

## "We Need the Church"

Many people think you can be a good Christian without being a member of any church. Well is church really necessary? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's way." And today we're going to explore what God says about the church, and you can't afford to miss this study!

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way; we're here to search God's Word so we might please the Lord. We know the Lord's way is the best way, the right way, and the holy way of life. The best way to know the Lord's way is to study the Scriptures. They're God's voice to us today. They were true when the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles and prophets to write them, and they're true for all time. We're so grateful you care enough to spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

When you mention the word "church," people respond in a multitude of ways. Some think of the church as optional. Some think of the church as an institution. Some think the church is made up of prejudiced hypocrites. Some think the church needs reinventing in a style more like the culture of our times. Everyone seems to think they know what the church should be like. You know even folks who have never read the Bible or haven't entered a church door in many years have an opinion about what the church should be.

You've probably noticed religion in America has changed. Many groups have become religious entertainment venues and others have become like shopping malls. Some think the primary purpose of church is to cater to my wants and desires. We've become self-centered, thinking Jesus ought to be our servant rather than thinking we ought to be His. It's no wonder some see the church as optional and others as a waste of time. Few want to know what Christ envisioned for the church that He built or what place it has in His heart. The Lord never thought of the church as an option; in His eyes it's necessary.

Now if you want to think a little more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free number, that number is 1-800-321-8633. Now if you're looking for a church home, call us and let us help you find one. We also stream this program on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from Acts 20 verses 28 to 32, and we'll explore our need for the church.

Our reading today comes from Acts 20, verses 28 to 32. Paul is here addressing the Elders of the church in Ephesus. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we are grateful that Your Word protects us and gives us the truths that we need to be right with You and to avoid foolish things. And Father we pray that Your Word and Your Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus Name, Amen!

Yes, the Lord Jesus considered the church as necessary. He wants everyone to be a member of His church and to worship with the church regularly. The idea that you can be a good Christian and not be a member of the church is not from the heart of God. When you take a close look at your Bible, the New Testament reveals that the church is quite necessary to our relationship with the Lord.

The church that Jesus built doesn't belong to you or to me; it belongs to the Lord. He built it. After Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, you remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16 verse 18, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (that is the confession Peter made) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Yes, Jesus built His church, and not even His death could prevent it.

Now the church belongs to the Lord, because He purchased it. The apostle Paul by inspiration told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20 and verse 28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." If Jesus loved the church enough to die for it, how can we think so little of it. The church must be precious to the Lord.

The Bible reveals how closely related Christ is to the church in Ephesians 1:22 to 23: the Bible says "And He (that is God) put all things in subjection under His (that is Jesus' feet) feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Now just as your head is inseparably connected to your body, so Christ is inseparably connected to the church. Just as your body does your will as is conceived in the brain, so the church does the will of its head, and that's Jesus Christ. The church is the fullness of Christ. And we must never, never separate Christ from His church or the church from Christ.

The church is extremely precious to the Lord; He considers the church as His bride. The Bible says in Ephesians 5 verses 25 to 27, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." Now Jesus has gone to great lengths to bless and to sanctify the church. He wants her to be radiant with glory. Jesus values the church that much.

When people slander the church or make it trivial, they mock and insult Jesus Christ. They're saying Jesus is foolish to sanctify and glorify the church. If you wish to make a man angry, just slander his wife. Do you think the Lord Jesus will look kindly on anyone who slanders His bride?

Now, I want to distinguish the church that the Lord Jesus calls His bride from what people today think when they hear the word "church." What I'm speaking about is the Lord's church described in the New Testament. Many religious groups who call themselves "churches" are nothing like the New Testament church. They differ in their name, in their organization, in their doctrine, in their mission, and in their worship. They're often a reflection of our culture more than what God intended for the church to be. Some groups have so little spiritual value and content, it's no wonder that people see it as unnecessary.

This difference of what we see today and what the Bible teaches confuses and causes people to stray from the will of God. More than ever, people need to know the truth revealed in God's Word about the church. They need to think clearly about what God desires rather than be pulled into a false hope by something that calls itself church but differs greatly from the church that Jesus built as found in the New Testament. Now the Scriptures clearly make the church that Jesus built a necessity for us to engage if we wish to please God.

Well why is the church so necessary? Well there are several reasons. First, the Lord adds those that He saves to His church. Now when the Jews at Pentecost heard Peter preach, they were pierced to the heart and they wanted to know what to do. And Peter replied that they must repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 2 and verse 41 says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." Now in verse 47 the Bible says, "And the Lord was adding to their number (that is "to the church") day by day those who were being saved." The Lord forgives us at baptism and adds us to His church. You see baptism was that time that they were forgiven or saved.

Well when a person is saved, the Lord adds him to His church. To be in the church means the Lord has saved you. The Scriptures never contemplate a person who is saved as a person who hasn't been baptized or a person who is not in the Lord's church. The apostle Paul told the church at Colossae in Colossians 1 verses 13 to 14, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Now just as the Lord grants forgiveness when one repents and is baptized, so the Lord adds the baptized to His church. Now the church is the kingdom of Christ!

When John wrote to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1, he revealed to them what Christ had done for them. The Bible says in Revelation 1 verses 4 to 6: that John, to the seven churches that are in Asia he writes: "Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—and to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Now the book of Revelation addresses people who had come into a kingdom and were priests to God. John taught that "we" Christians "are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5 and verse 19). There are but two kingdoms: the domain of darkness and the kingdom of His beloved Son. To enter the church is to enter the kingdom of the beloved Son.

The Lord Jesus Himself spoke of the church as a kingdom. You remember the Lord said in Matthew 16 verse 18 and 19, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (that is his confession) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (And then he said) I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Well why would the Lord build one thing and then give Peter keys to something else, if the church is not the Kingdom? He doesn't do that. You see, the church is the kingdom of God today.

We ask Phil, how do you know that? Well, think about this. In Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, you'll recall that the Lord Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. We have no record anywhere in the New Testament that the blood of Jesus ever purchased anything but the church. The twenty-four elders, however, sang this new song to the Lord Jesus in Revelation 5 verses 9 and 10, they sang "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Now the same blood didn't purchase two different things, no—the church is that blood-bought kingdom.

Second, being in the church means that you're blood-bought, but there's no promise of being blood-bought to those who outside the church. The church contains the cleansed, but the others outside are still in sin. The kingdom contains priests to God, but outside there are no priests to God.

The Bible says in 1 John 5 and verse 12, that "Whoever has the Son has life; but whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." You see, being in the Lord's church is vital to our eternal salvation.

Now Ephesians chapter 2 contrasts the difference between people who are in the world and outside of Christ from those who come into Christ and His church. The apostle Paul reminds those who came out of paganism at Ephesus of what they had before they became members of the church or body of Christ. Ephesians 2 verses 12 to 13 says, "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off, you've been brought near by the blood of Christ."

In verse 19 to 22, Paul describes them after they became Christians, and he says "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household (His family), having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Now before they were strangers without hope and without God. Now they're God's family and fellow citizens in God's kingdom the church.

Third, the church is necessary because being in the church means that you are a member of God's family. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 3 and verse 15, "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household (that is the family) of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." Now in this passage Paul identified the church as God's household or family. The children of God are in the church. And if you claim to be in God's family but say church membership is unnecessary, then you're confused and may be deceiving yourself.

The very act that puts you into the family of God is what puts one into the church. Now compare these two verses. First, Galatians 3 verses 26 to 27, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Well baptism as an act of faith is what makes us children of God. Second, let's consider 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 13, which says "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." This verse says that we are baptized into the body. Well Ephesians 1:22 to 23 taught us that the body of Christ is the church. So baptism is what makes one a child of God and baptism is what puts us into the body of Christ, and that is the church.

Now when we realize the church is God's family, it's the bride of Christ, it's the body of Christ, it is the saved, it is the blood bought or those that bought by the blood of Jesus, then we can see why the church is so important in God's eyes. Being a member of the Lord's church is not optional my friend; now let me ask you, are you a member of the church that Jesus built? It matters. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're so thankful for Your family the church. We're thankful for the Kingdom, for the body of Christ, for the bride of Christ the church. And Father help us to be devoted to You, and to give ourselves so that we might serve You and please You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Many people claim to be members of the church, but they aren't active. They've stopped worshiping at church or supporting it. By their actions they've actually abandoned the church and in that sense they've abandoned the Lord. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:24 to 25, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." The Lord

wants us to encourage each other to love and good works and not forsake assembling with other Christians. You can't encourage other Christians to stay faithful if you quit going to church altogether.

Now I know some of you can't attend worship because of your health. And the Lord understands your situation. But if you can attend, yet choose to forsake meeting with the Lord's church, you're forsaking the Lord too. The Lord loves His people and knows His church. If you quit serving Him, He knows it. When you stop attending, you also open the door to temptation of every kind. To stay spiritually healthy, stay in church.

To become a member of the church and to be saved, believe with all your heart Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; repent of your sins; confess Jesus Christ as the son of God; and be baptized. And when you're baptized the blood of Jesus will wash away your sins, he'll cause you to be added to church. You'll become a child of God, born again into His family. If you are a member of the church of Christ but you've stopped attending, my friend, why not come back to the Lord and to the church. Get right with God and do it today.

We hope and pray that you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org).

Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can access them in a printed, audio, or a video format. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses, just let us know that you want one. Now we offer free study sheets that go along with our programs as well. Now all of these things are free online and all you have to do is request them. If you get a hold of us we won't hassle you for money or put you on a mailing list unless you ask for it.

Please attend worship at one of the churches of Christ in your area. Now they're the reason that we don't ask for money. And if you're looking for a church home, a Biblical church home that's sound, call us and we'll help you find one. Churches of Christ love and they want guests, and you'll be welcome if you attend. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about In Search of the Lord's Way. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.