

Acts 2 Church

- The first mention of the church in the New Testament is in Matthew 16 where Jesus says, “I will build my church.” The first appearance of the church is in Acts 2. That’s why the book of Acts sets the pattern for our preaching and practice today. More than anything, we want to be, we need to be, we must be an Acts 2 church!
- **Humor: what some people think church is, etc.**
- The word “church” has lost most of its original meaning today, because the Church is definitely not just a building you go to!
 - The word church is used 140 times in the New Testament, but never to refer to a building
 - The language used by the Bible could not be applied to a building anyway: The Lord added to the church. Herod vexed the church. The church was persecuted. Paul saluted the church. The churches had rest.
 - Only in the traditions of men can people “go to church” – Jesus didn’t mean “buildings” when he said “I will build my church”!
- **Charts (point by point): here’s what God says church is**

God’s Ideal

- Church is a spiritual necessity
- Interdependence is valued
- Spirituality takes place in community
- Active involvement in social concerns
- All people fully accepted together
- Authentic behavior (*public and private lives match*)

Actual Practice

- Church is an optional activity
- Individualism is valued
- Spirituality is a private matter
- Aloof from the real world
- Segregation practiced
- Hypocrisy (*saying one thing but practicing another*)
- The original Greek word for church is **EKKLESIA**, and it is used 114 times in the New Testament
- In Greek society, EKKLESIA meant “an assembly of free citizens who were called out of their homes to assemble together for matters of public interest”
- The church is not just “called out,” but “called out to assemble together”

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

- So then, the church is the free citizens of a heavenly community, summoned by the gospel from their places in the world to assemble together to hear from God!
- We are called out of every kindred, tribe and nation (Rev. 5:9), and called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).
- Another important Greek word that relates to the church is KOINONIA. It is difficult to translate into English, but it carries the idea of communion, fellowship, sharing, and participation. It is used to describe the LIFE that the church is to share in Christ. In other words, EKKLESIA is what we ARE, and KOINONIA is what we DO.
- Koinonia (“fellowship”) is not just a potluck dinner or church meeting with a bunch of familiar faces, or a comfortable relationship with someone you would have liked whether or not you were a Christian!
- When the church began, koinonia meant that Jews and Gentiles, who had been enemies for centuries, were becoming one in the body of Christ. Breaking through thousands of years of separation, they came together to worship together. Those who before would not even speak to one another now worshipped together in one church.
- Koinonia is a oneness that is only possible through God’s supernatural work! Let’s look at some of the passages where the Greek word “koinonia” is used. These are the principles that should characterize our relationships with every other believer.
- **LIGHT: 1 John 1:6-7** If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship** one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
- **UNITY: Philippians 2:1-2** If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any **fellowship** of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
- **ACCEPTANCE: Philemon 1:17** If thou count me therefore a **partner**, receive him as myself.

- **SHARING: Acts 2:44-45** And all that believed were together, and had all things **common**; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.
- **GIVING: 2 Corinthians 8:4** Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the **fellowship** of the ministering to the saints.
- **SUFFERING: Philippians 3:10** That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the **fellowship** of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
- The word “membership” is of Christian origin, but the world has emptied it of its original meaning. Today, membership is often reduced to simply adding your name to a roll, with no requirements or expectations. But to the Apostle Paul, being a “member” of the church meant being a vital organ of a living body, an indispensable, interconnected part of the Body of Christ!
- If an organ is somehow severed from its body, it will shrivel and die. It cannot exist on its own, and neither can you. Disconnected and cut off from the lifeblood of a local body, your spiritual life will wither and eventually cease to exist. This is why the first symptom of spiritual decline is usually inconsistent attendance at worship services.
- Membership in the family of God is not something to be casually ignored. The church is God’s agenda for the world. The church is indestructible and will exist for eternity. It will outlive this universe, and so will your role in it! The person who says, “I don’t need the church” is either arrogant or ignorant. The church is so significant that Jesus died on the cross for it!
- The Bible calls the church “the Bride of Christ” and “the body of Christ.” Imagine saying to someone, “I love you but I hate your wife” or “I love you but your body disgusts me.” But that’s what we’re doing to Jesus whenever we complain about the church!
- God commands us to love the church as much as Jesus does. Sadly, many Christians USE the church but don’t LOVE the church. Many Christians who know John 3:16 are unaware of 1 John 3:16.
John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
- That is why we cannot just be church attenders. The difference between being a church ATTENDER and a church MEMBER is found in one word: COMMITMENT.
 - Attenders are spectators from the sidelines; members get involved in the ministry.
 - Attenders are consumers; members are contributors.
 - Attenders want the benefits of a church without sharing the responsibility; members put church at the center of their lives.
 - Attenders are like couples who want to live together without committing to a marriage; members wholeheartedly say, I DO!
- The local church is so important to God because it proves you are committed to His family in reality, not just in theory. God wants you to love REAL people, not IDEAL people. You can spend a lifetime searching for the perfect church, but you will never find it. You are called to love imperfect people, just like God does!
- First century Christians were very specific in their commitment to each other, according to Acts 2:42 (only four verses from Acts 2:38!).
 - **Acts 2:42 (KJV)** And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
 - **Acts 2:42 (CEV)** They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.
- The Christian life is more than just commitment to the Lord; it includes a commitment to other Christians as well! The First Century Christians in Macedonia understood this well:
- **2 Corinthians 8:5b (TEV)** First they gave themselves to the Lord; and then, by God's will they gave themselves to us as well.