



Why Church?



What is a person to do once they have placed their faith in Christ as their personal Savior?



Where do they go for Biblical teaching and fellowship?

Where can they find people like themselves?



Believer's are not to be "Lone Rangers" who fend for themselves and who are left to their own resources.



As a matter of fact it is God's will for Believers to attend church regularly !



Hebrews 10:25 says...

"And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." **NLT**



In **Acts 2:42** we see that the example of the early church where...



"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." **NASB**



The local church is a place where Believers can...

- ➔ Love one another - **John 13:34-25**
- ➔ Encourage one another - **Hebrews 3:13**
- ➔ Serve one another - **Galatians 5:13**
- ➔ Teach one another - **Colossians 3:16**



For these reasons and more, church attendance, participation, and fellowship should be regular aspects of a believer's life.



Weekly church attendance is not in a legal sense "required" of Believers, but it is God's will and it makes logical sense that a follower of Christ would have the desire to worship God, receive His Word, and fellowship with other Believers.

Questions to ponder...



At what level should a Believer participate in his/ her local church?

☞☞ See **1st Corinthians 12:12-31**



Who created/ started/ instituted the Church?

- The word “church” or “churches” is found in the New Testament over 100 times. The majority of the times the word “church” is used to refer to a local congregation.
- In the Bible the word “church” is a translation of the Greek word “*ekklesia*” which means “a called out assembly”.
- The word church first appears in **Matthew 16:18** when Jesus tells Peter, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”
- The “rock” here is referring to the statement Peter had made, in **Matthew 16:16** “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”. In other words, Jesus is the “rock” upon which the church is built. Anyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ alone to save them from their sins becomes a member of the church
- The church began on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover when Jesus died and rose again. (**Acts 2**)



What the Church is not...



The church is not Israel !

- ✗ Israel and the church are not synonymous terms.
- ✓ The Apostle Paul speaks of the church as being one new man that is composed of believing Jews and believing Gentiles.



Ephesians 2:13-22 says...

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. **NASB**



Colossians 3:11 says...

“there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.” NASB

FACT

But God still has a future for national Israel.

FACT

He is not finished with national Israel.



Romans 11:23-24

²³ And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?



The church is not a continuation of the Synagogue !

- Admittedly, there are similarities between the church and the synagogue, but there are also marked dissimilarities.
- In **Matthew 16:18** Jesus said that He would build His church. This could not refer to the synagogue because the synagogue was already in existence.
- When the Apostles preached in the synagogues, their message was evangelistic. When people heard the Gospel and got saved, they left the synagogues and formed a local body of Believers, a local church.



The church is not a Denomination !

- We often speak of various denominations as churches, but the word “denominations” does not occur in the Scriptures.
- As a matter of fact **1st Corinthians 1:11-17** warns against denominational style divisions in the church.



What the Church is...

The church is referred to in two senses...

#1 The Universal sense:

- The church consists of all those, in this age of Grace, that have been saved and resultantly been placed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.



1st Corinthians 12:13

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."



1st Peter 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"

The term is used in the universal sense because...

- ➔ Christ spoke of building His church, not churches - [Matthew 16:18](#).
- ➔ Christ is said to love the church and gave Himself up for the church [Ephesians 5:25](#).
- ➔ Christ is purifying and sanctifying the church - [Ephesians 5:26](#).

The term is used in the universal sense...

When one considers the figures used in the bible to represent the church.

- ➔ The church is referred to as "the body of Christ" - [Colossians 1:18](#) + [Romans 12:4-5](#).
- ➔ The church is referred to as "the bride of Christ" - [2nd Corinthians 11:2](#) + [Ephesians 5:24,32](#) + [Revelation 19:6-20:6](#).
- ➔ The church is referred to as "the vine" - [John 15:1](#)

#2 The Local sense:

- In the local sense the word "church" is used of the group of professed Believers in any one locality.
 - ➔ Jerusalem - [Acts 8:1](#) + [Acts 11:22](#)
 - ➔ Ephesus - [Acts 20:17](#)
 - ➔ Cenchrea - [Romans 16:1](#)
 - ➔ Corinth - [1st Corinthians 1:2](#) + [2nd Corinthians 1:1](#)
 - ➔ Church of the Laodiceans - [Colossians 4:16](#)
 - ➔ Church of the Thessalonians - [1st Thessalonians 1:1](#) + [2nd Thessalonians 1:1](#)

- Sometimes the term is in the plural...
 - ➔ The churches of Galatia - *Galatians 1:2*
 - ➔ The churches of Judea - *1st Thessalonians 2:14*
 - ➔ The churches of Asia - *Revelation 1:4*



How is the church to be governed?



The New Testament speaks of two church offices: Pastors & Deacons.

- The importance of these offices is underscored by the high moral & spiritual requirements set for those who would fill them.

Pastor/ Bishop/ Elder:

- Three terms used interchangeably in the New Testament to denote the person who is to give leadership in each church.
- Each name emphasizes the role that is being played.

"pastor"

In the greek = "*poimen*" = "shepherd"

Ephesians 4:11



Definition:

- As a "*poimen*" tends, feeds, protects and leads his sheep, so the pastor performs a similar function for his congregation.

"bishop"

In the greek = "*episkopos*" = "overseer"

Acts 20:28
Philippians 1:1
1st Timothy 3:2
Titus 1:7
1st Peter 2:25



Definition:

- This word "*episkopos*" (from which we get Episcopal) is used a total of 5 times in the New Testament, always in reference to someone who has authority to lead in ministry.
- It can be defined as one who superintends or looks after the church, being vigilant to protect it from false doctrine.

"elder"

 In the greek = "*presbuteros*" = "older one"

Definition:

- Occurs 72 times in the New Testament, and it has a range of meanings.
- The majority of the time (57 times) it is translated "elder" and means a position of leadership in the church, like a pastor or other member of church leadership.
- It differs from "*episkopos*" in that it also assumes the quality of old age. In other words, elders are leaders, in part, due to the wisdom and spiritual maturity they have obtained through a life-long walk with Christ. In fact, the word "*presbuteros*" is also translated at times to mean "older man" (10 times).

 The qualifications for the Pastor/ Bishop/ Elder are spelled out in detail in...

 **1st Timothy 3:1-7**



Three terms used interchangeably in the New Testament to denote the person who is to give leadership in each church.

- In **Acts 20:17-28** Paul gives a final word of exhortation to the church in Ephesus.
 - ➔ He begins in **verse 17** by addressing the "*presbuteros*" (elders) of the church, yet a few verses later in the passage, Paul refers to these same men in **verse 28** as "*episkopos*", or overseers.
 - ➔ By describing the same group one time as "*presbuteros*" and a second time as "*episkopos*", Paul seems to consider the two words to be synonyms for church leaders.
- In **Titus 1:5**, Paul reminds Titus that he left him in Crete with instructions to appoint "*presbuteros*" (i.e., elders) over every city.
 - ➔ In this context, an elder is clearly a position of leadership over a church, yet just a few verses later Paul begins to describes the qualifications for an elder using the word "*episkopos*" (i.e., overseer) to describe this same group.
 - ➔ Once again, Paul seems to use these two words for leader interchangeably.



It seems fair to conclude from these two passages...

- ➔ That scripture makes no clear distinction between a "*presbuteros*" (elder) and an "*episkopos*" (overseer) in terms of their role in leadership.
- ➔ Therefore, we should consider these two terms to refer generally to leaders over a church, whether they serve as a pastor, an elder or both.
- ➔ This fact also suggests that Paul was not especially concerned over the particular organizational form that church leadership assumed, though he does make clear he expects a plurality of leadership (i.e., overseers, elders) rather than just a single leader.

Deacon:

"deacon"



In the greek = "*diakonos*" = "servant/ helper"



Definition:

- The word appears 29 times in the New Testament.
- Of those 29 times, it is translated (by the NASB)...
 - As "deacon" 3 times
 - As "minister" 7 times
 - As "servant" 19 times.
- The best definition of the duties of a "*diakonos*" is one who ministers to the church through their service.
- "*diakonos*" are part of the leadership within a church, and they express their leadership primarily through acts of service for the benefit of the entire congregation (including other leaders).
- The best example of the appointment of "*diakonos*" within the church is found in **Acts 6** where Stephen and six other men are appointed to positions of service by the primary leaders in that church.
- Notice that several of these men eventually became evangelists themselves (e.g., Stephen, Philip), demonstrating that those who begin ministry in positions of service as "*diakonos*" are not precluded from eventually taking other roles in leadership.



In **1st Timothy 3...**

- ➔ Paul begins in **verse 1** by stating the qualifications for an “*episkopos*” (overseer).
- ➔ Later in the chapter, Paul switches to describing the qualifications for a man to serve as a “*diakonos*” (1st Timothy 3:8).
- ➔ By these verses, we learn an important additional piece of information. We can see that Paul envisions a clear break in leadership between overseers/elders on the one hand and deacons on the other hand.
- ➔ While both groups are considered leaders in the church, the first group (overseers/elders) appoints and rules over the second group (deacons).



To summarize then...

- ➔ “*diakonos*” are lesser leaders focused on service
- ➔ “*episkopos*” and “*presbuteros*” are primarily pastoral leaders over a congregation.

In conclusion...

- A classic New Testament church ought to be led by a plurality of overseers, including older, more mature elders who guard the flock, together with a cadre of secondary leadership called deacons focused on serving the body.
- Though churches often depart from this ideal form, that certainly doesn't preclude God from working through those churches nonetheless, as every church has its flaws and God accomplishes His work through us in spite of our form, not because of it.