

The Church

In the words of Christ from Matthew 16:18 *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* The word “church” in the Bible means the “called out.” Those who have been *called out* of sin into the glorious light by Jesus’ saving grace make up the church.

The church is people, not a building.

It is certainly okay to refer to a building as the church. Please understand the true meaning of church is the saved people. Two other common names for the meeting place of the saints are tabernacle and temple. *Church* is the most common name for the meeting place of born again people.

The church is the body of Christ

Colossians 1:18 *“And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”* Collectively, the saints constitute Christ’s body. Each saint is called a *member* of Christ’s body.

Key purposes of the church

- *Storm the gates of hell*

Matthew 16:18 *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* The church is to take the fight to the Devil. We are to storm the Devil’s territory. The church is to expose the ways of the Devil. The church is responsible to tell folk what the Devil’s drugs and liquor will do to harm them. The church is to oppose the gay movement and warn folk of the sin it involves. The church is the ARMY of the living God.

- *Tell the world about Jesus*

Mark 16:15 *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”* This is called “the great commission.” It is not the duty of the United Nations to preach Jesus to mankind. It is not the duty of the Red Cross to preach to mankind. The United Nations and the Red Cross distribute humanitarian aid such as food and clothes and medicine. Some churches give food and

clothes to the needy. This is okay and commendable *after* they have done their part to spread the Gospel. Some churches do nothing to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ preferring rather to pass out humanitarian aide such as food and clothing. Their priorities are confused. Who is going to tell the world about Jesus if the church doesn't?

- *The keeper of TRUTH*

I Timothy 3:15 *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”* The *ground* means the resting place. The church is where truth is stored. The church is the storehouse for truth. Washington, D.C. is not the keeper of truth. Television is not the keeper of truth. Politicians are not the keepers of truth. The church is the keeper of truth! Then, the *pillar* represents height. The church is to raise the truth of Almighty God high for the world to see. If any man seeks truth, he should know to go to the church to find it! Has the church failed the world as keeper of truth? When I was a sinner, the church told me the truth that I was a sinner in need of a Savior. The church needs to return to the business of being the “pillar and ground” of the truth.

- *As his bride, represent Christ on earth*

God made man in the Garden of Eden. He named him Adam. God surveyed Adam and saw that he lacked something. Adam needed a “helpmeet” to make him complete. So, God took a rib from Adam, went away, and returned with the woman. The woman, named Eve, was presented to Adam as his helpmeet. Eve completed Adam. He no longer seemed to have a missing element once Eve was given to him. Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of Father God. He cannot be on earth. So, the church is Christ’s helpmeet on earth. We are his “completer” on earth. We fulfill Christ’s purpose on earth. The church represents Him, testifies of Him, and does His service on earth accompanied by the Holy Spirit.

- *Intercede for those in need*

In the words of Christ in Matthew 21:13 *“And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”* The trademark of the church should be praying. The church should lift up to God in prayer the sick, the needy, and the sinners. Who else is responsible to pray for those who

need prayer? Should Congress be praying for folk in need? No, that is the job of the church. When I was a sinner, the church prayed for me. I have been sick, and the church prayed for me. I have had spiritual needs, and the church prayed for me. The church must return to its duty of praying for those in need of prayer. This burden lies with the church. God help the church to return to prayer.

You and the church

I have been a member of a *local* church since the day I got saved April 11, 1965. *Local* church means the assembling together of groups of saints in local settings. I am a fanatic in regard to the *local* church. Why is this? There are many reasons. The number one reason is that the church got me saved. Congress did not lead me to Christ. School did not lead me to Christ. The *church* led me to Christ. Who led you to Christ? The church helped save my life and my soul. Since the time I was saved, the church has met many needs in my life. To folk who have no use for the church, I have one thing to recommend- search your soul and see if you are actually saved. If you are saved and not a part of a local assembly, you are cheating yourself. Find a local assembly that preaches the Gospel and get on board.

- *What you do for the church*

Time: attend all services unless hindered by mandatory work assignment (don't *volunteer* to work when church is in session, for God will be displeased), sickness, or family death. Don't join a church if you are a spiritual gypsy who likes to "visit around." You make us all look bad. Volunteer time in some capacity to help the church such as mowing, cleaning, missions and many other tasks. Devote time praying for the church every day. It is a poor church member who does not pray for the church DAILY.

Talent: every saved person is given a talent by God. You are given the talent so you will have something to give back to God during your Christian life. Then, you will not have to face Him empty-handed at the judgment of the saved. The talent is not for your use, profit, or notoriety. The church is the path used by God to return the talent to God. The church provides you a way to use your talent such as singing, playing instruments, teaching, soul-winning, and many more.

Treasure: tithes and offerings are to be given into God's storehouse as each person is prospered by God. I Corinthians 16:2 "*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*" Like

your home and your place of employment, money is required to operate the church. Tithes and offerings are not required if God does not prosper you. But, who isn't prospered by God? Tithes means one-tenth. If God prospers you with \$1.00 this week, give 10 cents to the church Sunday. If you are prospered \$1000.00 this week, give \$100.00 to the church Sunday.

Testimony: leave the church property equipped with a testimony that reflects Christ to the world by the life you live. Be an example in dress/appearance, speech, finances, and all manner of life. If you are determined to live a "double standard" lifestyle, don't disgrace a church by joining it. You are a disgrace to the church, the Bible, the cause of Christ, the Pastor, the membership, and the family of God. Next to your salvation, the most precious thing you possess is your *testimony*. You, the redeemed of the Lord, are the only Bible the world reads. You owe it to the church to uphold the things of God to the sinful world. By the way, it is pleasing to God to brag on the church to the world. Are you ashamed of your church?

- *What the church does for you*

Oasis: after you are saved, you are a traveler passing through this world on your way to heaven. Earth is no longer your home after you are saved. The church is a place to get a drink of water and refresh your soul on your journey to heaven. I go to church to receive spiritual vitamins to strengthen my soul. Often I get tired on my journey to heaven.

Worship center: God holds every saved soul accountable for worshipping the Lamb of God. The church provides you a place to do just that. At church you can sing to Him, give to Him, pray to Him, read and study about Him from the Bible, and lift your hand heavenward and yell "Praise the Lord!"

Learning center: the church gives you a free Bible education. Come to Sunday School, for all we do is study the Bible. Listen to the preaching of the Word. Bible is no longer taught in school or home or at work. Except for Bible college, about the only place to get a Bible education is church.

Safety harbor: the world is dangerous and getting more dangerous. Christians are fired upon daily. But, not at church. It is a sweet and safe place where the Devil is not welcome. I love the serenity of God's house, the church.

Hospital: some darts of Satan hit God's children. The world is cruel. Come to church for healing.

Investment: like to have blessings rain down upon you from heaven? Like to prepare an endowment for your children? Give to the church, and you will reap returns pressed down, heaped up and running over. The banks are currently paying $\frac{1}{4}$ percent interest on your investment. God pays 1000 percent and more. What would you give to see one of your children or friends saved from hell? Honor God, and He will honor you.

Social life: I don't have friends down at the tavern and neither do you. The only friends I have are my Christian/church family. I can't wait to get to church to see them. Church is to be a friendly place, a place where strangers can drop by and feel welcome.

Rescue squad: Most saints got saved in church. If not in church, the church came to our home and witnessed to us or organized a tent meeting where we got saved. The shopping mall will not win your children to Christ. God never commissioned the schools or governments to win souls. Souls are birthed into the family of God by the mother, the church. Where did you get saved?

With a heavy heart for all Bible-believing churches...Brother Hogan