

CHURCH

WHAT IS IT?

WHY IS IT?

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

The Unity and Purity of the Church

The Church of Jesus Christ is one body. This means that all who follow Jesus Christ belong to the Church. They are our brothers and sisters. There must be unity among Christ's followers. However, the Church cannot sacrifice purity for the sake of a perceived unity.

The purity of the Church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God's revealed will for the church. In other words, the Church's purity is defined by how closely they follow God's Word in faith and practice. This faithfulness to God in all things is the most important aim of the Church. While the Church must aspire to be united in love and understanding, we cannot sacrifice faithfulness to God's Word for the sake of "getting along" with those who claim to be Christians yet deny central aspects of doctrine.

A helpful way to remember this is the statement: "In the essentials - unity, in the non-essentials - liberty, and in all things - charity." In the essentials of

Christianity we must have unity. Not holding to these essentials means that we forfeit the fundamentals of Christianity. However, in things that are non-essential, believers are allowed liberty. These are things we can debate but we don't need to divide over.

Yet, in everything that we do, whether it be admonishing false belief or debating non-essential issues, we must show the love and charity of Christ.



WHY SO MANY DENOMINATIONS?

Denominations were created in reference to different beliefs that arose in the Church. They are used as categories to distinguish those who believe differing aspects of theology.

For example, Lutherans emerged in defiance of the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on salvation and works during the protestant reformation.

Likewise, Methodists separated themselves from the Anglican Church following the reforms of John Wesley.

Pentecostalism emerged out of the Methodist church, favoring the exercise of charismatic gifts.

THE CHURCH



Church: Visible and Invisible

The invisible church (or the universal church) is the worldwide body of believers.

Anyone who is saved is part of the "church."

The visible church (or the local church) refers to the local fellowships of believers in each city and town.

Is it possible to be a member of the invisible church without being a member of the visible church?

I Love Jesus, Not the Church!

Especially in America, there are many people who profess a love for Christ, yet they recoil from the idea of being a member of a local church.

How would you react if I came to you and told you how much I loved you? I explained how much I adored you and wanted to fellowship with you. However, I could not stand your spouse and did not ever want to be around him/her. Do you think you could have fellowship with me?

Consider the following verse:

1. Eph. 5:29 - Christ loves and cherishes the church
2. Eph. 5:25 - Jesus loves the church and sacrificed himself for her.
3. Rom. 7:4; 1 Co. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8 - the Church is married to Christ

Is it possible to be in love with Jesus and not love what Jesus loves?

We should definitely grant the premise that the church is filled with sinners and sometimes sinners are hard to get along with. We should

also expect that there will be conflicts and disagreements in the church, but the question we must ask is - is it worth it?

There are also conflicts and struggles in our own families, but are those conflicts worth the benefit of being in the family? Aren't they worth knowing that you have those who love you and are growing with you?

The bigger question is: is obeying Scripture important or is it not? Can we just pick and choose which commands we think are good?

Most of the commands which are given to believers in the Epistles are impossible to keep unless one is a faithful member of a local congregation.

The list below is just some of the commands in Scripture. These commands are in the present active voice which means they are to be done continually as a lifestyle. How could this be accomplished unless one is involved in a local fellowship?

Stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)

Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)

Build up one another (1 Thess 5:11)

Be of the same mind as one another (Romans 12:13, 15:5)

Comfort one another in the face of death (1 Thess 4:18)

Employ spiritual gifts in serving one another (1 Peter 4:10)

Pray for one another (James 5:16)

Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)

Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)

Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11)

Greet one another (2 Cor 13:12)

Don't become boastful in challenging one another (Gal 5:26)

Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)

Abound in love for one another (1 Peter 1:22)

Live in peace with one another (1 Thess 5:13)

Love one another (2 John 5)

Fervently love one another (1 Peter 1:22)

Have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7)

Don't judge one another (Romans 14:13)

Take communion with one another (1 Cor 11:33)

Accept one another (Romans 15:7)

Regard others as more important than yourself (Phil 2:3)

Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)

Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)

Serve one another (Gal 5:13)

Do not lie to one another (Col 3:9)

Bear with one another (Col 3:13)

Forgive one another (Col 3:13)

Teach and admonish one another (Rom 15:14)

Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25)

Cloth yourself with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

Do not complain against one another (James 5:9)

Show forbearance to one another (Eph 4:2)

Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and songs (Eph 5:19)

Give preference to one another (Rom 12:10)

Don't bite and devour one another (Gal 5:15)

Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21)

Seek the good of one another (1 Thess 5:15)

Don't forsake assembling with one another (Heb 10:25)

THE CHURCH

The Offices of the Church

The Church is left without organization or leadership. The offices of the Church are given by God to shepherd and serve the people of God through instruction, ministry, and leadership.

Some people point to the “five-fold” ministry of the church as the offices which govern the church’s life and practice. These are said to be given in Ephesians 4:11 as “Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Preachers, and teachers.” There are biblical reasons why these are not the offices of the New Testament church. (They are given below)

There are three offices which are God’s ordained means for leadership and service in the Church.

1. **Elder** - Three terms in the NT define this office. They are *presbyteros* - Elder, *episkopos* - bishop, and *poimen* - Pastor/shepherd. These three terms are used interchangeably in Scripture for the office we call “Pastor.” (1 Ti. 3:1, Titus 1:5-9)

2. **Deacon** - Many are confused about the term “deacon” today. The word *diakonos* means “servant” or “minister.” Today, in many churches, the deacons are the ruling council. This is not the office of the NT. Deacons are those who serve the body. For example, in Acts 6:1-4, the leaders appointed “deacons” to serve the widows as the Elders concentrated on the word and prayer.

3. **Teacher** - A teacher in the church is most definitely an office with responsibility and duty.



How Does Paul Refer to the Local Church?

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” - 1 Timothy 3:15

In this verse, Paul is talking about the local body of believers of which Timothy is the overseer. In verse 14, Paul desires to come and visit this church. Likewise, he is speaking about how individuals should conduct themselves in the assembly of the local church. Is it important that Paul calls the local assembly of believers the “pillar and ground of the truth?”

Why not Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists?

Aren’t these offices as well? Many people think so. From a scriptural perspective, I do not. This is why:

1. **Apostles** - *Apostolos* - simply means “one who is sent.” In that sense, we are all apostles. Yet, it is also an office held by the first disciples of Christ. However, the criteria of the office of Apostle was to have been a direct witness to the resurrection. In Acts 1:21-22, they replaced Judas as an Apostle but the stipulation was that he must have, “companies with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us” Paul likewise understood this requirement when he said, “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” (1 Co. 9:1). Many people give themselves the title of Apostle today, but the biblical office came when one was a witness to the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

2. **Prophets** - Prophets are simply people who relate God’s words. Yet, there was an actual office of prophet. The prophets looked forward to Jesus just as the Apostles looked back to Him. Once Jesus had come and the Scriptures were established the office of Prophet ceased. Hebrews 1:1 says, God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake **in time past** unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath **in these last days** spoken unto us



by his Son.” Likewise, Matt. 11:13 tells us that, “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied **until** John...” - John the Baptist was the last of the OT prophets.

3. **Evangelist** - from the Great Commission, every believer is to do the work of an evangelist (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Ti. 4:5)

4.

THE CHURCH

The Mission of the Church

The Church is not simply a group of people getting together in a building on Sundays. The Church (the whole church as well as your local fellowship) is commissioned by Christ for a work. The Church is Christ's body and it is empowered by Christ to carry out His will in the world.

Jesus said, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* (Matt. 28:19-20).

There are two basic functions which are commanded in this order.

We are to evangelize all people, and we are to disciple each other by teaching everything God has commanded.

This means that the Church should never forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb 10:25) to sing

continually hear as it is for the world to embrace.

Yet, the church is not to be confined to the building where they meet. They are to go out into the world and testify to the love and grace of

God in Jesus Christ. The Church is called to "make disciples." This includes both evangelism and helping believers grow in the Lord.

All these things are to be done for the glory of God. Giving Him glory is the reason why we exist and the reason why we are here.

God receives no greater

glory than when He takes a sinful man and changes His heart to love God and serve Him. Then, He causes that heart to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.



(Eph. 5:19), serve (Gal. 5:13), encourage (1 Thess. 5:11), have fellowship (1 John 1:7), and teach (Rom. 15:14). The gospel is just as important for the Church to

How Do I Make Disciples?

If the church is to make disciples, how does that happen?

Discipleship is not simply a program or a class. Discipleship is a way of life. Each believer should have a "mentor"

who discipled them in the faith of Christ. Likewise, each disciple should have someone that they are helping to become a better disciple. We may even have more than one. It is all about relationship. As Christians we grow

together. There is no growth outside of fellowship and relationship.

The question is this: Who is your discipler and who are you discipling? If you can't answer either question, it is time for you to get started!

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All Churches are not created equal.

Mark Dever wrote a book called "The 9 Marks of a Healthy Church." This book showed from the pages of Scripture what a healthy church looks like

What makes a Healthy Church?

1. **Biblical Preaching** - centered on the Gospel Of Jesus Christ and the exposition of Scripture.

2. **Sound Doctrine** - Everything believed and taught is based on the teachings of Scripture

3. **The Gospel** - is the center of all programs, activities, and teachings

4. **Conversion** - the repentance of sin and the new birth are taught, preached, and lived out in the members lives.

5. **Evangelism** - A healthy church reaches beyond its own walls with the message of the gospel

6. **Membership** - A healthy church is filled with members who have committed themselves to the ministry and fellowship of that church.

7. **Church Discipline** - A healthy church is one that refuses to look and act like the world. When members begin teaching or living in opposition to biblical truth, loving discipline is necessary.

8. **Discipleship** - A healthy church grows and trains disciples, who also grows and trains disciples, who also....

9. **Leadership** - God called leaders accepting the office and responsibility given to them.



There are two ordinances which every New Testament Church must have. Without these two ordinances, a group of believers cannot be called a "Church."

1. **Believer's Baptism** - "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day

there were added unto them about three thousand souls." - **Acts 2:41**

Rom. 6:4 "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

2. **The Lord's Supper** - "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." - **1 Corinthians 11:23-25**

THE CHURCH

Yes, I said Ya'll

In English, we don't differentiate between saying "you" to a single person, and saying "you" to a group of people. We just say, "Hey you!"

This is not true in Greek or Hebrew. In the original language of the NT there are two different words translated "you," one is singular and one is plural. Most of the promises in Scripture are directed to the plural body of the church, not single individuals who are not part of the body. For example:

"But my God shall supply all **your** need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." - Phil. 4:19

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in **you** will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" Phil. 1:6

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward **you**, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." - Jer. 29:11

We are good at claiming promises, but we tend to claim promises as an individual that were made to people in the Church body.

1. Are you a member of a local church?

2. Are you a member simply because you attend services or signed a membership card? If so, why do you think that makes you a member?

3. If every church member was as active and involved as you are, would there be a church?

4. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you,

and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

According to this verse, why should you submit yourself to an elder or pastor?

5. Is it possible to "obey them that have rule over you..." if you are not actively involved in a local church?

6. Recently, I heard this statement made, "The Bible doesn't say that we have to go to church three times a week." While this may literally be true, it does say to submit yourself to a pastor or elder. If you pastor or elder leads his flock to assemble and fellowship three times a week, what would be a biblical response?

7. Although Scripture tells us to "Obey them that have rule over you..." Scripture allows each person and family to choose their leader. What qualities do you desire in a leader to whom you can submit?