

I. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

- A. Today, the Church is defined and expressed in countless ways. Yet the Church is not free to shape itself according to culture, personal preferences, or modern trends. Jesus Christ is its Head, and His Word establishes what the Church is to believe, how she should worship, function, disciple, and gather corporately.
- B. The Greek word Jesus uses to describe His church in Matthew 16 is "Ekklesia" which is defined as "a called-out assembly or congregation". The church is a people called out of the world that exists primarily for God's pleasure, but also to make known the knowledge of God, and to fulfill God's eternal purposes.
- C. The true church is not an organization, or an institution, or a political party, it's a living organism made of people who have been born again, uniquely fitted together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and guidance of the Spirit of God.
 - 1. ***²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. -Eph 2:21-22***

II. HEBREWS 10:23-25

- 1. ***²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.***

III. SOME CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- A. The letter of Hebrews appears to have been written to predominantly Jewish Christians who were deeply familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the tabernacle.
- B. The primary purpose of the letter is to encourage the believers who were experiencing increasing pressure because of their allegiance to Jesus to continue to persevere in their faith and allegiance to Jesus.

C. In this section of the letter the writer puts a call for the church to do four things in order to have persevering faith.

1. Hold fast to our confession of our hope

- a) Disciples of Jesus must remain faithful even when it is costly

2. Consider one another in love and good works

- a) Christian perseverance and growth is not merely an individual responsibility; it is also a corporate responsibility.
- b) The spiritual health of each individual member of the body should be the concern and responsibility of the whole, not just the pastor.

3. Don't neglect meeting together

- a) The concern is not an occasional unavoidable absence. It is the deliberate or habitual neglect of the Christian community. *Forsaking regular and consistent gathering, is to put at risk one's ability to persevere under pressure.*

4. Exhorting one another

- a) The purpose of gathering is not simply to occupy a seat during a religious service. It is to encourage, strengthen, and help one another remain faithful to Jesus.

(1) but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.-Heb 3:13

5. Gather with urgency in light of Jesus' return

- a) The gathering of the saints is inseparably connected to our preparation for the return of Jesus Christ. Spiritual readiness is not developed in isolation, but cultivated within the community of believers as we encourage, strengthen, and exhort one another to remain faithful until His coming.

- D. One of the defining characteristics of the Church is its commitment to gathering together as the Body of Christ. Throughout the New Testament, Scripture provides clear instructions concerning the purpose of these gatherings and how believers are to conduct themselves when they assemble.

IV. SEVEN ESSENTIALS OF A CHURCH GATHERING

1. WORSHIP | MINISTER TO GOD

- a) The primary purpose of a church gathering is centered around God first not man. We gather to minister, bless, thank, and worship Him together.

(1) ***speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,*²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father-Eph 5:19**

- b) The primary way transformational discipleship happens is through "corporate beholding"

(1) ***But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.-2 Cor 3:18***

2. PRAYER

- a) The primary identity of the church is a house of prayer for all nations, therefore prayer is the lifeline of the church. Prayer is how the body(church) stays connected to the Head (Jesus)

(1) ***Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men-1Tim 2:1***

- b) When we gather we should pray for others and receive prayer from the saints.

3. COMMUNION

- a) Honor and remember the blood

(1) ⁴² ***And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. -Acts 242***

4. PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE

- a) ***Until I come, give your attention to the public reading, to exhortation, and teaching. -1 Tim 4:13***

5. PREACHING AND TEACHING THE BIBLE TO BUILD AND EQUIPP

- a) ²***Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. -2 Tim 4:2***
- b) ¹¹ ***And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ Eph 4:11-12***

6. FELLOWSHIP AND SERVING ONE ANOTHER

- a) ²⁴ ***And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works- Heb 10:24***
- b) ⁷ ***But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, - 1Jn 1:7***

7. SPIRIT LED GATHERING

- a) A church gathering should be thoughtfully prepared and biblically ordered, yet remain dependent upon and responsive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

(1) ***The Church should welcome the Spirit's work and His gifts without manufacturing spiritual experiences.***

(2) ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.-Acts 13:2

(3) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. 2Cor 13:14