

THE WHYS OF CHURCH

Pastor P.W. Howard - firstbaptist-eurekasprings.org

Many people today say, “I believe in Jesus, but I don’t need church.” Others have been disappointed by churches, hurt by Christians, or convinced that they can worship God just as well by themselves.

But what does the Bible say?

The church isn’t a human invention, a social club, or merely a building where religious people meet. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Paul calls the church Christ’s body (Eph. 1:22–23), the household of God, and “a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

The question, then, isn’t whether church is always easy or whether every church is healthy. The question is why God gave us the church and what He intends it to be.

1. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS GATHER TOGETHER?

Because God tells us to. Hebrews 10:24–25 commands believers not to neglect meeting together, but to encourage one another. The first Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Jesus Himself regularly attended the synagogue (Luke 4:16). The New Testament assumes that Christians will gather in local churches for teaching, worship, prayer, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, service, discipline, and mutual encouragement.

Church attendance doesn’t save us. Jesus Christ saves sinners who repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). But Christians who belong to Christ also belong to His body. Deliberately separating ourselves from the church means separating ourselves from something Christ loves and established.

2. WHY DOES THE BIBLE CALL THE CHURCH A BODY?

Because Christians need one another. Paul writes, “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5).

First Corinthians 12 compares believers to parts of a human body. An eye can’t say to a hand, “I have no need of you,” because God designed the different parts to function together (1 Cor. 12:18–27).

A Christian living alone is like a stick by itself. Some sticks are stronger than others, but a bundle of sticks is stronger than any one stick alone. Christians strengthen one another through encouragement, prayer, teaching, correction, service, and shared burdens.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor. 12:26). God never intended Christianity to be merely “Jesus and me.” He makes His people part of a body.

3. WHY DOES THE CHURCH WORSHIP TOGETHER?

Because God deserves the worship of His people. Jesus said, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve” (Matt. 4:10). Christians worship individually, but Scripture repeatedly shows God’s people worshipping together.

The church sings together (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), prays together (Acts 12:5), hears God’s Word together (1 Tim. 4:13), gives thanks together, and encourages one another.

Worship isn’t entertainment. The church doesn’t exist to put on a show, impress the world, or keep people amused. Worship is directed toward God.

Jesus said the Father seeks those who worship Him “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). A faithful church therefore seeks worship that is sincere, biblical, Christ-centered, and focused on the glory of God rather than the preferences of man.

4. WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH TEACH THE BIBLE?

Because Christians are supposed to grow to maturity. God gave pastors and teachers “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” so believers will mature and no longer be “tossed to and fro” by every false teaching (Eph. 4:11–14).

The church doesn’t merely try to produce converts. It seeks to make disciples (Matt. 28:19–20) and to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28). That requires preaching, teaching, correction, and instruction from God’s Word.

Scripture is “breathed out by God” and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

A church that replaces the Bible with popular opinion, entertainment, self-help, or whatever the culture currently approves has abandoned its foundation. The church should conform itself to God’s Word, not conform God’s Word to the culture.

5. WHY DO CHRISTIANS NEED FELLOWSHIP, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND CORRECTION?

Because none of us sees everything clearly by ourselves.

Christians are commanded to encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11), bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), pray for one another (James 5:16), and speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

Sometimes love includes correction. Jesus gave instructions for confronting sin and, when necessary, bringing the matter before the church (Matt. 18:15–17). Paul commanded churches to deal with serious, public, unrepentant sin (1 Cor. 5).

Church discipline isn’t supposed to be vindictive. Its goals include repentance, restoration, protection of the church, and the honor of Christ.

We all have blind spots. “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17).

A healthy church helps us recognize errors we may never recognize by ourselves.

6. WHAT IS THE CHURCH SUPPOSED TO DO IN THE WORLD?

The church proclaims the gospel, makes disciples, and does good. Jesus commanded His followers to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19–20).

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again, and that sinners are saved through repentance and faith in Him (1 Cor. 15:3–4; Mark 1:15).

The church must never lose that message. If it loses the gospel, it loses the reason for its existence.

But Christians are also called to love their neighbors, care for those in need, defend the vulnerable, seek justice, and do good (Luke 10:25–37; Gal. 6:10; James 1:27).

The church therefore ministers in word and deed. It proclaims Christ, builds up believers, helps the needy, opposes evil, and seeks to be salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13–16).

7. DOES A CHURCH HAVE TO BE LARGE?

No. The New Testament speaks of churches meeting in homes (Rom. 16:5; Philem. 1–2). Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:20).

A church building can be useful, but the building isn’t the church. God “does not live in temples made by man” (Acts 17:24). The church is God’s people gathered in Christ’s name.

A small church can therefore be a true and faithful church. What matters isn’t size, wealth, popularity, programs, or impressive facilities. What matters is faithfulness to Christ and His Word.

8. WHAT SHOULD WE LOOK FOR IN A CHURCH?

No church is perfect because every church is made up of imperfect people. But churches can be more or less faithful. Scripture gives us standards.

A healthy church should faithfully preach God’s Word, proclaim the true gospel, worship God, pray, practice baptism and the Lord’s Supper, make disciples, encourage fellowship, exercise biblical discipline, care for people, evangelize, and seek holiness and love.

Christ is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). Therefore, neither the pastor, congregation, denomination, culture, nor government has authority to redefine Christianity. The church belongs to Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Christians shouldn’t neglect the church. God gave us the church so that we can worship Him together, hear and learn His Word, pray together, encourage and correct one another, grow toward maturity, proclaim the gospel, serve others, and function together as the body of Christ.

Like sticks of varying strength bound together, believers are stronger together than alone. The goal isn’t merely to attend church. The goal is to be a faithful part of Christ’s body. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27).

Find a true, Bible-believing church. Worship. Learn. Serve. Pray. Encourage others. Receive correction when needed. Help build up the body.

And above all, remember whose church it is. Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).