

The Church – Acts 2:41-47

Last week we looked at the simplicity of the foundation for our faith. While God is complex, His plan to save all of humanity is simplified for us in John 3:16. The Gospel, as given to us by God, the Father, is simply believing and trusting in Jesus. And if we do this in the manner God commands, it will be with *“all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”* (Mark 12:30 ESV) In other words... with your everything. The Bible also informs us that a gathering of people who love Jesus as Lord and Savior is what constitutes a church. When I consider the information found in the New Testament, it leads me to consider a much deeper question; What exactly is the church, or what exactly should church look like? How do you think most people on the street would answer this question? How would you answer this question if you were approached by someone in Walmart?

My guess is that most people would refer to the church as “that building with the fancy doors and the big, tall steeple on top,” or, “that building on the corner of main and church street.” Most of the time we use similar language when referencing our own church. We say things like, “I go over to that small church on Hwy 107 across from Gerber’s apple stand, the one on the right just before you get to Oconee State Park.” While those answers would not be wrong, we need to understand that those answers are also not sufficient answers for the question at hand, “What is the church?” What do you think a more succinct answer would be? **The church is not a building but is instead *THE PEOPLE* who gather at a building.**

Show video – What is the Church? |Bible Story| LifeKids 2:19

<https://youtu.be/rms6KePjIZ8?si=N96VbycbanGSIoYt>

Even when we all agree that church is the people, we need to make sure we understand what church is supposed to be like when God’s people gather. Contrary to what some may say, the Bible is filled with information to help us grasp what church truly is. Again, it’s not the location, or the building. It’s so much more than that.

Let me begin by stating that God’s faithful followers found in the Old Testament, because of the completed work of Jesus, are now considered part of the universal church, which is made up of all true believers across all of time. Think about it, when we look at the New Testament, the term, “church” always referred to an assembly of believers and followers of Jesus. Prior to Jesus, God’s followers met in temples, synagogues, tabernacles, or chapels. It wasn’t until the Day of Pentecost that the distinct nature of the local church was established. Remember, Peter’s powerful message which we learn in **Acts 2:41**, added about three thousand new members to the local church. Take note of what happened next, because this is where we find what church is truly supposed to be. **Read Acts 2:42-47.**

Look at the actions of these early believers. What were they like? Devoted to each other, to the teachings (Scripture for us), to times of fellowship, to prayers, to meeting needs, to worshipping together, to praising God. I love that they had favor with people and according to verse forty-

seven, with God also. Why do you think they had favor with God and with others? Everything they did was centered on Jesus and following His examples. They were living out the Great Commission as given by Jesus in **Matthew 28:19-20**. It was this early group of Jesus lovers that influenced Paul to instruct the church on what a healthy local church should be like.

Read Colossians 3:1-17 – These words speak to the hearts of individuals but also provide a beautiful picture of what belonging to a local church body is supposed to be like.

Along with these examples, the Bible is filled with other examples which help us answer the question; What is church?

The most detailed instructions from Paul concerning the church can be found in his letter to the Ephesians where in chapter 1, he establishes that Christ is the head of His body, which is the church. **Read Ephesians 1:22-23**. A body without a head would be lifeless and useless. When believers are submitted to the head, which is Christ, then the body is alive spiritually and willingly follows the leadership of the head.

Later in Ephesians, Paul teaches that the church is like the Bride of Christ. He uses the respective roles of a husband and wife to establish that the church is to love Christ, as a bride loves her husband. Likewise, we are to acknowledge that it is the husband who chose the wife and loves the wife. Never forget that Jesus loves you and chooses you. Hopefully, if you haven't already, you will choose Him also.

Finally, the most recognized example of what church should be, can be found in Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians. We do not have time to look at his teaching in detail today, but I encourage you to take some time this coming week and study 1 Corinthians 12-14. Paul in chapter 12 describes in more detail his teaching from Ephesians that the church is the body of Christ. Paul then provides a fitting example of how every member of the local church has a spiritual gift and is to use it for the edification or building up of the entire body as a whole. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31**.

Let me conclude by saying that every person sitting here this morning and every person sitting here in the weeks to come, are here for a reason. I hope you know that Jesus loves you and chooses you. And, when you choose Him, you become a part of something bigger than just a building sitting on the side of Hwy 107 where people occasionally meet. While the sign out front assigns a name to this local body of believers, I want you to know that MFBC is not a place to attend when you need a spiritual shot in the arm or if you have nothing better to do. MFBC is not here for any kind of show or entertainment. If you've trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, MFBC is a place where you can join with other believers as part of a body that is following the head, Jesus Christ. You have a place. You have a role. You have a family where God is the Father, Jesus is the Center, and the Holy Spirit is source of power for helping us fulfill all the things God has in store for us in this community.