

The Church

Historical Overview of the Institution of the Church

God's Desire for Relationship

- From the very beginning, **God has always desired a relationship with His people.**
- **Sin** separated humanity from God, but He has always had a plan to restore that relationship.

The Promise to Abraham

- God has always had a plan to reconcile the broken relationship with His people.
- God's plan begins with **Abraham**, to whom He promises, "Through your seed all the nations will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).
- **Abraham** becomes the father of **Isaac**, **Isaac** the father of **Jacob**, and **Jacob** the father of the **12 tribes of Israel**.

Israel's Early History

- **Slavery in Egypt** for 400 years
- God delivers His people through the **blood of the lamb** (Exodus 12), leading them out of Egypt.
- **Wandering in the desert** teaches Israel how to worship and obey God. (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
- Upon entering the **Promised Land**, God gives them rules for the land, establishing them as a **witness to the nations** (Deuteronomy 4:6).

The Period of Judges and Kings

- Israel goes through cycles of **judges** and **kings**, with periods of **captivity and release**, reflecting their spiritual struggles and need for redemption.

The Coming of Jesus

- Jesus arrives on the scene, teaching His **12 disciples** about the **Kingdom of God**.
- He challenges and **redefines religious practices**, preparing a new way for His people.
- Jesus speaks of a new group of people, "**called out**" to be His witnesses

Matthew 16:13-18 (NKJV) - ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The Death, Resurrection, and Commissioning of Jesus

- Jesus fulfills His mission by going to the cross, dying for humanity's sin, and rising from the dead.
- In **Matthew 28**, Jesus then commissions His **11 disciples** (soon to be known as **apostles**) to go and make disciples of all nations.

The Birth of the Church

- **Pentecost** comes 50 days after Jesus' resurrection, marking the **outpouring of the Holy Spirit** and the beginning of the Church's global mission (Acts 2). **Acts 2:37-41 (NIV)**
- The **apostles (now back to 12 including the addition of Mathias)** begin spreading the gospel, with **Peter** and **John** preaching in Jerusalem, leading to the establishment of the first **Christian church** in Jerusalem.
- The early Church grows despite **persecution** (Acts 8:1-4), and the **gospel** continues to spread through the Roman Empire, establishing churches and strengthening the body of Christ.
- The early **churches** are formed in **Judea, Samaria, and Galilee** as believers are added to the faith, and the **Holy Spirit** continues to guide them (Acts 9:31).

Church Planting and Expansion

- Paul's Missionary Journeys (Acts 13-21)

Why Did This Work?

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV) - ⁴² They **devoted** themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were **together** and **had everything in common**. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to **give to anyone who had need**. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to **meet together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and **ate together** with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ **praising God** and enjoying the favor of all the people. **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

Apostle's teaching: People were excited to learn about who God is and what He wants from them.

Fellowship: The people were not just friendly, they had deep friendships and authentic relationship.

Breaking of bread: Devoted to remembering the death of Jesus and keeping that at the center.

Prayer: Prayer was a top priority for them, and they did it often.

Together: They spent time together doing life together.

Had everything in common: They shared all that they had with one another.

Gave to anyone that had a need: They shared all of their things, not considering them their own.

Met together / Ate together

Praised God together: Worshiping God was central in everything they did.

Essentials of a Church

- Vertical**
- Apostles Teaching (The Word of God) - Grounded in the word of God
 - Breaking of Bread (Communion) - Remembering the death of Jesus and looking forward to His return
 - Prayer - Expressing our thankfulness to Him and our need for Him
 - Praising God - Singing songs and celebrating all that He has done for us

- Horizontal**
- Fellowship (Deep Relationship) - Doing life together
 - Serving - Using all the resources you have to serve one another. **1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)**
 - Giving - We give of our time, our talent, and our resources
 - Discipleship - We invest in others. We help those who are younger (physically and spiritually) grow up in the faith. We pour into the next generation because we believe that the next generation is the now generation, and we want them involved now.

So, What Does That Look Like?

- Vertical**
- Spend time with God through His word
 - Spend time in prayer each day. Don't forget to pray for your church

- Horizontal**
- Join a L.G. (or a men's/women's group)
 - Serve on a team
 - Give (regular giving, send a kid to camp)
 - Engage in a discipleship focused relationship

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) - ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.



Sermon Resources

Group Questions

Overtime Podcast