



*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church
and gave himself up for her...
Ephesians 5:25*

Damascus Road Church

Gospel Class 10

The Church

What is the church?

The church is the community of Christians for all time who have been loved and saved by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:25). The church includes the people of the Old Testament (i.e. Deuteronomy 4:10; Acts 7:38; Hebrews 2:12 cf. Psalm 22:22). In every church, there are people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24-30), including wolves sent by Satan to lead people astray (Acts 20:29-30). While it is possible for Christians to know who else is a Christian (i.e. the frequent references to Christian brothers and sisters), ultimately only the Lord knows exactly every person who is and is not a Christian (2 Timothy 2:19).

Should all Christians be vitally involved in a local church?

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

The Old and New Testaments were written to communities of God's people who regularly gathered together for such things as teaching, fellowship, worship, etc. The Bible is clear that every Christian is a part of the larger church body and is expected to participate in the life of a local church with the gift(s) God has given them (1 Corinthians 12:1-31).

It is therefore a sin for someone who claims to be a Christian to not be actively loving their Christian brothers and sisters (1 John 1:7, 3:17-18, 4:21) and seeking to build up the church (1 Corinthians 12:7, 14:6, 14:12, 14:26b).

Who is the ultimate head of the church?

The Scriptures are clear that **Jesus Christ is the head of the church** (Ephesians 1:9, 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23). Jesus is the Apostle who plants a church (Hebrews 3:1). Jesus is the Senior Pastor who builds the church (Matthew 16:18). Jesus is the Senior Pastor who rules the church (1 Peter 5:4). And, it is ultimately Jesus who closes churches down when they have become faithless and/or fruitless (Revelation 2:5). Therefore, it is absolutely vital that a church love Jesus, obey Jesus, imitate Jesus, and follow Jesus at all times and in all ways according to the teaching of His Word (Colossians 3:16).

What are elders, deacons, and members?

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons... Philippians 1:1

Elders are the male leaders of the church who are also called pastors, bishops, and overseers (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2). The elders are men chosen for their ministry according to clear biblical requirements (1 Timothy 2:11-3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The elders are always spoken of in plurality because God intends for more than one man to lead and rule over the church as a safeguard for both the church and the man.

The elders' duties include:

- ruling (I Timothy 5:17)
- managing (I Timothy 3:4-5),
- tending (I Peter 5:2-5), giving account (Hebrews 13:17),
- living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7),
- using authority (Acts 20:28),
- teaching (Ephesians 4:11, I Timothy 3:2),
- preaching (I Timothy 5:17),
- doctrinal instruction (Titus 1:9),
- discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

Deacons are the servants of the church who are also qualified for their ministry of overseeing and caring for God's people by qualifications that are nearly identical to the elders minus the teaching and preaching abilities (I Timothy 3:8-13). The deacon ministry may have officially begun in the early church in Acts 6:1-6.

Members are the Christians who are actively participating in the life of the local church that it is built up for God's purposes (I Corinthians 12:1-31 especially 12:24). The early church had a notion of membership that included numerical record (Acts 2:37-47), records of widows (Tim. 5:3-16); elections (Acts 6:1-6), discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1), accountability (Heb. 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Rom. 16:1-16)

What is a local, global, historical, and future church?

The **local church** is the gathering of God's people in particular areas. In the New Testament this would include, for example, the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Thessalonica, the church at Colosse, the church at Galatia, the church at Philippi, etc. Many of the New Testament letters were written to be read in the gathered worship services of local churches (Colossians 4:16). It is the privilege of Christians to gather together in a local church and participate in the work of the gospel there.

The **global church** includes Christian brothers and sisters from other nations, languages, races, and cultures of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Revelation 5:9-10, 14:6). It is the privilege of Christians to stand in unity with Christians across the globe with such things as prayer, funding, missions, service, opposition to persecution, etc.

The **historical church** includes the Christian brothers and sisters who have gone before us (Hebrews 11:1-12:1). It is the privilege to learn from the lives of our brothers and sisters.

The **future church** includes the Christians who will carry the gospel of Jesus Christ forward after we are gone into the nations, races, cultures, languages etc. that will exist.

What is a missional church?

A **missional church** is a church that considers the gospel of Jesus Christ as its primary motivation in all things. As a result, the missional church takes seriously the need for the power of the gospel to be practically demonstrated so that Christians are built up in their faith and non-Christians become Christians (Romans 1:16-17). A missional church, therefore, cares very deeply about people coming into and going out of the church for the sake of the gospel.

A missional church thus trains up leaders for the work of the gospel and sends them out to begin new congregations and churches and designates a significant portion of its resources to both building the local and global church. This is all done out of Jesus' mandate that we begin at home and work the gospel out to all nations of the earth from our home (Acts 1:8).

What are church plants and Acts 29?

Church planting is patterned after the ministry of the Apostle Paul and the other disciples who began new churches. Damascus Road is privileged to belong to an entire network designated to church planting called the Acts 29 Network (www.A29.org). Acts 29 is not a denomination, but rather a network of like-minded pastors from some varying denominations who love the gospel and church planting and work together to begin new churches around the world. In its first year of operation, Acts 29 started 41 new churches in six nations (U.S., Canada, Mexico, Haiti, Brazil, India) and prayerfully hopes to begin 1000 new churches in its first ten years.

Damascus Road is young, but we are committed to church planting. We will look for new opportunities to plant churches and designate 10% of its general tithes and offerings to help fund future churches to get started.

What things should happen at a healthy church?

1. **preaching** and teaching of all of God's word (Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 4:2)
2. worship of God (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 1:12, 5:16-19)
3. evangelizing of lost people (Matthew 28:19)
4. helping those in need (Luke 6:35-36; Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 John 3:17)
5. **baptizing** of new Christians (Matthew 28:19)
6. building up of God's people (Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:12-13)
7. unity and love among God's people (John 13:34-35)
8. service by God's people (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 4:11)
9. **partaking** of communion (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
10. church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-5)
11. effective prayer (Acts 2:42; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18)
12. Biblical church government (Philippians 1:1)
13. holiness among God's people (John 14:15, 17:23; Hebrews 12:14)
14. deep and sincere love for Jesus at all times (Luke 10:27)
15. an unwavering commitment to the gospel of grace (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)
16. evidence of the power of God (Romans 1:16)

What is baptism?

In the New Testament, baptism occurred by the immersing of a person completely under water and then rising them up (Mark 1:5, 1:10; John 3:23) to show that they were united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-7; Colossians 2:11-12). Baptism is to be done in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism is to be done for Christians who evidence saving faith (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 10:47-48; Galatians 3:27). Baptism does not save anyone, but instead shows that God has saved them solely by His free grace (Galatians 1:10, 5:4; Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is commanded for God's people (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).

What is communion?

Communion was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper as a means by which God's people continually remember and celebrate His body (shown in the bread) and His blood (shown in the wine) shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26-29). The final communion for God's people will be at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb with Jesus at the end of history in His Kingdom (Revelation 19:9). The church is to celebrate communion with a sober confession of sin and recognition of why Jesus died and rose (I Corinthians 11:17-34) and partake together to show that they are unified by Jesus (I Corinthians 10:17).

Therefore, communion is only intended for Christians (I Corinthians 11:29-30). It was the custom of the church, until a schism at the time of the reformation for the church, to partake of communion each week.

The elders of Damascus Road have chosen to partake of communion every week as a reminder to confess our sins to Christ, be cleansed and transformed by Him, to celebrate the goodness of the gospel in our lives, and to proclaim the Lord's return.

For further reading

Church History in Plain Language by Bruce Shelley

The Master's Plan for the Church by John MacArthur

The Church Between Gospel and Culture by George Hunsberger

Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch

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