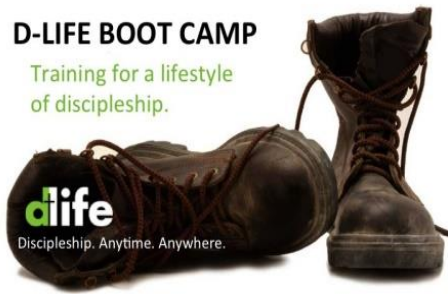


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"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Rev. Deborah Crawley, Teacher
Sis. Tammi Crummy, Asst. Teacher

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST CHURCH

By Don Krow

THIS ARTICLE IS FLAWED! FIND THE FLAW

Today we're talking about the importance of Christ's church. I'd like to read a scripture out of Hebrews 10:25. It says, ***"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."*** As we look into the importance of Christ's church, my question is, **"What is the church?"**

I took the Discipleship Evangelism program into a local church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We trained people how to use it, and we used it out in the field. Within six weeks of working with this local church, we had established twenty Bible studies **outside** of that local congregation. For months, we were working with these people in the Bible studies. The pastor really confused me one day when he said, **"You know, the Bible says that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Why aren't we seeing these people from the Bible studies come into our church?"**

When we were out in the field, people were being saved and they were being disciplined and ministered to. But what the pastor really meant was, **"Why aren't they coming to meet together on Sunday morning in this building?"** My concept of the church was a little off too. What the pastor said really troubled me, and I didn't know what to do. I thought, *Is the Discipleship Evangelism program really working?* Are we really reaching people's lives? I knew we were reaching many people, but what confused me was why they were not coming to the **Sunday morning service.**

I decided to do a study on the word **"church."** What's covered in this lesson is what I discovered. In **Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15,**

Philemon 2, Acts 5:42, and Acts 20:20, the Bible primarily speaks about the early New Testament church meeting in someone's home. I know that there are all kinds of churches. There are home churches, churches with small and large congregations, and very large mega-churches. The one thing that really caught my attention in the Scripture was that the New Testament church seemed to meet together in small congregations in people's homes.

The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words by Lawrence O. Richards (p. 164) says, "Anyone may be excused for being a bit confused about the meaning of the word, 'church'; we use the word in so many ways. It means a particular building (e.g., the church on 4th street), a denomination or organized faith (the Reformed Church in America) [or the Baptist Church], and even a Sunday meeting (e.g., did you go to church today). None of these uses is particularly Biblical." **And I got to thinking, What does this really mean?** What does the word "**church**" really mean? I'm going to quote further. It says, "Since many persons think of a church as a building for religious services rather than a congregation engaging in worship, the rendering church can be misleading." The Greek word for "**church**" is **ekklesia** and literally means an assembly of people together for the purpose of worship or prayer or praise or just looking unto God. I'm going to read some other things here. It says, "Ecclesia in the New Testament can encompass any number of believers. It can be used of small groups that met in homes (Rom. 16:5). It encompasses all believers living in a large city (Acts 11:22), or a large geographical district, such as Asia or Galatia." It goes on to say, "The typical meeting of the church was in a home. When such a congregation met 'everyone [had] a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation' (1 Cor. 14:26). Individuals shared and others 'weighed carefully what was said' (1 Cor. 14:29)...such sharing remains essential to the very existence of the church as a community of faith...Each person was expected to contribute and to serve others with his or her spiritual gift(s)."

In Hebrews 10:25 it says, ***"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."*** The church is an assembly of people coming together for the purpose of looking to Jesus, praising the Lord, to receive direction from the Lord, to follow through with that direction. The primary purpose of the early New Testament church was edification. They met together for the purpose of building each other up in the faith.

The early church was an evangelistic church. People were scattered everywhere, sharing their faith in Jesus Christ, and as they did, the Lord added to the church—not to a building— but added to the people of God as they repented and believed. Then they assembled themselves together to encourage one another, to exercise their spiritual gifts, to serve one another, and to have a time of fellowship with one another by sharing a meal together. When they were together, they exercised their spiritual gifts to edify one another. Then they would go out and preach the Word, and the whole

cycle would begin again. They believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they assembled themselves together. It didn't matter where they assembled. It could've been in a building or someone's home. It could've been a large amount of people, or it could've been a small number of people meeting in homes. It didn't really matter, as long as they met together in the name of the Lord for the purpose of exercising their gifts, to encourage one another, and to fellowship with one another with the end result being edification, or building, each other up.

I discovered that what we were doing with the Discipleship Evangelism program through the local church I mentioned earlier, by meeting in twenty different Bible studies throughout the city, is we were meeting in twenty different churches. It wasn't church as we know it today, but we were meeting as "the church," twenty times a week, because we were meeting together in the name of the Lord Jesus to encourage one another, to look to the Lord Jesus, to be instructed out of the Word of God, and to exercise our spiritual gifts.

No matter what church you go to—no matter if you're in a denominational church or a non-denominational church, if you are meeting in a mega-church or a small home group—the Scripture is telling us that as you see the Day approaching, and as sin abounds, the grace of God much more abounds. Grace is going to abound within these assemblies of God's people. In the church where each believer has a part of the ministry of Jesus Christ, you can minister to one another, exhort one another, and encourage one another as you exercise your spiritual gift with one another.

We would all benefit by meeting with a group of believers in this way. Even if it's just two or three that are meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus, we need to meet together on a regular basis. It is good to meet together to use our spiritual gifts, to exhort one another, to encourage one another, to look to Jesus together, and to pray for one another. There's a lot we could say about the church. We could talk about the elders, overseers, pastors, and church government, but that's not the purpose of this teaching. The purpose of this teaching is to know the purpose of the church and to know we do not have to be isolated like one man on an island all to himself. We cannot survive that way. When we received salvation, God put us in the body of Christ—the universal body of believers. We need one another, and we need to meet together as God's church to encourage one another and serve one another with the spiritual gifts that God has given us. I encourage you, meet together today with God's people.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A REAL CHURCH?
