

The greatest **enemy of Christianity is false diluted religion**. Religion always distorts the truth.

Although much of religion presents itself as pleasant and undemanding, much of it is heretical religiousness, steeped in centuries of tradition

Our culture treats the church like a product to consume

That means many people approach church the same way they approach a restaurant

The question becomes, **What do I get out of it?** Do I like the music? Was the Bible study interesting?

But biblically, the Church is not a product. The Church is a people

The Church is not something we consume; it is something we belong to. It is not a religious service provider; it is the body of Christ

It is **not built** around personal preference, comfort, or convenience; it is built on the Lordship of Jesus Christ

**Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 1 Corinthians 12:27 NKJV**

If the Church is a body, then I am not merely a customer. We have a **place**, We have a **purpose**, We have a **responsibility**

I do not come only to receive; I come to worship, serve, encourage, give, pray, grow, and help build up the body

Consumer Christianity says, **I will stay as long as my preferences are met**. Biblical Christianity says, **I am committed because Christ has placed me in His body**

Consumer Christianity looks for comfort; Biblical Christianity calls us to faithfulness

Here is the danger when we treat church like a product: we begin to evaluate it by personal taste instead of biblical truth

We become critics instead of servants, we become spectators instead of disciples, we become shoppers instead of worshipers

But **Jesus did not die to create a religious marketplace**. He died to redeem a people

**Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28 NKJV**

That is why we must be careful with the Church. What we casually critique, Jesus sacrificially purchased with His own blood

The Church may not always meet **every preference**, but it is still precious to Christ. The **music** may not always be our favorite. The **Bible study** may step on our toes

But the Church is **not valuable** because it is **perfectly polished**. The Church is valuable because it belongs to Jesus

Instead of asking **What can I get out of this service?** The better questions are, **Did I worship God? Did I receive His Word? Did I encourage someone? Did I use my gifts? Did I help strengthen the body? Did I leave more surrendered to Christ?**

The Church is **not man's idea**; it is Christ's possession

Normally, when many people hear the word **church**, they think of a place

They think of a building with a steeple, pews, coffee, bulletins, songs, sermons, potlucks, children's ministry, and maybe the occasional thermostat debate (**true**)

But biblically speaking, the Church is much more than a building

The Church is not brick and mortar. The Church is not merely a Sunday service. The Church is not a club for those who want to act "religious"

The Church is the people of God, the body of Christ, the household of faith, the bride of Christ

Jesus said, I will build My church!

That means the Church belongs to Jesus. It is founded on Jesus. It is sustained by Jesus. It is sent by Jesus. And one day, it will be presented spotless before Jesus

### **What is the Church, biblically speaking?**

The word translated **church** in the New Testament is the Greek word **ekklesia**, which means an assembly, a gathering, or a called-out people

Biblically, the Church is **not first a location**. It is a **people called out of darkness** and brought into the **kingdom of Christ**

**But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9 NKJV**

Notice what Peter says. The Church is: **Chosen**, we belong to God by grace, **Royal**, we serve the King, **Holy**, we are set apart for God, **God's own special people**, we are His possession

And then Peter tells us **our purpose**: "that you may proclaim the praises of Him"

That means the Church is not merely saved **from** something. We are saved **for** something

We are called out of darkness so that we can shine the light of Christ

Jesus did not say, I will build your church. He said to Peter: I will build My church **Matthew 16:18**

That one word **My** matters to me, because the Church belongs to Christ

**Pastors, Deacons, Committees, Congregations, Denominations** do not own the Church

Jesus owns the Church because Jesus purchased the Church

The value of the Church is not **determined** by attendance numbers, budgets, buildings, programs, or even popularity

Because the Church is the body of Christ, no faithful part of the body is unnecessary

**For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12 NKJV**

The Church is designed for **unity without uniformity**

We are **not all the same**, but we belong to the same Savior

We do **not all have the same gifts**, but we serve the same Lord

We **do not all have the same function**, but we are part of the same body

A disconnected Christian is **like a hand trying to live apart from the arm**. It may still be a hand, but it cannot function as it was designed to

**Jesus did not save us into isolation**. He saved us into a body

What is the Church for?

**The Church exists to worship God**

**Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Psalm 95:6 NKJV**

The first purpose of the Church is to worship, exalt Him, adore Him, thank Him, confess Him, and submit to Him

Worship is not merely the **music portion** of the service

We worship when we sing, obey, pray, hear His Word, repent, and give

### **The Church exists to make Disciples**

Jesus gave the Church a mission - *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 NKJV*

The mission is not merely to **make attenders**, not merely to make **religious consumers**, not merely to **make fans of Jesus**

- The mission is to make disciples

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, learns from Jesus, obeys Jesus, and helps others follow Jesus

Jesus continues: *Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. Matthew 28:20 NKJV*

So the Church is **not just called to reach people**. The **Church is called to teach people**

**We call** people to come to Christ, and then we help them grow **in Christ**

The Church exists to **proclaim the Gospel and then equip the Saints**

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Ephesians 4:11 NKJV*

*For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12 NKJV*

The Church exists to build up one another and to be the **Salt and Light**

*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14 NKJV*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16 NKJV*