

CHURCH DEFINED

The English word **church** - is a translation of the **Greek word ekklesia (G1577)** which means, ***“a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly.”***

In a Christian sense – this word means, ***“an assembly of Christians gathered for – or called out for - worship in a religious meeting.”***

“The church is the community of all true believers for all time.” - Wayne Grudem

“The church is the community of God’s redeemed people – all who have truly trusted Christ alone for their salvation.” - ESV Study Bible

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

1. THE CHURCH IS PEOPLE, NOT A BUILDING

As the root meaning of Church in the Greek reveals – the church is people, not a building.

The physical structure – or lack thereof – is not part of the Bible’s definition of church.

Romans 16:3-5: *Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 5 Greet also the church in their house.*

2. THE CHURCH IS A PHYSICAL GATHERING OF PEOPLE

The church is by its very nature a physical gathering of people.

Martin Drysdale: *“If the gathering (ekklesia) is not gathering, and the assembly is not assembling, then the church is not churching.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Hebrews teaches us that the church is a physical gathering of people – and that attendance is not optional.

3. THE CHURCH IS UNIVERSAL & LOCAL

“There is ultimately only one church, the global community of believers on earth plus those already in glory. In this world, however, the one church takes the form of countless local churches, each of which must be viewed as microcosm, outcropping, and sample of the larger whole.” ESV Study Bible

The universal church consists of everyone - everywhere, who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. All those who have received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ comprise the universal church.

The local church is a group of professing believers in Jesus Christ who – as part of the universal church - gather in some location on a regular basis.

4. THE CHURCH IS BOTH VISIBLE & INVISIBLE

1 Samuel 16:7 *7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: **man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.**”*

2 Timothy 2:19 *But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “**The Lord knows those who are his,**” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”*

The Invisible Church is how God in heaven sees it. He sees the hearts of all those in the local church gathering and knows those who are his.

The Visible Church is how Christians on earth sees it. We see those people who join a local church gathering – we see the outward appearances and behaviors – but we cannot see the heart.

5. JESUS IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Imagines of Christ and The Church

- Branches on a Vine – with Jesus as the True Vine (**John 15**)
- The Bride of Christ – With the church as the bride and Christ as the Groom (**Ephesians 5, Hebrews 12**)
- A Building - with Christ as the builder and cornerstone (**Matthew 16:18, 21:42, Ephesians 2:20-22**)
- The Body of Christ – with Christ Jesus as the Head (**Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12**)

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Christ Jesus is the unquestioned leader of the church.

- He builds the church.
- He sources and sustains the church.
- He guards and protects the church.
- He guides and directs the church.

It is the duty of everyone in the church to submit to His rule, reign, and authority in everything.

Church Leadership Structure

Christ has given the church a leadership structure in the form of elders and deacons (**1 Peter 5, James 5, Acts 6, 20, Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3**) who care for the physical and spiritual needs of the church.

- These leaders are described by scripture as shepherds (**1 Peter 5**) and stewards of Christ’s Church (**2 Timothy 2**) - not owners of it.
- The church is instructed to obey and pray for their leaders (**Hebrews 13**)

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

1. MINISTRY TO GOD - WORSHIP

The first purpose of the church is to do what it was created to do (**Isiah 43:7, 1 Corinthians 10:31**) – to bring Glory to God through Worship.

Colossians 3:16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, **singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

“Worship is not merely a preparation for something else: it is in itself fulfilling the major purpose of the church with reference to its Lord.” – Wayne Grudem

2. MINISTRY TO BELIEVERS - NURTURE

The 2nd purpose of the church is the building up of believers to maturity in the faith.

Ephesians 4:11-16 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

The Church ministers to believers in 4 ways:

Acts 2:42 *“They devoted themselves to the 1) apostles' teaching and to the 2) fellowship, to the 3) breaking of bread and to 4) prayer.”*

1. Teaching Sound Biblical Doctrine
2. Providing a Place of Fellowship for Believers
3. Observing the Lord's Supper
4. Praying

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's instruction, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.” – John Calvin

3. MINISTRY TO THE WORLD – EVANGELISM

The church ministers to the world through evangelism – the proclamation of the gospel in word and deed (**Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-15, Acts 1:8, 1 Peter 3:15**)

The local church does this by:

- Training, equipping, and encouraging its members for the work of evangelism. (**Mathew 28, Ephesians 4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**)
- Giving church resources to support the work of evangelism locally and around the world (**Philippians 4**)
- Caring for those in distress (**James 1:27**)