

Steps of a Disciple

Part Six - Church: Living In Community

Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Jesus, the Son of God, in this statement elevates dramatically the importance of the church and that it is His.

- Jesus is not talking about a building people meet in.
- Jesus is not talking about a denomination people join.
- Jesus IS talking about “a group or assembly of persons called together for a particular purpose.” (Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Church. In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 1, p. 458). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.)

THAT is what a church is!

#1 - The Bible Speaks Of Two Different Types Of Church

1. The Universal Church

The Church (universal) is the body of Christ made up from the saved from every nation, I Corinthians 12:12-14

From this passage, we learn that each and every believer of Jesus Christ is baptized into the universal church—the body of Christ. The Universal Church of Jesus Christ is called in Scripture:

- The Body Of Christ, Ephesians 1:22-23
- The Temple Of God, Ephesians 2:19-22
- The Bride Of Christ, Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 19:7

2. The Local Church

The Church (local) is a body of believers made up from the saved in a specific area, I Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 4:16; Philippians 4:15

So, the New Testament teaches us that every person who receives Jesus Christ as their Savior is automatically baptized into the Universal Church of Jesus Christ, and assemblies of local believers form a Local Church of Jesus Christ. A Church isn't a building, but instead is the saved people who meet together under the banner of Jesus Christ.

Some would say, well, if I am automatically baptized into the Universal Body of Christ, why do I need to become a part of the Local Church? It's a good question. Let me explain to you how the Bible answers that question.

#2 - Why Should I Be A Part Of A Local Church?

You see, God never intended for you to live your Christianity successfully all on your own. Christianity was designed from the very beginning, the Day of Pentecost, to be lived out in community. That's why I have called this sermon, "Church: Living In Community."

A. God Has Purposes For The Local Church, Acts 2:41-47

In this passage, we see the purpose of a local assembly/church.

1. Teaching/Studying The Bible Together, vs. 42 "devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching"
2. Fellowship With Other Believers Together, vs. 42 "to the breaking of bread"
3. Communal Prayer Together, vs. 42 "and to prayer"
4. Testify Of God's Power Among Them, vs. 43 "everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles"
5. Meeting Each Other's Needs, vs. 44-45 "and they began selling their property and possessions... as anyone might have need"
6. Worshiping God Together, vs. 47 "praising God"

It is within a local assembly that believers can express their spiritual gifts:

- A. To edify/build-up the church/body: I Corinthians 14:5, 12, 26; Ephesians 4:16
- B. To minister to one another: I Peter 4:10
- C. To glorify God: I Peter 4:11

B. God Says Not To Abandon The Local Assembly, Hebrews 10:23-25

- Within the context of a local assembly, we keep our faith straight, vs. 23
- Within the context of a local assembly, we motivate (stimulate) each other in acts of service, vs. 24
- Within the context of a local assembly, if we continue, we can encourage each other, vs. 25