

## Foundation Study 9: The Church

What do the following verses say about the church?

### 1. Acts 2:41

**The Church came into existence at Pentecost.** The term church means called-out group or assembly. It began in Acts 2 through the work of the Holy Spirit as He placed people into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### 2. Ephesians 3:21

**The church exists to glorify God.** God is glorified as His attributes are displayed. His attributes are displayed by a community of believers as they engage in the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) then carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). In other words, God is glorified as His people worship Him and then make disciples of all nations.

The purpose of the Church is also echoed in the following words in Scripture, “God told Pharaoh, “I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth.” (Romans 9:17). Different age, different agent, same purpose. God created the Church to display His power (the gospel) and spread his fame throughout the earth (my making disciples of all nations). The Church is God’s chosen agent through whom He makes Himself known to the world today.

### 3. Colossians 1:18

**The church is headed by Jesus Christ.** (Ephesians 1:22–23, 5:23–24; Colossians 1:24). As its head, Christ is the ultimate authority. He controls, directs, and gives life to the church. As His body, the church is the representation of Christ to the world. Other figures of speech that define the relationship between Christ and the church are

- vine and branches (John 15:5),
- shepherd and sheep (John 10:11), and

- cornerstone and building (Ephesians 2:19–21)

#### 4. **Matthew 16:13–18**

**The church is built on the testimony of faith in Christ.** There are two expressions of the church: local and universal. The local church is designated by location (Revelation 2:1; Colossians 4:15) and is composed of believers and unbelievers (Matthew 13:36–43, 1 John 2:19). It is made up of those who possess genuine saving faith and those who do not. The universal church is made up of all truly regenerate believers from all ages, nations, tribes, and tongues (Ephesians 3:10,13; Revelation 5:9, 7:9).

#### 5. **Philippians 1:1**

**The church is made up of saints, deacons, and elders.**

**Saint** is a term that refers to those who are set apart or holy. It refers to all true believers, not a selected class (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

**Deacons** serve under the authority of the elders to enable them (the Elders) to perform the ministry of the word and prayer (Acts 6:1–4). They are qualified based on 1 Timothy 3:8–13 and Titus 1.

**Elders** are the leaders of a local church. The term is also used interchangeably with Overseer and Bishop. Elder is the title; Bishop is descriptive. They are appointed and qualified based on 1 Timothy 3:1–6 and Titus 1:7–9. The duties of elders include the following:

- Overseeing and ruling (1 Timothy 5:17). The church is to have a plurality of elders (Titus 1:5).
- Preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17–18). The term pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11) refers to an elder who is to carry out both functions of pastoring (caring) and teaching (educating). It is a two-word description of one office.
- Shepherding (Acts 28:20).

- Guarding against false doctrine (Titus 1:9).
- Managing the church (1 Timothy 3:5).
- Modeling the Great Commission. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

## 7. 1 Corinthians 11:23–34, Matthew 28:19

**The two church ordinances (practices) are communion and baptism.** The term sacrament is not used here so as not to confuse it with a means of grace. Communion (also called the Lord’s Supper) is a memorial. Its purpose is to create a humble remembrance of the sacrificial and beneficial death of Christ until He returns. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward commitment. It communicates the believer’s public association with Jesus Christ. It is the wedding ring of the Christian faith. It is symbolic of the cleansing of forgiveness, the resurrection of the redeemed, and the union of the believer with Christ (Romans 6:5–11).

## 8. Acts 5:14

**The church is created to grow.** Ryrie states, “Building His church constitutes Christ’s principal work in the world today.”<sup>1</sup> The means of growth from a human perspective is obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20). Simply put, the church is intended to grow as believers make disciples of all nations. This is accomplished as believers go, teach, and baptize in such a way that their disciples repeat the process with others. This is called multiplication. The expansion of Christianity is the result of disciple-making churches.

The church can grow in varied circumstances. It can grow during a time of peace when there is genuine reverence for the Lord (Acts 9:31). Or it can also grow in the midst of profound suffering and persecution, which can purify the church and spread the gospel (Acts 8:1–4).

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<sup>1</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 455.

**9. Acts 20:17, 8:4**

**The church exists in two states, gathered and scattered.** Enns states, “The two overriding purposes of the Church can be delineated: gathered, ministering to the body, scattered, ministering to the world.”<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the gathered church is worship. The purpose of the scattered church is witness (Acts 8:1–4).

**Which verse meant the most to you? Explain.**

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<sup>2</sup> Enns, *Moody Handbook*, 365–66.