

Session 1: What is the Church:

The nature and life cycle of the church

Three key passages:

- **The Promise: Matthew 16:18**
- **The Commission: Matthew 28:18-20**
- **Fulfillment: Acts 2:40-47**

Part 1: Defining the church:

- **The term:**
 - **Church: ἐκκλησία:** We are a called-out assembly
 - **Elect: ἐκλεκτός:** We are assembled because He has called us
 - **Basic Explanation:**
 - **2 Corinthians 4:6**
 - **Romans 10:14-17**
- **The body of Christ:** All true believers are a part of the body of Christ.
 - **Colossians 1:18**
 - **Ephesians 5:23**
 - **Matthew 16:18**
- **Local assemblies:** This is the overwhelming focus of the New Testament.
 - **Acts 2:41**
 - **Acts 20:28**
 - **Titus 1:5**
 - **Revelation 2:5**
- **Why this concept matters:**
 - The local church is a living organism.
 - It is a body of believers formally united and committed to one another to submit to Christ's instruction to the church regarding its doctrine and practice.
 - Since we are alive, we are constantly experiencing change.
 - New members are added through evangelism.
 - New members are added through transfer.
 - We experience generational change and the birth of children that we pray will one day embrace the faith and be added through evangelism.
 - We can be healthy and strong or unhealthy and weak.
 - We can reproduce ourselves through sending people out.
 - We can die because we are failing to grow.
 - We can become so internally focused that we split through strife, and the cycle of growth starts over or the church dies.
 - We go through lifecycles.

Part 2: Understanding the lifecycle of local churches:

- **Organic life:**
 - **Birth:**
 - **Early years:**
 - **Adolescence:**
 - **Early Adulthood:**
 - **Middle Age:**
 - **Later Years:**

Part 3: Keeping a fresh, biblical perspective: Revelation 2:2-5

- **Actual health is tied to core issues:** "I know thy..."
 - **Work:** Active service that impacts the Kingdom.
 - **Patience:** Not getting ahead of what God is doing.
 - **Discernment:** Sound doctrine
 - **Conviction:** an unwavering commitment to hold fast to what is true.
 - **Endurance:** Not quitting when we encounter difficult seasons.
- **Actual health goes deeper than those core issues:** "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee..."
 - **"You have left:"** This indicates that all these good things were empty at their core.
 - **"Your first love:"**
 - We must love Him supremely.
 - Our church cannot be about numbers or influence.
 - It must always be about a deep-rooted love for Christ.
 - If we fail to keep things right at the foundation, we are in danger of eventual death as a church.
 - **"Remember...Repent...do the first works"**
 - Think back.
 - Let the truth sink in and change how you think.
 - Start back over again.
- **The church is always God's church:** "Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick..."