

Theology 2
The Nature & Role of the Church
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*The church is one of the few visible forms of a corporate relationship among believers. The Christian life is not a solitary matter. Conversion leads the individual into the fellowship of a **group of believers**. That collective dimension of the Christian life we call **the church**.*

The Nature of the Church

- Because they have a common Savior and are indwelt by the same Spirit, members of the church should demonstrate **a unity** that can't be found in the world (Acts 4:32, 9:31).
- In the NT, the word "church" has two senses. First, it denotes **the universal church** (Matt. 16:18). It also refers to a group of believers in a given *geographical* location – a **local church** (examples – 1 Cor. 1:2, 1 Thess. 1:1).
- Biblical Images of the church
 - The People of God (2 Cor. 6:16) – a common OT description of Israel, the concept is applied to the NT church as well
 - The Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12ff) – Christ is the head of the Body (Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:10) and we make up its various members
 - The Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17) – The Spirit gives life to Christ's church and it is sustained by the word of His power and leadership

The Functions & Officers of the Church

- Various models of the church's function have been suggested (purpose-driven church - Warren, Total Church Life – Coleman, etc.)
- Erickson's list of Functions
 - **Evangelism, Edification, Worship, and Social Concern**
 - At first glance it seems to be a good list, but it doesn't appear to be as comprehensive as we might like
- A Simple Model of Church Function
 - Vertical – The church exists to **worship** (bringing glory to God – 1 Cor. 10:31)
 - While worship is often personal, here we need to emphasize corporate worship (Heb. 10:25).
 - Horizontal – The church exists to **make disciples** (Matt. 28:19-20)
 - Of those outside (evangelism) and those inside (baptizing & teaching)
 - Discipleship can take a multitude of modes – prayer, preaching, teaching, ministry, fellowship, encouragement, edification, etc.
 - **The Gospel** lies at the heart of the church's ministry (Rom. 1:16)
- The Officers of the Church
 - Two offices mentioned in Scripture
 - Bishop/Pastor/Elder – 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4
 - Deacon – 1 Tim. 3:8-13