

WHY I NEED A CHURCH

Let's open our Bibles to:
EPHESIANS 4:4-5:

'There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism.'
ESV

In Ephesians 5:29,30, Paul identifies that 'one body' as the church.

'For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body.' ESV

In Colossians 1:18 Paul says that Christ *'... is the head of the body, the church.'* ESV

- When you became a Christian, Jesus made you a part of His body, the Church.

Every Christian is a part of the “Universal Church” of Jesus Christ.

- We are united with Jesus – a part of His body; and due to our connection with Christ we're also united with every born-again believer.

We're part of something much bigger than a particular brand of Christianity.

- All Christians share common, foundational beliefs that transcend differences in worship styles, church organization, cultural adaptations and even particular doctrines that are not “testing truths” of Biblical orthodoxy.

When Jesus saved us, He brought us near to Himself and to the rest of the saved.

The Christian life is meant to be lived in community, --not in isolation.

SOME DAY WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE WORSHIPPING & FELLOWSHIPPING IN HEAVEN!

“Well, fellowshiping with other believers in eternity will be great, and I have no problem with the truth that I’m part of Jesus’ universal church.

But, I’m not so sure that I want to be part of a local church.”

- *I’ll never join a church again!*
- *I’m taking a break from church and just watching “church” online or on TV.*

Is it really all that important to participate in a church?

Yes! Because God’s Word tells us to!

Hebrews 10:25 “...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” NASU

- **To maintain spiritual health we need to be part of a local church. This is the pattern of New Testament teaching and practice.**

In every community where people were saved, churches were established.

- Jerusalem – Acts 5:11
- Antioch – Acts 11:26
- Every city where Paul preached – Acts 4:23

The New Testament gives us God's model for the Church.

MAYBE YOU CAN'T FIND A GOOD CHURCH, OR YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

Find a healthy church and get plugged in.

The Church is meant to be a place of life!

Let's look at **ACTS 2:42-47**

- The early Church was filled with **LIFE!**

THE MARK OF A HEALTHY CHURCH IS LIFE!

Let's use the word, **LIFE**, as an acronym to help us remember the marks of a good church.

There was **LIFE** because people were:



LEARNING the Word of God

A healthy church places a priority on Bible Study, --teaching & learning the Word of God.

The Church was birthed by the proclamation of the Word and continued in the study of the Word.

“And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle’s TEACHING...”

- **That’s why Bible study shouldn’t be a side dish at Church; it should be the main course!**
- **At our church, Calvary, the Bible is important, so we use it! We bring it with us and we use it!**

Throughout the years, people have often commented about how great it is to hear the sound of the fluttering of pages in church as people look up passages in their Bibles.

THE TOP PRIORITY OF THE EARLY CHURCH WAS KNOWING AND TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD! LEARNING.

That’s GOD’S PLAN because THE WORD OF GOD DOES THE WORK OF GOD!

HEBREWS 4:12-13 says:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

God’s Word is “active, operative, energizing, and effective.” (Amplified).

- **The Apostle Paul emphasized the power of the Word of God to work in our lives in**

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13 when he said:

“And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost is an EXAMPLE OF THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Acts 2) It wasn't long, but it was full of the WORD!

It could be read in 3 minutes or less, but every minute was packed with the power of the Word of God and the effect was stunning:

Verse Acts 2:37 says, *“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostle, “Brethren, what shall we do?”*

In 3 minutes the Holy Spirit used the Scriptures to convict 3000 lives!

A thousand people a minute were saved!

Nearly 17 people a second were being saved!

THE ONLY WAY TO GROW IS TO BE IN THE WORD. The Bible must be opened & seriously taught!

- Acts 5:42 *“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”*
- Acts 11:26 *“...And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and they taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”*
- Acts 15:35 *“But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord.”*
- Acts 18:11 *“And he [Paul] settled there [in Corinth] a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”*



LIFE happens in a church that's committed to preaching and LEARNING God's Word

We need a steady diet of the Word of God to grow in Christ. It says that *“they were continually devoting themselves to...”*

Paul tells us that *“all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness”*

2 Timothy 3:16.

- The apostles did their part, --they faithfully taught them, but those who heard had the responsibility to be

faithful in growing and learning what was taught to them.

We have God's guarantee that His Word will work in our lives, --we have God's promise!

ISAIAH 55:10-11 says:

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

L – LEARNING

Another reason there was **LIFE** in the Church was these believer's were:



– INTERCEDING – Praying

"And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to PRAYER."

- Reading through the book of Acts you'll be impressed with the prominence of prayer in early church.

THEIR PRAYER LIVES WERE IMPRESSIVE:

- Prayer was so natural to them, it was like breathing!

Prayer was a PRIORITY

- Acts 3:1 - They prayed 3 times a day, at the 3rd, 6th, & 9th hour.

Prayers was answered POWERFULLY.

- Acts 4:31 tells us the place where they prayed was shaken!

Their Prayers SET PRISONER'S FREE:

- Acts 12:4 - They Prayed for Peter in prison.

Through times of prayer & fasting MISSION OUTREACHES began:

- **Acts 13:3** tell us that They fasted & prayed & then laid hands on Paul & Barnabas.

They prayed IN TROUBLE:

- **Acts 16:25** - *"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."*

Church leaders were appointed after **PRAISING**

Acts 14:23 says: *"And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."*

L - LEARNING God's Word.

I - INTERCEDING through prayer.



Life is experienced whenever there is authentic:
- FELLOWSHIP

ACTS 2:42 says: *"And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to FELLOWSHIP,..."*

WHAT DOES "FELLOWSHIP" MEAN?

Our word, "Fellowship", comes from the Greek word "*koinonia*" which means *"sharing with someone in something"*.

Verses 46-47a give us a look into the life of FELLOWSHIP of the new-born church:

"And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple,

and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people...."

- FELLOWSHIP means sharing LIFE in Jesus' love!

THEIR FELLOWSHIP WAS EXPRESSED IN:

UNITY

It says they were *"...continuing with one mind..."* Acts 4:32a says, *"All the believers were of one heart and mind,..."*

In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

"Were the first Christians Communists?" I like Spurgeon's answer. He said, "They were not communists, they were Christians; and the difference between a communist and a Christian is this -- a communist says, "All yours is mine;" while a Christian says, "All mine is yours;" and that is a very different thing."

COMMUNION

"breaking bread" (vs. 46) is one of the NT terms referring to sharing the Lord's Supper together.

SHARING & CARING

Look at how they took care of each other:

ACTS 4:32b,34 – NLT *"...they shared everything they had...34 There was no poverty among them, because people who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need."*

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE for the world has always been wrapped up in people.

“Well, I like learning about God’s Word, and I believe in prayer, but I think I can do without this church thing, OK?” --NO K!

Part of God’s plan for fellowship is
WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

LOOK AT HEBREWS 10:24-25 again:

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

NLT - ***“Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.”***

“ONE ANOTHERS” in N.T.

Pray for O.A. - James 5:16
Confess sins to O.A. - James 5:16
Forgive O.A. - Col 3:13
Bear O.A. burdens - Gal 6:2
Rebuke O.A. - Tit 1:3
Comfort O.A. - 1 Thes 4:18
Exhort O.A. - Heb 10:25
Edify O.A. - Rom 14:19
Admonish O.A. - Rom 15:14

I think it’s notable that these verses don’t use the word “church”. Instead, what is obviously the church is referred to as, “One Another”.

- The New Testament tells us that we should be involved in ministering to “ONE ANOTHER”.
- There are 31 “one others” in the NT:
- God knows we don’t do well alone.
- God has placed us in a FAMILY as Christians.

How do you do these things without church? Do you do them by yourself? They can only be fulfilled in community.

When you belong to Jesus, you belong to others in Jesus!

- Psalm 68:6 says: ***“God places the lonely in families...”*** NLT
- One of the deepest thirsts we have is for belonging, --for community.

HEALTHY CHURCH LIFE involves RELATIONSHIPS:

- Relationships are the heart of the church, not meetings.
- Though Jesus is our source, relationships are one of the primary ways He channels His supply of blessing to us.
- The apostle John says they are a test of our love for God (I John).
- Without relationships we will not spiritually mature. Relationships help us understand the difference between what we know and who we are.”

When you find a Church with LIFE, you will find a church where people are devoted to one another.

Paul Tournier observed: “There are two things we cannot do alone—one is be married, and the other is to be a Christian.”

(Quoted in Philip Yancey, *Church, Why Bother? My Personal pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 37).

One evening Dwight L. Moody the great evangelist, while visiting a businessman at his home was asked, “Isn’t it enough that I worship God on my own each day? Why then would I need to interrupt my life and attend a church week after week?”

Moody listened without comment. Finally he leaned over, picked up the fireplace tongs, reached into the roaring flames, and pulled out a single burning coal into the stone hearth.

While the two men watched in silence the red-hot coal separated from the other fiery embers slowly began dim its glow and lose its fire, --until finally nothing was left but the cold, charred remains. The question was answered.

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

Another part of God’s plan for fellowship is:
EATING TOGETHER

They were “...*breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness.*”

When you find a Church with **LIFE**, you will find a church where people are

- ◆ **L – LEARNING** God's Word
- ◆ **I – INTERCESSION**/Prayer
- ◆ **F- FELLOWSHIP** and...



A Church that is experiencing Christ's power will share Christ's life through intentional: **EVANGELISM**

There was an ad in Newsweek magazine (2000) that said, "*Last year Americans traveled 350 billion miles and never found what they were looking for.*"

A church full of LIFE will have a heart for **EVANGELISM & OUTREACH**

ACTS 2:41 - "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

ACTS 2:47 – "...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

ACTS 4:4 - "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

ACTS 5:14 - "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number."

ACTS 6:7 - "And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith"

EVANGELISM

TELL people about Jesus!

T – Testimony

E – Explain

- All have sinned
- Sin = Death
- Gift of God = Eternal life

L – Lovingly present Christ

L – Lead them to a decision

If you were to take all the people alive who have not heard the Gospel and line them up they would circle the earth 30 times. That line is growing 30 miles longer every day if you take into account the birth rate.

When you find a Church with **LIFE**, you will find a church that is built on Acts 2:42-47:

L – LEARNING God's Word
I – INTERCESSION/Prayer
F- FELLOWSHIP
E- EVANGELISM

AN ATMOSPHERE OF GRACE

Knowing God's grace means you understand that the basis of your relationship with God is not how well you perform, but how well God performs.

God's grace must not only be a doctrine that is taught but the foundation of everything in a good church.

There are churches that are:

- **L – LEARNING God's Word**
- **I – INTERCESSION/Prayer**
- **F – FELLOWSHIP**
- **E – EVANGELISM**

Paul told the Ephesians that to “stand firm” they needed to be wearing their “gospel shoes” (Cleats):

Eph 6:10-15 *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.”* NASU

When you know God’s grace, you won’t always be slipping and loosing your spiritual footing.

- ◆ God’s grace will give you TRACTION in life!
- ◆ Your walk with God will be much more stable.

This is nothing new, it’s just often overlooked. The apostle Paul shared this truth with the Roman Christians.

Look at Romans 5:1-2: *“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”*

Grace gives us our spiritual footing and keeps us standing!

GOD’S GRACE WORKS!

GOD’S GRACE MOTIVATES US TO WORK! Look at TITUS 2:11-14:

- I like the way the NIV puts it: *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”*

- The Amplified Bible puts verse 12 it this way: *“It has trained us to reject and renounce all ungodliness (irreligion) and worldly (passionate) desires, to live discreet (temperate, self-controlled), upright, devout (spiritually whole) lives in this present world,”*

Through the work of the Word and the Holy Spirit, God’s grace transforms our lives.

- At first it CHALLENGES us.
- Then it CONVICTS us
- Then it CONVERTS us
- And then God’s grace CHANGES us, --we’re given new hearts with new desires!

Always KEEP YOURSELF in an ATMOSPHERE, -- and a culture of God’s grace, you won’t grow any other way.

THE CHURCH WAS NOT DESIGNED BY JESUS TO FUNCTION LIKE:

#1. A BLOOD BANK

A place where they drain you!

The “program” church...

#2. A PRISON

#3. A BURGER KING

“Have it YOUR way!”

#4. A MUSEUM

**Caution: Antiques on display!
Don't touch!**

*Not functional in the world
anymore. OBSOLETE*

#5. A COUNTRY CLUB

**A place where only a certain few
are welcome. "Member's Only"**

Club rules

#6 A CIRCUS

**A place where you go to be
entertained!**

**THE CHURCH WAS DESIGNED TO
FUNCTION LIKE:**

#1. AN EMERGENCY ROOM

*Where sin's accident
victims may receive the
critical care they need.*

#2. A HOSPITAL

*A Place to recuperate: a
caring place, bandaged,
broken bones mended.*

#3. A GAS STATION

*A place where the saints
fill up their tanks!
Refueling for
another day's journey!*

When you go to an embassy you know you'll find those who:

- **Speak your language**
- **Like your food**
- **Think like you**
- **Have your ways, & customs**
- **Have the same allegiance to Christ**

#4. AN EMBASSY

A sanctuary, the one "safe" place in a hostile world where Christ's ambassadors find refuge.

#5. A TOOL SHED

A place where you get the equipment you need to do your job.

#6. AN AUTO BODY SHOP

A place where wrecks are restored, & messes made into masterpieces!

A place where dents are Hammered out.

New paint covers the chips and the original beauty God designed and intended is restored.

#7. A HOME

- *A place where your heart is!*
- *A place where you are always loved, accepted, and forgiven, welcome.*
- *You can relax and be yourself, a haven.*

THERE ARE 4 THINGS THAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR IN A CHURCH.

**We call them the 4 “F’s”
You want to find a church where
you are:**

1). FED

2). FELLOWSHIP

3). FIT IN

4). FRUITFUL

How to Find a Good Church.

ESSENTIALS:

- ❖ **The Bible is recognized as God's authoritative and reliable, and final word. All teachings are tested by the Scriptures. Belief in its verbal, plenary inspiration is essential. (1 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:12-13; 2 Pet 1:19-21).**

- ❖ **Belief in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are equal, pre-existent, eternal, yet one in nature and purpose. (Gen 1:1-2; Matt 28:19-20; Jn 1:1-3; Jn 14:16).**

- ❖ **Salvation comes only by grace through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. (Eph 2:8-9; Rom. 3:23; Rom 6:23; 1 Jn 5:10-13).**

- ❖ **The Gospel is defined as found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: Christ died, He was buried and He rose the third day according to the Scriptures.**

- ❖ **The Holy Spirit indwells believers and enables them to live lives of service and honor to God. This is the result, and not the cause of Salvation. (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom 8:1-6; Jn 15:1-5).**

- ❖ **The Holy Spirit is the seal of God. (Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22).**

- ❖ **Baptism is a public demonstration of faith in Jesus Christ. (Jn 3:5; Acts 2:38; Matt 28:19-20).**

- ❖ **Believers receive a spiritual gift when they are saved. All the gifts are to be used for the building up of the church in unity and function. (1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:12-16).**

- ❖ **Believers expect a literal second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven. (Mt 24:27; I Th 4:13-18; Mt 26:64; John 14:1-3).**

- ❖ **Those who receive the gift of eternal life will be taken to a literal heaven in the next life. (Jn 14:1-3; Rev 21:1-4; Matt 25:46; Phil 1:21-23; 2 Cor 5:8).**

- ❖ **Those who reject the Gospel will experience eternal separation from God which the Bible calls hell. (Rev 20:11-15; Mt 10:28; Mt 25:41-46).**

- ❖ **Believers are expected to support the work of God by giving generously. (Mal 3:8-10; 1 Cor 9:6-7; Mt 6:19-21).**

- ❖ **Believers are expected to guard the unity of the church. (Jn 17; Phil 2:1-11; Eph 4: 30-32; Col 3:12-16; Jn 15:12).**

- ❖ **Believers are to follow Jesus' three great commands to love God, love each other, and reach the world for Him. (Mt 22:34-38; Mt 22:38-40; Mt 28:19-20).**

Every Christian believes **THE APOSTLE'S CREED**,
the earliest statement of Christian doctrine:

I BELIEVE in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our
Lord.

*He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified,
died, and was buried.*

*He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

I BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit,
*the holy catholic [universal] Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.*

NON-ESSENTIALS:

- ❖ **Exact timing or interpretation of prophetic events.**
- ❖ **Doctrinal disagreements that orthodox Christians debate.**
- ❖ **Things not taught by Christ, by the apostles, or not practiced by the early church.**

QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN A CHURCH:

- **Love and unity in the congregation.**
- **Evangelism and mission outreach.**
- **Generous compassion for the poor.**
- **Leadership that is accountable to spiritual authorities.**
- **A balance of grace and truth in the teaching and in church life and church discipline.**
- **Look for a church that teaches the Bible verse by verse rather than topically. This way you will get the whole counsel of God's Word.**

DO NOT JOIN A CHURCH THAT:

- **Claims to be God's true church excluding all other Christian churches.**
- **A church that denies the Trinity.**
- **A church that teaches a "Prosperity" gospel.**
- **Is controlling and equates its rigid demands with loyalty to Jesus.**
- **Compromises Biblical truth.**
- **Has an extra-biblical source of authority or any other books of the Bible that claim to be inspired by God.**
- **Where the pastor leads like a dictator, instead of leading by example.**
- **A church that Proselytizes from other Christian churches.**
- **A church where the Bible is referenced, but not opened.**

- A church that insists on the observance of restrictive diets or the observance of Sabbath days.
- Ordains practicing homosexuals as elders or bishops.
- Does not consider marriage as the union of one man to one woman.

STARTING SELECTIONS:

- Calvary Chapel
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Evangelical Free Church
- Many Baptist denominations

FORMER SDA PASTORS & THEIR MINISTRIES

ERIC BAHME -- Eastside Foursquare Church, Portland Oregon www.eastsidechurch.net message online/download.

JONATHAN BILIMA – Kairos Church, Riverside California www.Relevant316.com podcast, message online/download, author.

RITCHIE CARBAJAL – Crossweave Church, Escondido, California www.crossweave.org message online/download.

RICHARD FREDERICKS – Damascus Road Community Church, Damascus, Maryland www.damascus.com message online/download.

MARK MARTIN – Calvary Community Church, Phoenix, Arizona www.calvaryphx.com. Live streaming video all services, 24-hour online radio, www.calvaryradio.com, podcasts, weekly messages online/download, CDs, daily gracemail email devotional. SDA outreach ministry: www.exadventist.org, author.

LESLIE MARTIN - Women's Ministry director at Calvary Community Church. Tuesday morning & evening Women's Bible studies live streaming www.calvaryphx.com, podcasts, weekly messages online/download, CDs, author.

CLAY PECK – Grace Place, Berthoud, Colorado www.graceplace.org streaming video, podcasts, weekly message online/download.

JAMES RAINWATER – Bethany Brethren in Christ Church, Thomas, Oklahoma www.Bethanybic.com message online/download (coming soon).

GREG TAYLOR – Hempfield Brethren in Christ Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania www.hempfieldchurch.com – message online/download, author.

JOHN TULLIO – Gospel Life Community Church, Walnut, California www.gospellifecommunity.org podcast, message online/download.