



BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

What is the Church?

1 INTRODUCTION

For our growth, God has given us some very important tools. He hasn't left us without help! We have already studied how the Bible is a vital tool. As we saw earlier, God has given us His Word through Scripture, so that we will be ready for every good work (II Tim. 2:16-17) and how through knowing His Word, we can be prepared to live life in a godly way (II Peter 1:3-4).

God has also given us the tool of the church.

- ✎ What comes to your mind when you hear the word church?

It is vital that we have a biblical understanding of what the church is and what the church is not.

2 THE MEANING OF CHURCH

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There are several misconceptions about church, so let's start by addressing some common misconceptions.

Misconception 1: Church is a building.

Though this has become one of the meanings of the word (let's go help clean the church), it is not the primary meaning.

The Greek word used in the New Testament literally means a "called out assembly." This means a group of people that were called out to assemble together for a purpose.

READ Acts 19:28-32

Here, a group of silversmiths were very angry at Paul. They made a living by making and selling statues of the gods of their time. While they were doing this, Paul was preaching against idols. The silversmiths gathered a group together to kill Paul. The word used to describe this gathering is the same Greek word used for "church." The meaning is an assembly of people called out to gather together for a purpose.

- ✎ What are we called out from?

This brings us to another misconception:

Misconception 2: I can go to church without actually going to church.

This misconception takes many forms. People will say things like, "My 'church' is when I'm fishing on a lake. That's when I feel closest to God." Or, "My 'church' is when I'm all alone with my Bible. I don't need to go to church to go to church."

The problem is that church, by definition, is an assembly. It's a gathering of people. If people are not gathering together to worship and serve God, it is not a church.

READ Hebrews 10:24-25

🔗 What does this text say about the importance of gathering together?

🔗 Why does a church gather together? (vs. 24)

Misconception 3: Church is just a place to go on Sunday mornings.

It's just another appointment on my schedule to check off. Though it is true that we do gather together on Sunday, just showing up and sitting is just the starting point. The Bible uses very descriptive language when talking about churches.

READ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

🔗 To what does Paul compare the church?

🔗 How does this dispel the myth that church is just a place I attend?

READ Romans 12:3-8

🔗 What does this passage teach about the church?

According to these passages, as well as many others, God has designed each of us to fulfill a specific function within the church body. Just as the Pastor's role is leading, teaching, and the worship team's role is to lead worship, we are all called to fulfill a specific and needed role within the church!

🔗 According to Romans 12:6 we are to do what with our gifts?

🔗 What role might you play in the church?

3 THE MAKE-UP OF THE CHURCH

Let's look at a couple more passages that talk about the church, to gain a better understanding of the concept of church.

Look back at 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are immersed (baptized) into His body. We become part of the "church" at that point.

READ Ephesians 1:22-23

The Church here is every believer in the world. We are all a part of His Body. This is what is referred to as the Universal Church. All believers, everywhere, make up His Body: The Church.

But, as already mentioned, a key component to the definition of church is the idea of gathering together. Since it is impossible for every believer across the planet to gather in one place at one time, we have local assemblies of believers, also known as the local churches.

In the opening statements of Galatians (Gal. 1:2), Ephesians (Eph. 1:1), Philippians (Phil. 1:1), and Colossians (Col. 1:2), Paul addresses either the "church" or the "saints" that gather together in those places. These are local assemblies of believers.

In fact, we also see another important distinction about the makeup of a local church.

READ Philippians 1:1

- ✎ What groups of people are mentioned?

God ordained two offices for the local church. Pastors (also called Elders and Overseers) and Deacons.

Pastors have to meet specific qualifications.

READ 1 Timothy 3:1-7

- ✎ List some of the qualifications:

Pastors also have very specific tasks. In fact, these tasks are outlined in a number of passages of Scripture (Acts 20, I and I Timothy and Titus for example). However, Paul summed up the position of Pastor well in Ephesians 4:11

READ Ephesians 4:11-16

- ✎ What other job is linked specifically to Pastors in this verse?

- ✎ What does that tell us about the job of a Pastor?

- ✎ In addition to teaching, what else are Pastors called to do?

It is a pastor's primary to job to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. A Pastor should teach, lead, and shepherd people in an effort to help their congregation to fulfill their roles in the church. When this is done well, the body will be rooted in sound in doctrine and will grow closer to being like Christ.

In addition to Pastors, churches also have Deacons.

They, too, have specific qualifications.

READ 1 Timothy 3:8-13

- ✎ List some of the qualifications of Deacons.

READ Acts 6:1-4

- ✎ What were some of the qualifications for Deacons mentioned here?

- ✎ What are the deacons to be doing?

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① What were the deacons to be doing?

① Why?