

## What it Means to be a Church

- I. A church of Jesus Christ is more than just a group of people that meet together weekly to listen to a sermon.
  1. A church is the body of Christ (**1Co 12:27**).
  2. A church is the house of God (**1Ti 3:15; 1Pe 2:5**).
  3. A church is the temple of God (**1Co 3:16**).
- II. To be a church means being committed.
  1. There is nothing more important in a Christian's life than to be in God's church.
    - A. A Christian should seek *first* the kingdom of God (**Mat 6:33**).
    - B. We should desire to be in the church all the days of our lives (**Psa 23:6**).
    - C. It should be the one thing that is desired above all else (**Psa 27:4**).
    - D. They who dwell in God's house are blessed (**Psa 84:4**).
    - E. A day in God's house is better than a thousand days anywhere else (**Psa 84:10**).
    - F. The church should be preferred above one's chief joy (**Psa 137:6**).
    - G. God loves His house more than any of ours (**Psa 87:2**).
  2. There is no looking back when one puts his hand to the plough (**Luk 9:62**).
  3. Church members must never forsake the assembling of themselves together (**Heb 10:25**).
- III. To be a church means being accountable.
  1. A church is accountable to Jesus Christ.
    - A. Jesus is the head of the church and the church is subject unto Him (**Eph 5:23-24**).
    - B. A group of people that meet regularly to study the Bible together are not accountable to Jesus Christ like a church of the same size is.
    - C. Jesus judges His churches and will remove their candlesticks if they persist in sin and disobedience (**Rev 2:5,16; Rev 3:3**).
    - D. To whom much is given much shall be required (**Luk 12:47-48**).
  2. A church is accountable to each other.
    - A. Church members must submit to one another (**Eph 5:21; 1Pe 5:5**).
      - i. Submit *v.* - I. 1. *refl.* and *intr.* To place oneself under the control of a person in authority or power; to become subject, surrender oneself, or yield to a person or his rule, etc.
      - ii. Subject *adj.* - I. 1. That is under the dominion or rule of a sovereign, or a conquering or ruling power; owing allegiance or obedience to a sovereign ruler or state, a temporal or spiritual lord, or other superior.
    - B. A church will have to sit in judgment of each other.
      - i. Judgment must begin in the house of God (**1Pe 4:17**).
      - ii. A church must exclude commonly known sinners from its membership (**1Co 5:1-13**).
      - iii. A church must withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly (**2Th 3:6,14**).
      - iv. A church must mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine and avoid them (**Rom 16:17**).
      - v. A church must judge between two brethren when an offense has occurred between them (**Mat 18:15-17**).
      - vi. A church must judge between brethren when one has a matter against another (**1Co 6:1-8**).

3. A church is accountable to a pastor who gives an account of them to God (**Heb 13:7,17**).
  - A. This means being accountable to him for your church attendance.
  - B. When a church has a resident pastor, he is there seeing their demeanor and behavior each Sunday.
    - i. This is quite a different experience than being a non-resident member.
    - ii. There is a potential danger for a church that has no pastor present on a regular basis (**Jud 18:7, 27-28**).
  - C. Things may be a little cleaner without an ox in the stall, but much increase comes with having the ox around (**Pro 14:4 c/w 1Co 9:9-10**).
  - D. Ask your brethren in Minneapolis how significant the difference is between being non-resident members, or even being a church with a non-resident pastor, compared with being a church with a resident pastor.
  - E. There is no replacement for face-to-face interaction (**2Jo 1:12**).
- IV. To be a church means making personal sacrifices.
  1. The sacrifice can include affliction, reproach, being made a gazingstock, prison, or the robbery of one's possessions (**Heb 10:32-34**).
  2. Another sacrifice is sacrificing our money (**Heb 13:16 c/w Phi 4:15-18**).
  3. Communicate v. - 1. *trans.* To give to another as a partaker; to give a share of; to impart, confer, transmit
  4. The one sacrifice that we all have to make is to offer our body as a living sacrifice (**Rom 12:1**).
  5. The most simple sacrifice that must be made by us all is the sacrifice of our time to get our butt in a chair in church on Sunday morning.
- V. To be a church means being supportive of each other.
  1. Brethren in a church must bear each others' burdens (**Gal 6:2; Heb 13:3**).
  2. When one member of the church suffers, all the members suffer with him (**1Co 12:26; Rom 12:15**).
  3. Church members must esteem each other more highly than themselves (**Phi 2:3-4**).
  4. Church members must prefer each other before themselves (**Rom 12:10**).
  5. A church must pray for each other (**Jam 5:16**).
- VI. To be a church means financially supporting the church and the pastor.
  1. A church should financially support a pastor so that the pastor can devote himself full time to the ministry (**1Co 9:6-14**).
  2. A church should be prepared to take up a collection for needs in the church or in other churches (**Act 11:27-30; 1Co 16:1-2**).
- VII. To be a church means being involved in evangelism.
  1. The word of the Lord should sound out from a church as it did in Thessalonica (**1Th 1:8**).
  2. A church should pray that that the word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified (**2Th 3:1-2**).
- VIII. To be a church means being the object of Satan's assaults.
  1. Since the day Jesus built His church, the gates of hell have tried to prevail against it, but will never be allowed to do so (**Mat 16:18**).
  2. The devil has persecuted the church throughout history (**Rev 12:11-17**).
  3. He will continue to do so until the last moment of time (**Rev 20:9**).
  4. Every true church is in Satan's crosshairs.
- IX. The size of the church is immaterial.

1. Don't despise small things (**Zec 4:10**).
2. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord (**Pro 15:16**).
3. Better is a little with righteousness (**Pro 16:8; Psa 37:16**).
4. He that is faithful with little will be faithful with much (**Luk 16:10-11**).
5. Jesus' flock is a little flock (**Luk 12:32**).
6. Noah's church only had eight members (**2Pe 2:5**).
7. A church can function as a church with as little as seven members.
  - A. Jesus taught the proper method of conflict resolution in a church where one brother offends another, which, to properly function, would require a church of at least seven members (**Mat 18:15-17**).
  - B. A brother offends another brother (2 members) (**v.15**).
  - C. If the brother doesn't hear the other brother, then one or two members are called in as impartial witnesses (2 members) (**v.16**).
  - D. If the brother doesn't hear them, then it must be taken before the church (**v.17**).
  - E. At that point, it's 3 vs. 1 (the offended brother plus two witnesses vs. the offending brother) when it goes before the church.
  - F. Assuming that the church will be an impartial jury and could side with either the alleged offender or the offended, there would have to be at least three additional members (3 members) in the church in addition to the four already involved in the controversy, so that it would be possible for those three members to side with the alleged offender and make the vote 3 vs. 4 (the offended + two witnesses vs. the alleged offender + three witnesses) in favor of the alleged offender.
  - G. This makes a total of at least seven members in the church.
  - H. It is based on this reasoning that I would not start a church with fewer than seven members.