

# The Church – *Our spiritual home*

# 4

## God's family to which we now belong

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Has anyone ever commented to you, “You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian?” Do you agree with that statement? Is the statement biblically correct?

As God’s primary interest in our lives is to grow us to full maturity in Christ-likeness (Romans 8:29), you will discover in this spiritual growth step that the church is God’s family to which you now belong, specially designed for your spiritual nurture, development and wellbeing (Acts 2:41-47).

- The church is not a place to visit dutifully each week but a *family* where you belong, from where you can draw your daily sustenance for living your new life in Christ.
- The church is indispensable for the spiritual growth of all believers.
- The church is God’s means for reaching a lost world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that church involvement is not an option for believers who:

- Desire to experience spiritual growth
- Desire to experience meaning and purpose in their lives
- Desire to be a channel of blessing to others
- Desire to live lives that are pleasing to God.

This discovery session looks at:

- What is the church?
- Why is the church necessary?
- Signs of a healthy church

## What is the church?

The word church is used in two ways in the Bible:

At times, church refers to the entire *universal* body of Christians, and, at other times, church refers to a *specific group* of believers meeting in a specific place (i.e., the local church).

The church is often called the Body of Christ. This means that every Christian is a living and essential part of the spiritual Body of Christ as it ministers in our world today.

What term is given to refer to *individual* believers in the church?

1 Corinthians 12:18 \_\_\_\_\_

What term is given to refer to the *collective* believers in the church?

1 Corinthians 12:27 \_\_\_\_\_

New believers are made “life members” of the Body of Christ through their baptism in the Holy Spirit, immediately at the time of their conversion to Christ.

**Why is the church necessary?**

The church is necessary for a number of reasons.

**a) It provides opportunity for group WORSHIP**

God created us to live in a worshipful relationship with Him, individually and within the context of His family (the church). Therefore, we need to understand that our worship is to be both personal and corporate. Group worship can be experienced in a small group and the wider church body through: silence, surrender, Scripture, singing, supplication (personal prayer requests) and willing service. This honours God and helps us in our spiritual growth.

What do the following references say about worshipping God?

Matthew 4:10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 13:15 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**b) It provides FELLOWSHIP**

We have been created to worship God and fellowship with one another.

What do the following references say about our fellowship responsibility towards one another in the church (in small groups)?

Galatians 6:2 “We are to \_\_\_\_\_”

Ephesians 4:3b “We are to \_\_\_\_\_”

Ephesians 4:15 “We are to \_\_\_\_\_”

Ephesians 4:16b “We are to \_\_\_\_\_”

Hebrews 10:24 “We are to \_\_\_\_\_”

Hebrews 10:25 “We are to \_\_\_\_\_”

### **c) It provides sound TEACHING**

A healthy church provides sound biblical teaching for its members and offers a variety of spiritual training and leadership development opportunities.

To what did the three thousand new believers devote their lives?

Acts 2:42(a) “They devoted themselves to the Apostles \_\_\_\_\_”

### **d) It provides an opportunity for SERVICE**

A healthy church also empowers its members to take up positions of service.

God gives spiritual gifts (special abilities) to every believer to exercise within the life of the church for the mutual nurturing and development of its members and the growth of the church through ministry and mission service opportunities. Small groups are ideal contexts to discover, practice and develop your special God-given gift/s.

What does God say about our service to others in the church?

Hebrews 6:10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Through serving others, we grow, our church grows and the Kingdom of God grows.**

### **e) It provides ORGANISATION**

An effective and orderly home functions with a certain degree of organisation.

A healthy church provides organisation that enables the nurturing, growth and development of all believers and allows for effective and efficient operation of ministry and mission to the unchurched community.

What do the following verses say about this?

1 Corinthians 14:33 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 14:40 \_\_\_\_\_

## Signs of a healthy church

The following are “health” signs to look for when considering a suitable church to call “home”:

- The church is “Kingdom of God” minded, not denominationally minded
- God’s Word is the standard for faith and practice
- Prayer is keenly encouraged
- Fellowship is promoted, and community building is achieved by the members through a coordinated network of Spirit-driven small groups
- Is compassionate to the unchurched – and outreaches to them
- Encourages its members to develop their leadership potential
- The Good News of the church is always about the Lord Jesus Christ
- Ministry opportunities are provided for people of all age groups
- Church belief is matched by the behaviour of its members
- Personal spiritual growth is fostered
- Every person is highly valued for who they are, not for what they do.

## Summary

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Believers who are serious about growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ see that the church is of critical importance to their growth, and the growth of others in the church. Why? Because ...

- Spiritual growth stifles and stagnates outside of church life
- God designed the church to be their spiritual home.

The church is your spiritual home – designed by God for your growth, for the growth of others, and for the expansion of His Kingdom.

