

What is the Church?

We live in a time where it feels like the importance of the church is diminishing. We certainly have the stats to reinforce our feelings. If unchurched Americans were their own nation, they would be the 8th largest nation on the planet. Yet, out of the 156 million unchurched, 2 out of 3 say they are spiritual. How can this be? Perhaps it is because a growing number believe they don't have to go to church to be a Christian. How much is the local church a part of your life? And, what does all of this have to do with being rooted, firmly established in Jesus Christ?

I. The Importance of the Church

A. Built by God

1. Daniel 2:44: *In the days of those kings, the God of the heavens will **set up** a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and this kingdom will not be left to another people. It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever.*

B. Built by Christ

1. Matthew 16:18: *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not **overpower** it.* Not even Jesus' death would stop its coming.
2. God has rescued you from the oppression, brutality, and slavery of Satan and sin.

C. Christ died for it

1. Ephesians 5:25: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and **gave himself** for her.*
2. This is not about being part of an institution .. it is about being in the living, dynamic family of God.

II. An Assembling of God's People

A. *Ekklesia*, in its first-century context, it identified secular gatherings of people, comprised of political, community, or other types of assemblies. It could even refer to a riot.

1. 1 Thessalonians 1:1: *To the **church** of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
2. A unique spiritual identity. An actual group that gathered for regularly constituted meetings.

B. Something Special: An occasion for reverence, sobriety/seriousness, self-examination, and gratitude.

C. A gathering of God's family

1. 1 Timothy 3:15: *...I have written so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's **household**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*
2. Ephesians 2:19: *So, then, you are ... fellow citizens with the saints, and **members** of God's household,*

D. The Church is Not:

1. A building; A human institution; or a denomination. Scripture knows of only one church.
2. 1 Corinthians 12:13: *For we were all baptized by one Spirit into **one** body—given one Spirit to drink.*

III. Why you need to be a part of it

A. It provides you with an opportunity to encourage others

1. Hebrews 3:13: *But **encourage** each other daily, ..., so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.*
2. Encouragement has the power to change lives.

B. It involves you in helping others through difficult times

1. Romans 12:15: *Rejoice with those who rejoice; **weep** with those who weep.*
2. The comfort we give our brethren is priceless.

C. It helps you help others fight back against sin

1. Galatians 6:1–2: *Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted. **Carry** one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
2. The support and care we receive is vital.

IV. As We Close...

A. You cannot have Christ and not be a part of his church. When you get Jesus, you get the church.

B. You need to be in fellowship with your brethren. Are you a faithful member of the church?