

When we want to describe an object so it could be manufactured or assembled, we usually need several important drawings. For example, for a family house, floor plans of the foundations and individual floors are essential. So-called sections are suitable for the construction of stairs and roofs. And future residents are very interested in views from different sides.

It is similar when the Holy Spirit shows us what we call by the special word „**church**„. In the Bible, we do not find an explicit definition in the sense of „the church is - colon - and something“. But we see remarkable images there. Some are directly connected to the word „church“, and some clearly characterize the followers of Jesus and the community they form. (I certainly won't mention all of them in these five minutes.) Even if we have already formed an idea, let's take a quick look at the „building blueprints of the church“ directly in the Bible. You can find the references again down below in the text.

To the friends in Corinth, Paul writes: *You are **God's FIELD, God's BUILDING.*** (1 Corinthians 3:9) And he expands on the idea of God's building for a moment: *According to the grace of God that was given to me, I, as a wise builder, laid the **foundation**, and another builds on it. Let everyone be careful how they build on it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 3:10-11)

The building ideas Paul writes also to Timothy: *...that you may know how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.* (1 Timothy 3:15)

**FAMILY terminology** is quite common in the New Testament for the church. A few times we directly find the term „family of God“ (Ephesians 2:19) or „family of faith“ (Galatians 6:10).

It is clear that God is our Father in Christ, and those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord are God's children (John 1:12). Brothers, sisters and also children, sons or young people indicate that we are to move towards maturity. That is why the apostle John also uses the term „fathers“ in the same context, i.e. those who brought someone into the world and take care of them. (1 John 2:13-14)

The family sphere also has the interesting dimension that *we are God's heirs and joint heirs*

with Christ (Romans 8:17). And the close connection with the Holy Spirit is repeatedly shown to be very significant here: *Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons. We have received the Spirit of sonship in which we cry: Abba, Father! That Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* (Romans 8:14-16)

A wonderful intimate picture - actually also from the family category - is the church as a **BRIDE**. (Ephesians 5:21-32) It shows the closeness between Christ and His Beloved, the deepest love, total devotion, complete intimacy and also exclusivity, uniqueness. Perhaps even a mystery, as the apostle Paul mentions it.

The image that emphasizes functionality is *Jesus as the Head and the church as His **BODY*** (Ephesians 5:23), *for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.* (Ephesians 5:30) The apostle Paul places great emphasis on the fact that we are part of one Body under the leadership of one Head, but at the same time we each have different gifts, different skills and thus different tasks. (1 Corinthians 12:12-30)

The Lord Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd. (John 10) The apostle Peter writes about **FLOCK** and shepherds in the plural. (1 Peter 5) To the leaders in Ephesus, the apostle Paul says during a personal farewell: *„The Holy Spirit has appointed you as guardians to shepherd the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.“* (Acts 20,28 1 Peter 5,2-4) Then he talks about various dangers and pitfalls. It is very interesting what Paul sees as the protection or solution of those threats to Jesus' flock! *I entrust you to God and the Word of his grace.* (Acts 20,32)

The apostle Peter goes into the depth of our identity with some images. By strong words he says who we are and what our mission is: *You are the chosen **RACE**, the royal **PRIESTHOOD**, the holy **NATION**, the **PEOPLE** destined for God's possession.* (1 Peter 2:9) We are all this in order to fulfill the mission that is related to our identity: *to proclaim the mighty deeds of the one who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* Something of this identity of ours is also captured in the book of Revelation: *and he made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father.* (Revelation 1:6)

I have not listed all the New Testament images of the church here! Please prayerfully go through these at least. And think about how they should be reflected in the practical life of



the contemporary communities of Jesus' followers. Then check out other lessons on this topic.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for the many very clear expressions so that we can understand how your beloved church should look and function.*