

ADDED UNTO THE CHURCH

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Acts 2:41-42

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Matthew 16:18

“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

God desires for every born-again believer who has been Scripturally baptized to become a member of a local church. This local church must be a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Great Commission-fulfilling church.

God has chosen the institution of the local church to accomplish His work in this world. We find the God appointed steps every person is to take.

The order we find in Scripture is simple:

- Salvation – “...they...received his word...”
- Baptism – “...they...were baptized...”
- Church Membership – “...there were added unto them...”
- Discipleship – “...they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...”

The doctrine of the church is one of the most misunderstood doctrines of the Bible:

- Some see the church as a building (a cathedral, or a place of worship)
- Some think of a church as a denomination (a human organization). They would refer to the ‘Catholic Church,’ the ‘Presbyterian Church,’ the ‘Baptist Church,’ etc....
- Many think of the church as all individuals who have been born again in the entire world. This is also referred to as the ‘invisible/universal’ church.

However, the word translated “church” is very significant because it is never used to describe a denomination. It is not used to describe a national church. Our understanding of the local church is foundational to our Christian life.

The first mention of the word “church” in the Bible is found in **Matthew 16:18**.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Who founded the New Testament church? _____.

Jesus Christ said, *“I will build my church.”* He did not say, *“**You** will build my church.”* He did not say, *“I will build **your** church.”* He clearly said, *“I will build **my** church.”*

The Lord did not change the meaning of the word church, but He distinguished it from all other assemblies of the day with the personal pronoun *“my”* church.

In **Ephesians 5:23**, Christ is called the _____ of the church.

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

According to **Galatians 3:1** and **Galatians 5:7**, how can the church demonstrate that Christ is its Head? _____

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?”

The Old Testament nation of Israel is not to be confused with the New Testament church. The Bible makes a clear distinction between them in **1 Corinthians 10:32**.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:”

I. THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Matthew 16:16-18, *“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”*

Jesus Christ established the church; it is His institution for this present age to carry out the Great Commission

The word *“church”* or *“churches”* is found **115 times** in the New Testament, and is rendered from the Greek word *‘ekklesia.’*

This word 'ekklesia' has only one meaning – 'a called out assembly.'

Definition of the church:

The local church is a group of baptized believers who have voluntarily joined themselves together to keep the ordinances and to carry out the Great Commission.

A. A Biblical Church Must Be Local

The church is clearly identified by believers coming together in one local place. The church is not a local building, but rather a local group of people who assemble together.

Who was gathered together upon the return of Paul's missionary journey?

_____.
Acts 14:27, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

The believers at the church of Corinth came _____ in the church.
1 Corinthians 11:17-20, "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, *that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.*"

People cannot "come together" and yet be all over the world.

Illustration:

An automobile is an "assembly" of many and various parts. How absurd to think of it as being everywhere. There is no such thing as a 'universal car.'

In all but about 15 instances in the Word of God, the word "church" or "churches" is used in connection with a definite geographical location.

B. A Biblical Church Must Be Visible

Believers cannot "come together" and not be seen! Many like to talk about the "invisible church" but all the churches mentioned in the New Testament were visible.

Paul expected to come and see _____ the believers at Philippi.

Philippians 1:27, *“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs...”*

Paul endeavored to see the F _____ of believers at Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 2:17, *“But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.”*

C. A Biblical Church Must Be Organized

An assembly is not disorderly. The word “assembly” implies organization.

Jesus Christ is the _____ of the body, the church.

Colossians 1:18, *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

The local church is figuratively likened to a body. The human body is an “assembly” of many parts; but does a random pile of skin, flesh, organs, bones, etc..., constitute a body? NO! They must be put together according to a plan.

In **1 Timothy 3:15**, the church is likened to a house. The house you live in is also an “assembly.” Does a dumped pile of bricks, timber, plaster, nails, and so on constitute a house? No! These materials must be put together according to a plan or blueprint. **A true biblical church is organized, and its blueprint is the New Testament.**

II. THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Acts 2:41, *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”*

The local church is indispensable for several reasons as revealed in the Word of God.

The early church had a record of the number of _____ together.

Acts 1:15, *“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)”*

Paul assayed to _____ himself to the disciples.

Acts 9:26, *“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.”*

It is imperative that every born-again Christian seek to join a local church!

A. The Local Church is Indispensable because of its Role to Saints

The local church exists for the spiritual growth of the believer.

A Place of Preaching & Teaching

It was common practice for the first century church to have teaching and preaching in its regular meetings. The local church is to be a place where believers grow spiritually through the teaching and preaching of God’s Word.

Within the church, believers _____ in the apostles’ doctrine.

Acts 2:42, *“And they continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine...”*

On the first day of the week Paul _____ unto them.

Acts 20:7, *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”*

God gave to the church both P _____ and T _____.

Ephesians 4:11, *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”*

A church that no longer teaches and preaches the Word of God has ceased to be a New Testament church. There are no substitutes for teaching and preaching.

Many churches has ceased to teach and preach the Word of God for fear of being offensive, and in doing so they have ceased to be a church where Christ is the head.

A Place of Fellowship

Fellowship is a vital part of the life of the church. The local church is a family of like precious faith.

Acts 2:42, *“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship...”*

Philippians 1:3-5, *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;”*

A Place of Protection

The local church is place that protects and keeps fellow believer accountable. Fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ is of great benefit to our spiritual health.

Acts 2:42, *“And they continued...in breaking of bread...”*

The expression “breaking of bread” refers to the observance of the Lord’s Supper as seen in **1 Corinthians 10:16**.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

The believer is to _____ himself when partaking in the Lord’s Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:26-28, *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”*

Those in leadership in the church are said to _____ for your souls.

Hebrews 13:17, *“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...”*

A Place of Prayer

Acts 2:42, *“And they continued...in prayers.”*

Believers continued with one accord in _____.

Acts 1:14, *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”*

Prayer was made without ceasing of the _____ unto God.

Acts 12:5, *“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”*

We are instructed to _____ in prayer.

Colossians 4:2, *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”*

B. The Local Church is Indispensable because of its Role to Sinners

The local church exists to accomplish the work of the Lord. The Great Commission was given to the local church.

The church is the pillar and ground of the _____.

1 Timothy 3:14-16, *“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 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. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*

Believers are _____, and must therefore be ready to preach the gospel.
Romans 1:14-15, *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also.”*

The Holy Ghost wanted Barnabas and Saul to be separated for the _____.

Acts 13:2, *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”*

We read about the work they were called to do in **Acts 14:21-23**.

They returned to Antioch after the _____ was fulfilled.

Acts 14:26, *“And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.”*

C. The Local Church is Indispensable because of its Role toward the Saviour

The local church exists to bring glory to God.

Who is to have the glory in the church? _____.

Ephesians 3:21, *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

Jesus Christ is to have the _____ in all things.

Colossians 1:17-18, *“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

The primary objective of the local church is to bring glory to God. Believers must never lose sight of that!

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

What does it mean to be a member of a church?

A worldly idea of church membership has crept into the minds of Christians today. There is a corrupt view of church membership today.

Example:

The world has its view of a membership. A person will pay certain dues, with the expectation of certain benefits and privileges. Individual members will attend an organization based upon when they want to attend. Members are typically not required to attend every event that is hosted by an organization, but when there is a vote or an opportunity for their voice to be heard they show up.

It is sad to say that many Christians treat the local church the same way.

A. The Prerequisites for Biblical Church Membership

Sincere Salvation

Romans 3:28, *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”*

There is only one way for a person to be saved. A man is only justified by faith without the deeds of the law. The membership of the church must only be comprised of born-again believers.

Scriptural Baptism

A Scriptural baptism is for **believers only**, by **immersion only**. We have already studied this issue in the previous lesson.

Acts 2:41, *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”*

Sound Doctrine

Doctrinal agreement is imperative for the local church. The sole authority for faith and practice must be the Word of God.

They continued steadfastly in the _____ doctrine.

Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The church is to be the pillar and ground of the _____.

1 Timothy 3:15, "...the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

What was taught by Paul, the _____ must be committed to faithful men, who will in turn teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:1-2, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Timothy was instructed to preach the word with all longsuffering and _____.

2 Timothy 4:1-3, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..."

Shared Responsibility

Believers have a responsibility one toward another. Those that do not behave in a Biblical way are to be excluded from church membership.

Read **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

A brother with unrepented sin must be taken _____ from among you.

Verse 2, "...he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

A brother with unrepented sin must be _____ out as old leaven.

Verse 6-7, "...a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened."

A brother with unrepented sin should not be kept _____.

Verse 11, "...not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

A brother with unrepented sin must be put _____ from among yourselves.

Verse 13, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

2 Thessalonians 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us."

B. The Pattern of Biblical Church Membership

The **Steadfastness** of the church member

We are not to F _____ the assembling of ourselves.

Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

We are stewards of the mysteries of God and should be found _____.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

The **Service** of the church member

What is believer to exercise within the local church?
_____.

Romans 12:3-6, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us..."

Our service is described as _____ to the Lord.

Acts 13:1-2, "As they ministered to the Lord..."

The **Submission** of the church member

What word is used to speak of the believer's submission? _____.

Hebrews 13:17, *“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.”*

The **Stewardship** of the church member

When was the collection of the saints held?

1 Corinthians 16:1-2, *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”*

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

Write down the definition of the church:

What does the word "church" mean? _____

Jesus Christ said, "_____ will build _____ church."

What are the Biblical requirements before a person can join a New Testament church?

What did Paul try to do when he came to Jerusalem?

Is it the will of God for every believer to join a New Testament church? YES or NO

Why is the local church indispensable? (List the three reasons given in the lesson.)

How many believers are to serve in the local church? _____

What organization has God chosen to accomplish His work in the world?

What must happen to a member who continues in unrepented sin?

What is required in stewards? _____

Are you a member of a New Testament local church? _____