

“What Is This Thing Called Church?”
“Getting the Most Out of Church”—Part 2
Matthew 16:18

...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.
Matthew 16:18

**The church is the centerpiece
of God’s purposes for humanity.**

***“We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ Jesus. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not a means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.*”**

1. God’s Gospel creates the church.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Matthew 16:13-18

Saving faith entails a new community!

2. The nature of the global church: We refer to this as the global/true church, for it is a community ultimately known only to God, for only God can know the depths of the human heart. Only He can perceive with absolute certainty whether the faith professed is truly believed.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9-10

3. The nature of the local church: We can speak of the true church as known only to God, but in general in the New Testament, the church refers to a community visible in the world. More commonly it denotes a local gathering of believers in one place.

***This community of Christians in the local church
is a microcosm of the global or true church.***

- **Size is not the issue.**

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”
Matthew 18:20

- **Connection and commitment are our priorities.**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
Acts 2:42-47

***Without a commitment to the local church,
we haven't rightly understood God's gospel.***

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:27

- **The ministry of care is our priority.**

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”
John 15:12

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
James 1:27

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2

- **Jesus' final command is our priority.**

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:18-20

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light...Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.
1 Peter 2:9 and 12

- **Protecting sound doctrine is our priority.**

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 1 Timothy 3:14-4:1

- **Guarding the unity of the church is our priority.**

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1-6

Each local church is to demonstrate to the world something of the truth and beauty of the gospel.

Summary: The gospel creates the church, but the church also proclaims the gospel. And the church proclaims the gospel not simply by what the church is called to do, but in what the church is. The church is the loving family of God.

Question: What is it that gets people most stirred up: disobedience to the commands of God or church failing to meet people's expectations? The answer to this question might show us whether we exist to please God or people.