his wisdom through the church (Eph. 3:10-11). While one of the tasks of the church is to declare God's purpose, it is more likely that this verse focuses on our existence and shared life as a declaration of God's wisdom.

When God looks at the church, he sees all of the possibilities of his power and his glory (Eph. 3:17-21). The glory of God dwells in the church and in Christ Jesus.

These points do not touch all of the concepts that overflow from the first half of Ephesians, but can be a helpful study guide and prayer guide as you think about what God has done, is doing, and will do through the church. May God's view of the church guide us rather than our own wants, likes and dislikes, "druthers" and personal tastes. It's not about us. It's about God!