

"You and Your Beliefs"—Ecclesiology

If you were to get in your car, and drive up and down every street within a 15 minute radius of this point, you would see some 97 signs with the same word on them. The buildings would all be different. But somewhere near each, either in front, or on the building, or beside the building, you would see the bold letters, C-H-U-R-C-H.

Are they all really churches? They all *claim* to be churches. But what really makes a church? People? A common cause? A religious commitment? A building with padded seats and a lecturn up front?

The Kiwanas Club has that. So do the Masons. So do lots of other groups.

Are they churches? No.

What then makes a church? This is key. To answer that question we must go to God's Word to find out. God told us in the Bible...

Outline of this week's and next week's lessons on the church...

I. The Identity of the Church: What is the Church?

A. The Universal Church (Mt 16:16-19; Eph 1:22; 4:4)

1. The Right Profession (Mt 16:16)
2. The Right Person (Mt 16:18)
3. The Right Purpose (Mt 16:19)

B. The Local Church (Rom 16:16; I Cor 1:2; Gal 1:2)

Definition: "The Church is that dynamic group of believers in Jesus Christ which the Lord promised (Mt 16:18), and the Holy Spirit established (Acts 2). The Church is founded upon the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and exists to announce to the world the redemption provided by Christ.

II. The Functions of the Church: What does the Church do?

- A. Exaltation
- B. Edification
- C. Evangelism
- D. Extension

III. The Biblical Images of the Church: What is the Church like?

- A. The Body of Christ (Rom 12:4-8)
- B. The Temple of God (Eph 2:21)

- C. The Household of God (I Tim 3:15; I Pt 2:5)
- D. The Bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27; II Cor 11:2)
- E. The Flock of God (Ps 23; Jn 10:14, 16)
- F. The Family of God (Rom 8:14-17)
- G. The Vine and the Branches (Jn 15:1ff)

IV. The Mission of the Church: Why does the Church exist?

- A. The Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20)
- B. Ordinances
- C. Our Mission Statement at WBC

V. The Organization of the Church: How does the Church Function?

- A. Leadership
- B. Denominations

Tonight: The Doctrine of the Church

Discuss: Let's begin by sharing...What makes the church so special?

I. The Identity of the Church: What is the Church?

The English word "church" is the translation of the Greek "ekklesia." It means "called out." The church is a group of people who have been "called out" from the world, and "called out" to God. Thus, the church is a distinct organism (not an organization like the "Lion's Club" etc). The term basically depicts an "assembly or gathering" (whose background is the Jewish synagogue).

The Scriptures present the concept of the church from 2 perspectives.

A. The Universal Church (Matt 16:16-19; Eph 1:22; 4:4)

Matt 16:13-20

What are the marks of a true church? In this foundational text, Jesus said the true church has 3 things:

1. The Right Profession (16) "Thou art the Christ"
2. The Right Person (18) "On this ROCK..." (=Christ)
3. The Right Purpose (19)

The Universal Church is all the saints from Pentecost to the present, in heaven and earth, sometimes called "the Church Triumphant."

Eph 1:22 "...head over all things to the Church."

Eph 4:4 "there is one body..."

Eph 5:25 "...even as Christ also loved the Church..."

Discuss: What observations can we make about the church from these texts?

B. The Local Church (Rom 16:16; I Cor 1:2; Gal 1:2)

The term "church" appears 114 times in the Bible.

Does the term most commonly refer to the Universal Church or local churches? Actually, all but a handful of references refer to local churches.

Rom 16:16

I Cor 1:2

Gal 1:2

Definition: "The Church is that dynamic group of believers in Jesus Christ which the Lord promised (Mt 16:18), and the Holy Spirit established (Acts 2). The Church is founded upon the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and exists to announce to the world the redemption provided by Christ.

Discuss: Every once in awhile you'll meet a person who says (or at least thinks), "I am part of the universal church. I don't think I need to participate in a local church." How would you respond to such a person?

II. The Functions of the Church: What does the Church do?

The Church was founded on the Day of Pentecost. The event is described in Acts 2. What did the early church do? Let's look at the familiar passage of Acts 2:42...

2:42 "And they continued..."

1. Apostles Doctrine--Teaching
2. Fellowship--Edification

3. Breaking of Bread--Communion/Corporate Worship

4. Prayer

What kind of impact did such a church have on its community?

2:47 "...favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church...saved."

Discuss: What stands out to you about the church from this passage?

What does God intend for the church to do? Four functions...

A. Exaltation

This is the primary responsibility of the church. To exalt God, to worship God.

Phil 3:3 "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit..."

Jesus Christ created His Church to worship. We gather to worship.

What is worship? An active response to God whereby we declare His worth.

When does the church worship?

--when God's people meet corporately, and honor God with their lips

--when God's people honor God with their lives

Col 3:17

Heb 13:15-16

Discuss: What can we do to help people who don't seem to grasp the importance of corporate worship?

B. Edification

Eph 4:11-12 "...for the edifying of the saints..."

What is edification? The word "edify" means "to build up." It refers to the development and growth of the church (spiritual and numerical growth).

How is the church edified?

Eph 4:15 "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up..."

The Word of God is the primary means of edification. The Spirit uses the taught Word to bring maturity to the church. Edification leads to the following...

1. Fellowship ("koinonia")--I Jn 1:3

2. Ministry

Mk 10:45 "For the Son of Man did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister..."

Mk 9:35 "...If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last and servant of all."

2 Cor 4:5 "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ...and ourselves your servants..."

Note: There are around 40 "one another" commands in the NT.

C. Evangelism

Acts 1:8 "And ye shall be my witnesses..."

Matt 28:19 "...make disciples..."

Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread. Our task is not to hoard the great blessings we have in Christ, but to share them with others. He is the Bread of life. We must proclaim Him to a world that is hungry.

Discuss: What happens to a church that fails to give attention to evangelism?

But it doesn't stop there. In our day of "Mega-churches" we need to see a fourth function...

D. Extension

Extension is the establishment of other local churches throughout the world. God wants us to have a heart for needy people in the next community, and in the next country. We must look on the fields whitened unto harvest.

Acts 1:8 "...unto Judea... Samaria ...uttermost parts of the world."

Sum: What does God expect the church to do? Exaltation, Edification, Evangelism, Extension. That's God's design.

Think about something...

Problem: Churches can become apostate.

Discuss: When does a church cease to be a church?

Challenge:

Discuss: Why is it contradictory for a person to say he/she loves Christ, and yet disdain and avoid the church?

Key: The Church is important to Christ. As we'll see next week, the Church is the Body of Christ.

[\[1\]](#) These unedited notes were prepared for use in a Wednesday evening, discussion-oriented Bible study at Wheelersburg Baptist Church in Wheelersburg , Ohio . Although the notes are in draft form, I trust the seed thoughts contained will be used by our gracious God for your edification. –Pastor Brad Brandt