



The Church

PART 1

BUILD YOUR LIFE ON THE FOUNDATION OF 11 CORE BIBLICAL TRUTHS



Life Change Objectives

- To deepen your love for and commitment to the church.
- To see in a new or deeper way your part in living out all five purposes of the church.

As we begin this study of the church of God, some may ask, “Why is the church so important? Why can’t I just have a relationship with Jesus and forget about the church?” We all know people who consider themselves Christians but seldom attend church. Is the church really necessary?

Absolutely! To have faith in God means we cannot live the Christian life in isolation, like a spiritual Robinson Crusoe. The truth is, we cannot live out the Christian life without belonging to the church. The New Testament knows nothing of unattached Christians.

Our Need for the Church

God's Ideal	Our Actual Practice
Church is a spiritual necessity	Church is an optional activity
Interdependence is valued	Individualism is valued
Spirituality takes place in community	Religion is a private matter
Active involvement in social concerns	Aloof from the real world
All people fully accepted together	Segregation practiced (racial, social status, etc.)
Authentic behavior, with the public and private lives matching	Hypocrisy; saying one thing but practicing another

To recapture the role God intended for us as his church, we must gain an understanding of how the church began, what its nature is, what its mission is, and explore the implications for *our* church.

The Beginning of the Church

by God

The Bible makes it clear that God has always desired to create a people for himself; a people who would love him with all their hearts, and a people for whom he could prove himself to be a faithful God.

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

—Deuteronomy 7:6



A Closer Look

When Adam turned away from the blessing of being in harmony with God, God turned to creating a people for himself. He called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the forefathers of these people—Israel. When Israel proved to be unfaithful to God's covenant promises, God continued his plan through a "remnant" of people, who also became unfaithful to him. God's plan came to fruition when he sent his Son, Jesus, to bring together finally a people who would belong totally to God. These people would be an "elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's possession." This is the church.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

—1 Peter 2:9

by Jesus

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." This indicates that the church was still in the future when he spoke. He was making a prediction concerning his future building of the church.

by the Spirit

How is the church built? It is the work of the Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the body of Christ.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

—1 Corinthians 12:13

The Nature of the Church (What is it supposed to be?)

The church is an _____.

The primary Greek word used for the church in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, which has the meaning “to call.” It was used to describe an assembly of people (secular or spiritual), but it came to mean an assembly or community called by God. So the assembling was not the key. The key was the fact that God called them together.

Ekklesia refers to both the _____ church and the _____ church.

The universal church is composed of people from every tribe and race and culture (regardless of their denominational affiliations) who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

In the universal church the emphasis is on the _____ of the church.

The local church is a group of believers who meet together for worship, instruction, fellowship, and ministry.

In the local church, the emphasis is on the _____ of the church.

The church is a _____.

Another important Greek word that relates to the church is *koinonia*. Difficult to translate into English, it carries the idea of communion, fellowship, sharing, and participation. It is used to describe the life that the *ekklesia*, or church, is to share in Christ.

Koinonia is our participation together in the life of God through Jesus Christ.

Koinonia is:

- more than the congenial relationship of “buddies.”
- more than participating in a potluck dinner.
- more than “I can get along with you because you’re so much like me.”

Koinonia is a oneness that is possible only through God’s supernatural work.

Koinonia is characterized by:

- _____ (1 John 1:6–7)
- _____ (Phil. 2:1–2)
- _____ (Philem. 1:17)

- _____ (Acts 2:44–45)
- _____ (2 Cor. 8:4)
- _____ (Phil. 3:8–10)
- _____ (1 Cor. 10:16)



A Closer Look

The Ordinances of the Church

The word *ordinance* comes from the word *ordained*. It refers to the events that Jesus specifically ordered us to make a regular part of our worship as a church. The two ordinances that Jesus gave to the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism demonstrates _____ what took place _____ when we accepted Christ. Through baptism, our participation in his death, burial, and resurrection is portrayed, and we rise up out of the water, symbolizing the new life we now have in Christ.

Why is it important for you to be baptized as a believer in Christ? First and foremost, because Jesus commanded it! He “ordained”—he commanded—baptism to be a step we take as we follow him. In his Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 and 20, Jesus told us to “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

When you are baptized, you are picturing to the world what happened in your life when you became a believer. Look at Romans 6:4:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

—Romans 6:4

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, also is a physical reminder of deep, spiritual realities. We remember that through his broken body and spilled blood a _____ has been established between God and man.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

—1 Corinthians 11:24–26

Sometimes the ordinances are called “sacraments,” from the Latin *Sacramentum*, which was an oath of allegiance a Roman soldier took to his emperor. Christians took over the term and meant that it bound them in loyalty to Christ. In the ordinances, Christ’s grace and forgiveness are depicted—they are sermons acted out. We are allowed the opportunity to express our allegiance and loyalty to Christ when we are baptized and when we eat the Lord’s Supper together. The ordinances do not give us “more” of God’s grace. They are a way to praise God for the grace we’ve already received.

The Mission of the Church (What is the church supposed to do?)

The five purposes of the church

The five purposes of the church are given in two statements of Jesus: the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

The Great Commandment

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

—Matthew 22:37–40

The Great Commission

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

—Matthew 28:19–20

Five instructions for the church

1. “Love God with all your heart”: _____
2. “Love your neighbor as yourself”: _____
3. “Go . . . make disciples”: _____
4. “Baptizing them”: _____
5. “Teaching them to do”: _____

The church exists to:

1. Celebrate God's _____ (worship)

"Exalt our Master."

O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

—Psalm 34:3 (RSV)

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the LORD's house."

—Psalm 122:1 (GNT)

2. Communicate God's _____ (evangelism)

"Evangelize our mission field."

The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me—to tell people the Good News about God's grace.

—Acts 20:24 (NCV)

You will be my witnesses . . .

—Acts 1:8

3. Incorporate God's _____ (fellowship)

"Encourage our members."

You are members of God's very own family . . . and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

—Ephesians 2:19 (LB)

4. Educate God's _____ (discipleship)

"Educate for maturity."

Building up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity; until . . . all become full-grown in the Lord.

—Ephesians 4:12–13 (LB)

5. Demonstrate God's _____ (ministry)

"Equip for ministry."

To equip the saints for the work of ministry.

—Ephesians 4:12 (NRSV)

Purpose Statement for the Church

To bring people to Jesus and to membership in his family, to develop them to Christlike maturity, and to equip them for their ministry in the church and their life mission in the world in order to magnify God's name.



Discussion Questions

1. How does the idea of the unity of the church really work in your life? Here are some points of struggle that it would be helpful to discuss honestly.
 - How do you handle it when you disagree strongly on some issue (political, for instance) with a Christian brother or sister?
 - How do you survive the temptation to compare: to think “I wish I had their gift” or “I have better gifts than they do. Why are they being noticed more than I am?”
 - Is our unity in Christ always stronger than the prejudices we grew up with? How can that unity break down those prejudices?
2. Look back at the seven characteristics of *koinonia* fellowship. Which of these is the most important to you personally?
3. Suppose you came home to find five phone messages for you from different people:
 - From someone asking you for your opinion about a new mission project.
 - From a friend asking about how to help two fellow Christians with a disagreement they’ve been having.
 - From someone asking a question about understanding a Bible verse or Bible truth.
 - From another with an idea for starting a new ministry.
 - From a friend who has some questions about how to truly worship God.

All things being equal, which of these calls would you return first?



Answers to Fill-Ins

envisioned
established
energized
ekklesia
universal
local
unity
ministry
koinonia
light
unity
acceptance
sharing of material goods
giving money
suffering

Lord's Supper
physically
spiritually
new covenant
worship
ministry
evangelism
fellowship
discipleship
presence
Word
family
people
love