

# Foundations of Truth

## Week Six – The Church

March 9, 2022

*“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18*

### What is the Church?

❖ Church – ekklesia (Greek) - a called out assembly; a town-hall type of meeting

The disciples were not familiar with our thought of church, but they would have been familiar with an ekklesia assembly (Acts 19:32-41). We use the word church to refer to a place or a building, but the ekklesia was not a reference to a **place**, it was a reference to a **people**, an assembly of people that had been called out and gathered for a purpose. **So Christ is saying that He is going to build His assembly.**

### Two expressions of the church

#### 1. Universal and Invisible (to us, not God)

- **Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25; Hebrews 12:23**

This use of the word church is in reference to the believers of all ages. We refer to this as the universal, invisible church. It is **universal** in that it is comprised of all the saints of all the ages from all parts of the world and it is **invisible** in that represents a work that is being done in the hearts of men as they trust in Christ as their Savior. Some refer to this as the “church as God sees it.”

#### 2. Local and Visible

- **Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 14:33, 16:19; Galatians 1:2**

Local churches like us are a different application of the word church. First Baptist Church of Merritt Island is not universal nor is it invisible, at least not until it is time to recruit new people to change diapers in the children’s ministry, then you can’t find First Baptist Church Merritt Island with a search warrant. Only Kidding.

The vast majority of times ekklesia is used in the New Testament it is referencing the local assembly of believers. It is the local, visible expression of Christ’s church in this world. **The local church is the backdrop for the entire New Testament and is the vehicle by which Christ is building His universal church.**

### New Testament Backdrop

- ❖ In the Gospels, we see Christ is establishing the foundation for the church through His life, death, and resurrection.
- ❖ In Acts, we find the birth and growth of local churches throughout the Roman Empire.
- ❖ Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians are written to address specific issues in specific local churches.
- ❖ 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are written to instruct and establish the leaders of local churches.
- ❖ Philemon and John’s letters are addressed to churches meeting in people’s homes.
- ❖ Hebrews is written to a Jewish audience and contains the command to join in the community of a local church by not forsaking the assembling of themselves together.
- ❖ James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, writes to believers and instructs them to call the elders of the church when they are sick.
- ❖ The letters of Peter contain instructions to the leaders of the local church, whom Peter calls “shepherds of God’s flock”.
- ❖ Jude writes to warn local churches of false teachers that were sneaking into local assemblies.
- ❖ The Revelation is addressed to seven local churches in Asia.

## **Defining a Local Church**

What makes a local church a church? Is my family a local church? Is a bible study on a college campus a local church? (Acts 2:41-27)

1. **Believers in Jesus** (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Corinthians 1:2)
2. **Regular Assembly** (Acts 2:46; Hebrews 10:25) – the definition of *church* is *assembly*. To be a church means to be an assembly. The early church gathered each Lord's Day, Sunday. (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) They likely gathered more often as small groups in homes (Acts 2:46).
3. **Baptism** (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41) – In the New Testament, baptism is the outward declaration of our faith in Jesus. So, if the local church is to be comprised of believers in Christ, it naturally flows that those believers are making their faith known through baptism.
4. **Lord's Supper** (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34) – the observance of the Lord's Supper is in the context of coming "together as a church." Even more, a failure to "observe the body" as part of the Lord's Supper is expressly condemned.
5. **Praise and Worship** (Acts 2:47; Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; 5:18-19)
6. **Teaching the Word** (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 4:2-4)
7. **Prayer** (Acts 2:42)
8. **God-ordained leaders** (Acts 2:42; 14:23, 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17–22; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1–5)

*A local church is a group of baptized believers in Jesus who regularly gather to worship God, teach and learn the Word, pray, and observe the Lord's Supper under the leadership of God-ordained leaders.*

## **Describing a Local Church**

### **The Church is the Body of Christ.**

- Jesus is our Head. (Colossians 1:18)
  - *The head directs the actions of the body.*
  - *The invisible God becomes visible through the body.*
- Each believer is placed as a Spirit-gifted member of the body. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)
  - Diversity in the body does not impair, it enhances. (12-16)
    - ◆ *Feet are not ears.*
    - ◆ *God has made us all different.*
    - ◆ *God is happy with the way He made you.*
  - Each member must assume his responsibilities in/to the church. (17-19, 27-31)
    - ◆ *Noses should smell.*
    - ◆ *Discover your gifts.*
    - ◆ *Perform your function.*
  - *Each member must accept his limitations. (20-26)*
    - ◆ *Knees are not necessary for phone calls.*
    - ◆ *Understand that you cannot do everything.*
    - ◆ *Do not become jealous of other people.*

## Why we practice Formal Church Membership.

What we mean by formal church membership is that individuals are required to make a personal and intentional commitment to be counted as a member of this local church.\

1. It enables us to follow biblical teaching concerning spiritual leaders. (Hebrews 13:17)
  - If you aren't committed to a specific local church, which leaders are you called to obey and submit to?
  - If we don't recognize those who are (and aren't) part of this local church, how do our leaders know why they are responsible to lead?
2. It enables us to follow biblical teaching concerning church discipline. (1 Corinthians 5; Matthew 18:15-17)
  - The church is responsible to confront individuals who are living in open, persistent, unrepentant sin...if they say they are a believer.
  - How do we know who is inside the local church if no one has made a commitment to be a part of the church?
3. It enables us to know who our "one anothers" are.
  - "...Be at peace with each other." (Mark 9:50)
  - "...Wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)
  - "...Love one another..." (John 13:34)
  - "...Love one another..." (John 13:34)
  - "...Love one another..." (John 13:35)
  - "...Love one another..." (John 15:12)
  - "...Love one another" (John 15:17)
  - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..." (Romans 12:10)
  - "...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
  - "Live in harmony with one another..." (Romans 12:16)
  - "...Love one another..." (Romans 13:8)
  - "...Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)
  - "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..." (Romans 15:7)
  - "...Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)
  - "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16)
  - "...When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (I Cor. 11:33)
  - "...Have equal concern for each other." (I Corinthians 12:25)
  - "...Greet one another with a holy kiss." (I Corinthians 16:20)
  - "Greet one another with a holy kiss." (II Corinthians 13:12)
  - "...Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)
  - "If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other." (Galatians 5:15)
  - "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)
  - "Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2)
  - "...Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)
  - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)
  - "...Forgiving each other..." (Ephesians 4:32)
  - "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
  - "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)
  - "...In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)
  - "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
  - "Bear with each other..." (Colossians 3:13)
  - "...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
  - "Teach...[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
  - "...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
  - "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
  - "...Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
  - "...Encourage each other..." (I Thessalonians 4:18)
  - "...Encourage each other..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
  - "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
  - "Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13)
  - "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
  - "...Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
  - "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
  - "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
  - "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
  - "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
  - "...Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
  - "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
  - "...Love each other deeply..." (I Peter 4:8)
  - "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
  - "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
  - "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..." (I Peter 5:5)
  - "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)
  - "...Love one another." (I John 3:11)
  - "...Love one another." (I John 3:23)
  - "...Love one another." (I John 4:7)
  - "...Love one another." (I John 4:11)
  - "...Love one another." (I John 4:12)
  - "...Love one another." (II John 5)

## **The Mission and Ministry of the Church**

- To make disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- To minister to its members. (Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:12-13)
- To minister to those in need. (Galatians 2:10; James 1:27)
- To witness to the world. (Acts 1:8)

### **Passage for Meditation – Ephesians 2:4-10**

*11 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.*

**Belief Statements:** Concise statements of truth that are taken directly from the text.

**Example:** Christ desires unity and maturity in His church.

**Application:** Am I living in unity as part of Christ's church? How might my words or actions be divisive?

**Pray:** Ask the Lord to grow you in maturity to be the kind of believer who promotes unity.