

Series: Foundations  
C.R. 3-13-22  
“ The Church”

**Text:** Matthew 16:18

**Intro:** A few years ago a Pastor put a question on social media that asked, “What is the point of the church”? After a few hours he had multiple responses, and as you could imagine many opinions. By far the most interesting comment was not a response to the question, but an observation about the wildly divergent answers. The comment read, “If you ask any of the employees at Chick-Fil-A what the purpose of the company is, they will all say the same thing.

Why is it that we have such varying opinions about the church? Could it be that we are not sure about what the purpose of the church is? It appears that as we read scripture that the early church was not confused about what their purpose was. But like most things that man gets his hands in, confusion takes hold.

Over the past few weeks we have looked at some things that make up our foundation. Why we do what we do, and why we believe what we believe. We have looked at scripture, salvation, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and today the church. Is the church important? Is it relevant anymore? Why should we join a church? What is the purpose of the church? Hopefully we can address many of these questions today.

**1) The Church is God’s Plan.**

- a. Our text today indicates today that Jesus was going to build a church, and that all of hell would not stop the mission and purpose of the church.

- b. Jesus made this statement to a handful of men that along with Paul would be tasked with starting churches all over the known world at that time.
- c. Their purpose was clear. As Jesus ascended, they were told to go into all the world, preach the gospel, make disciples, baptize the believers, and continue to teach them what had been commanded.
- d. Then, as these followers joined together in communities where Jesus was treasured and people were cared for (Acts 2:37-47), their long-term strategy for spreading the good news about Jesus was starting more churches.
- e. It is no accident that most of the New Testament is comprised of letters written to what we might call “church plants.”
- f. Finally, these new churches were started as leaders were equipped to share the gospel boldly, to serve God faithfully, and to start even more churches (Acts 14:21-23; 2 Tim. 2:1-2; Titus 1:5-9).
- g. Throughout the N.T. we see churches formed in communities, leaders chosen to lead those churches, and the work of Christ being established in that local community.
- h. In Revelation John was commanded to pen down letters to individual churches.
- i. This was and is God’s plan. The Church was birthed by God and is vital.

## 2) The Purpose and Mission of the Church.

- a. “The whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3), but one day “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14)—everything that happens in between those realities is mission.
- b. We are here to bring honor and Glory to God. To point the world to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

- c. God has chosen to use communities of redeemed men and women as flesh-and-blood examples of the transforming power of his glory.
- d. All over the world there are communities of people who know what it is to have been lost, but be found, to be blind but now see, to be redeemed.
- e. Yes, all the redeemed make up the universal church, but God created a plan that in our community we can join with other believers, be discipled, be strengthened, do missions, and point a lost world to a loving Savior.
- f. The church is, in fact, the sole entity that God has entrusted with both the capability and the responsibility of displaying and declaring his glory to the world. There is no 'plan B,' in other words. There is no "Church is nice and all, but I'm going to be a Christian on my own." (*Ponder*)
- g. More than anything else, God's glory is displayed in and through Christ-exalting, neighbor-loving, gospel-advancing churches.
- h. The church loves one another, lifts each other up, cares for the dying, prays for one another, comforts the broken-hearted, runs to the needs of its community, and becomes the hands and feet of Jesus.

### 3) The Purpose of Church Membership

- a. In joining a church, you make visible your commitment to Christ and his people. Membership is one way to raise the flag of faith. You state before God and others that you are part of this local body of believers.
- b. When you join that local body, you are saying I believe as it believes, I support what it supports.
- c. Paul wrote to churches. Only a handful of his letters were written to individuals, and they were mostly to Pastors.

- d. In the N.T. believers attached themselves to their local church. Believers belong to churches.
- e. Joining a church in such an environment makes a counter-cultural statement. It says “I am committed to this group of people, and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get.”
- f. **Deyoung:** We prefer to date the church-have her around for special events, take her out when life feels lonely, and keep her around for a rainy day. Membership is one way to stop dating churches and marrying one.
- g. Church membership keeps us accountable. When we join a church, we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are placing ourselves under leaders and submitting to their authority (Heb. 13:7). We are saying, “I am here to stay. I want to help you grow in godliness. Will you help me to do the same?”
- h. **Mark Dever:** Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well.
- i. Membership matters for the Pastor. ...shepherd the flock of God that is among you. (1 Peter 5:2)
- j. How do we define “the flock”? The best way I know to answer that question is to look at my church’s membership list. These are the believers who have committed themselves to our local church. These are the believers I am most responsible to serve.
- k. Church membership clarifies who the flock is.

- l. We must always remember this: Jesus is not indifferent about the church. Jesus died for the church. He gave his life to redeem a people for himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation on the planet (Revelation 7:9)
- m. We cannot overstate the level of Christ's commitment to the church. So why would we ever think lightly about our own commitment?
- n. When we take the formal step of belonging to a church in membership, we affirm the truth that we belong to Christ and his people, and we dedicate ourselves to caring for the people Jesus loves, which brings him great honor.