

# Word Pictures in the Bible That Show Us Peace and Agreement



## SABBATH—NOVEMBER 3

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5, 6; Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 12:12–26; John 10:1–11, Psalm 23.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up [form] one body. It is the same with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12, NIV).

**THE BIBLE** is filled with word pictures that show us important truths. One example is the Jewish worship plan in the Old Testament. The animals killed as part of that plan were word pictures too. They showed us Jesus' future death.

The Bible uses many other word pictures to teach us truth. Some word pictures are very simple. Water, fire, and wind are a few examples. In John 3:8, Jesus uses the wind as a word picture. He uses it to help us understand the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. “The wind blows where it wants to and you hear its sound. You do not know where it comes from or where it goes. It is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit of God” (NLV).

The Bible uses different word pictures to help us understand what it means in the church to have unity. You will remember from past lessons that unity is peace and agreement. Unity comes from our being joined as one in heart, mind, and the truth in Jesus and each other. God commands the church to show everyone on earth that we are joined as one in Him. The word pictures of unity in the Bible show us many truths about agreement in the church and with other people. This week, we will take a closer look at some of these word pictures. What do they teach us about being joined as one in Jesus?



**Jesus uses the wind as a word picture. He uses it to help us understand the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.**

## GOD'S PEOPLE (1 Peter 2:9)

**In 1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5, 6; Deuteronomy 4:20; and Deuteronomy 7:6, we learn about God's special people. What does it mean to belong to God's people? Why is the church special in God's eyes?**

The church is about people. But not just any people. The church is God's people. God's people are the people who belong to Him. These people accept God as their Father and Savior. Jesus saved God's people, and they obey Him. The word picture of the church shows us an important truth. God has always had a people on earth. From Adam and Noah's time to Abraham's time, God made Special Agreements with His people. He chose His people to show the truth about Him to all people. He wanted His people to show His love, mercy, and justice to everyone on the earth.

In 1 Peter, 2:9, Peter tells us that God's people are "a chosen group of people" (NLV) and are "the King's [Jesus'] priests [religious leaders]" (ERV). Peter also says that God's people are "a holy nation [group of people from the same country], people who belong to God" (ERV) and "God's special treasure" (NIRV). All these word pictures show us that God chose His people. He separated them from all the people on the earth to do special work for Him. What is that work? Peter tells us in that same verse. God "chose you to tell about the wonderful things he has done" (ERV). All these word pictures about the church show us God's heart. Exodus 34:6, 7 uses these same word pictures to talk about God. "God chose the church as His own special treasure. He wanted its members to live in a way that showed everyone on earth what was in God's heart. He wanted His people to tell everyone about His love and His mercy."—*The SDA Bible Commentary [explanation]*, volume 7, page 562, adapted.



**"God chose the church as His own special treasure."**  
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**Deuteronomy 7:6–8 shows us that God chose Abraham's future children to be His people. Why did God choose Israel? What does God's choice mean for us today?**

No one has done anything to earn God's special favor. The Bible shows us that God chose Israel to be His special people for only one reason. He loved them.

**Why must we always remember that God saves us because He loves us and not because we do any special work?**

## THE FAMILY OF GOD (Ephesians 2:19–22)

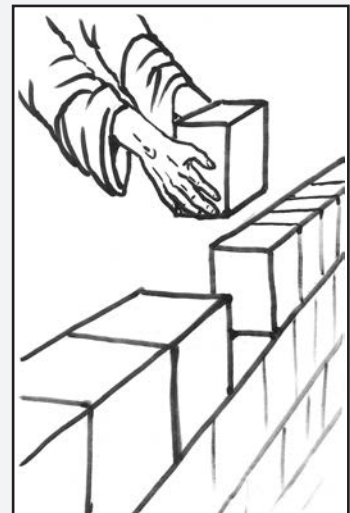
Yesterday, we saw how the Bible uses the word picture of a church to describe God’s people. Another word picture the Bible uses to show us God’s people is a big house made of stones. Peter says that Christians are the same as “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5, ERV). God uses these “stones” to build a spiritual temple or house. Each stone shows us the different ways that everyone is connected to each other in the church. This word picture helps us to understand how God makes us strong and firm in our faith.

**In Ephesians 2:19–22, Paul uses a word picture to explain unity. We know that unity is peace and agreement. Unity comes from our being joined as one in heart, mind, and the truth in Jesus and with each other. How does Paul’s word picture in Ephesians 2:19–22 show us unity in the church?**

In these verses, Paul mixes two word pictures into one: (1) a house or building and (2) the family that lives in that house. One stone by itself cannot make a house. But when a stone is joined with other stones, it can make a strong building. No Christian can be a “stone” alone, separate from other “stones,” or believers. No, we must all join with other believers in Christian friendship in the family of God. A building must be solid. A solid building must stand on a strong foundation. Jesus is the foundation for the church (read 1 Corinthians 3:11). The church will die if Jesus is not its foundation. The church is really about Jesus: His life, His death, His waking up from the dead, and His Second Coming. The church is a community of believers. They join together to share the Good News about Jesus with everyone on earth.

How else is the church the same as a family? Most families have a father and a mother, brothers and sisters. Connections between family members can be strong. Church members also are part of one big family. We are connected to the human family because of Adam. But as Christians, we also are connected to each other because Jesus became the “Second Adam.” In Jesus, we experience the “new birth.” In this way, we become joined with each other in new life.

**Not all people have a wonderful family experience. So, how can the church become the family some people never had?**



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**THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEMPLE (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17)**

Yesterday, we saw how the Bible uses the word picture of a building to show us what it means to belong to God's family. Today, we will look at another building. It is the "temple" of the Holy Spirit. Paul uses this temple as a word picture in 1 Corinthians 6:19 to mean the human body. But when Paul talks about the "temple" in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, he does not mean the human body. Paul means the most holy and precious building in the Near East in New Testament times. That building was God's temple in Jerusalem. Paul uses God's temple as a word picture to describe the church.

**In 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, Paul tells us that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? Also, what is Paul warning us about in verse 17?**

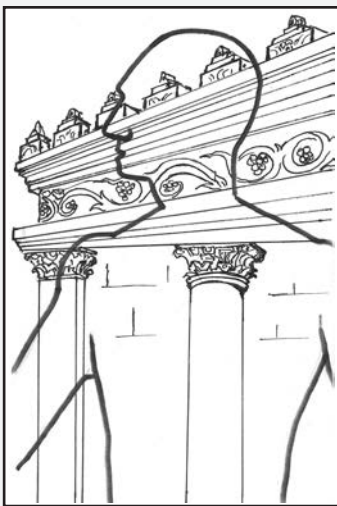
Clearly, Paul is not talking about a real building for God. What this word picture means is that the Christians in Corinth become the "temple" of the Holy Spirit. God "lives" with them by living in their hearts.

For Paul, God lives in our Christian friendships and unity. As we learned, unity is agreement. Unity comes from our being joined as one in heart, mind, and truth in Jesus and with each other. Paul warns us not to destroy these connections. God will judge the person who tries to destroy Christian unity. Christian unity is at the heart of our friendships and connections in the church. God is at the heart of our unity in His "living temple."

In 1 Corinthians 3:3, Paul talks about the dangers to the church's unity. Separations and disagreements are behaviors that are dangers to our peace. Bad feelings and behaviors cause God to remove Himself from His church. Disagreements in the church can destroy God's "temple." God wants members to turn away from feelings that cause disagreement.

What do we do when disagreements happen in the church? Paul's advice to the Corinthians holds true for us today: "Agree among yourselves. Do not be divided into little groups. Think and act as if you all had the same mind" (1 Corinthians 1:10, NLV).

**We all must do our part to put a stop to the problems that destroy our unity. What can you do to help end them?**



**In 1 Corinthians 6:19, the temple is a word picture for the human body.**

## THE “BODY (THE CHURCH)” OF JESUS (1 Corinthians 12:12–26)

Maybe the most popular word picture for the church is Jesus’ body. This word picture gives us a strong description of unity. We know that unity is peace and agreement. Unity comes from our being joined as one in heart, mind, and the truth in Jesus and with each other. That is why Paul writes, “There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ [Jesus]” (1 Corinthians 12:12, NIV). And “You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27, NIV).

**In 1 Corinthians 12:12–26, Paul uses the word picture of a body to describe the church and how it works. How do all the body’s parts work together? What does this word picture tell us about the way our worldwide church works together too?**

Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 shows us a deep truth. Real Christian unity or agreement happens because the Holy Spirit blesses our differences and helps us to work together in unity. The human body is made of many parts. Each of those parts is very different from each other. The “body” of Jesus, His church, is the same way. The different parts of the church help show us that the “body” of Jesus is very wonderful and perfect.

The word picture of the body speaks to us as Seventh-day Adventists. In the last thirty years, our church grew very fast. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is made of members from almost every way of life, race group, and country on earth. But we must not let our differences separate us from Jesus or each other. We should let the Holy Spirit control us so that we can come closer together. Then we will show everyone the truth that we are all one people in Jesus.

At the foot of the cross, everyone is equal. It does not matter who we are or where we come from. People everywhere and their ways of life are becoming more and more hopeless and broken. So, as a church we must show everyone that we can join together, even when we are different from each other. As God’s people, we can show other people that we can have unity in Jesus. We can show everyone on the earth that the Good News about Jesus has the power to heal people and join us all together.



**We must not let our differences separate us from Jesus or each other.**



## SHEEP AND SHEPHERD (John 10:1–11)

In John 10:1–11, John uses the word picture of a sheep fence to explain unity. (Read also Psalm 23.) We know that unity is peace and agreement. Unity comes from our being joined as one with each other in heart, mind, and the truth in Jesus. What parts of this word picture help us to understand what unity is?

Jesus tells a picture story about shepherds in John 10:1–11. In our way of life today, we may know very little about shepherds. But the people in Jesus' day understand clearly what Jesus talks about. So, when Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11, NLV), the people know right away that Jesus' words are a quotation from Psalm 23: "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1, ERV). The people understand the meaning of "my shepherd" very clearly. The word picture of the shepherd is full of deep meaning for the people. Shepherds in the Near East took very good care of their sheep. The shepherd is one of the most beloved word pictures in all the Bible. Nothing else so fully shows us who God is or how much He loves His people.

The Bible uses sheep as a word picture to describe God's people. Sheep are very gentle and helpless. They need a good shepherd to protect and guide them. Sheep get lost sometimes. So, some people think sheep are very stupid! The shepherd searches for his lost sheep and puts them back inside their fence. Young sheep often need to be carried and need a lot of extra care. Shepherds must be patient and understanding with sheep if they want to take good care of them. In many ways, sheep are a perfect word picture for the church. Church members need the Good Shepherd to take care of them, lead them, and keep them safe.

In His picture story, Jesus also talks about how the sheep must listen to the Good Shepherd and obey Him. Sometimes, a shepherd must put several different flocks of sheep together in the same place to protect them. How can the shepherd later separate his flock from the flocks that are not his? Easy. All the shepherd needs to do is stand at the gate and tell his sheep to come to him. His sheep know his voice. As soon as the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, they will separate from the other flocks and come to him (John 10:4). The church must obey the voice of the Shepherd in the same way. We must do what He tells us to do. Our unity and our safety depend on obeying Him.



**The shepherd is one of the most beloved word pictures in all the Bible.**

**Nothing else so fully shows us who God is or His love for His people.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Divine [having to do with God] Shepherd,” pages 476–484, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Church on Earth,” pages 240–243, in *Counsels [advice] for the Church*.

“The New Testament uses the word picture of a temple to help us understand that the church is very holy. The Bible also uses this word picture to explain the things God did to start and grow the church. This word picture also helps explain Jesus’ work and the Spirit’s work and the agreement needed between believers. When we think of a church, we often think of a building. But the Bible wants us to think about the church in a different way. The Bible wants us to make a picture in our minds of a church that God continues to build, not one already finished. For sure, the church is ‘the temple of the living God’ (2 Corinthians 6:16).”—John McVay, “Biblical [from the Bible] Metaphors [word pictures] for the Church: Building Blocks for Ecclesiology [teachings about the church],” in Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, editor, *Message, Mission [special work we do for God], and Unity [agreement] of [in] the Church* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2013), page 52, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think about the word pictures we studied this week. Which one do you like most? Why? Here are some more word pictures about the church: 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:3–5; 1 Peter 2:9. What else do these word pictures teach us about our church?
- ② “God wants His people to become very good friends with each other. We must have faith in our brothers and sisters so that the church can be a success. We must agree on what to do when trouble happens in the church. If we do something wrong or careless, we may cause the church to suffer hard times. It may take many years for the church to heal from these mistakes.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [special messages] for the Church*, volume 3, page 446, adapted. What a strong warning! So, why must we protect our unity in the church?
- ③ Why must we trust in God’s loving-favor alone to save us and not in our own good behavior?



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