

## "The church of Christ"

Occasionally people ask me questions about the church Jesus built. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. This is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Many years ago, I became a member of the church Jesus built, the one you can read about in your New Testament. To find out more, stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We search the Scriptures, because we know God has revealed the truth in them. God's Word is pure and holy; it never teaches anything but what is good and acceptable and perfect. When we follow God's Word, we show Him our love and our loyalty. The more we study His Word, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we want to give our hearts to Him. When we obey Him from the heart, the Lord is pleased. Thanks for taking time with us today; we want to be part of your life each week.

The church Jesus built, the one that you read about in the New Testament, came to earth in identifiable, local congregations. They were like families in various locations, meeting each first day of the week to worship. They ate their meals together, they took care of their needy, and they served the Lord. Acts 2:42 says, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." To be the church Jesus built today, congregations must seek to follow the examples of what God desires. We can know what God instructs by examining the New Testament.

The Lord's teaching was not merely for the first century; He gave it for all time. That teaching is preserved for us in written form in the New Testament, so that people in every age might know God's will. What God desired in the first century, He desires today. If the Lord gave us this model in the Word, shouldn't we follow it? Jesus said in Luke 6 and verse 46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" Because we call Jesus our Lord, we follow Him and obey His words.

Now we're offering this lesson on the church of Christ free. If you want a copy of today's 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 our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org) and on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Ephesians 5:23 to 27, and examine the church of Christ.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 5 verses 23 to 27. And it speaks of Jesus and His love for the church.

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

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.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that in Your work of love all through the ages, that You would have a Son who would purchase the church with His own blood. And love the church and sanctify it. Father we're so grateful that we can be a part

of Your family in the church. Father help us always to do Your will and to obey You. In Jesus name, Amen.

As members of the Lord's church, our heart's desire is to believe in and to obey the Lord Jesus. We don't want to add to His words or take away from them. We want to believe and practice everything He taught and nothing else. When we became Christians, we recognized Jesus Christ as our only Lord. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." You see we act in His name and by His authority. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some encyclopedias say that the church of Christ began in America in the early 1800s with men such as Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone; but Campbell and Stone can't establish something that's already been established. I've never claimed membership in any church but the church that Jesus established at Pentecost in 30 A.D., some say 33. I wasn't baptized in the name of Campbell or Stone; they're just men. Neither of them was crucified for me. I believe in the Lord Jesus and was baptized in His name. I've taken up my cross to follow Jesus. He is my Lord and the only head of His church. Now churches of Christ look to Him alone as our Savior and Lord.

Today there are thousands of local churches of Christ across the United States. Like the churches of the New Testament, these congregations look to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They don't have bylaws or a manual that they use in addition to the New Testament. They don't have a denominational headquarters or an organization over the local congregations. They don't meet annually to make official statements of the church or to make binding theological decisions. While these congregations recognize one another as brethren, they are autonomous. Each congregations has its own leaders made up of elders and deacons, who follow the Bible for their teaching and practice.

Now should you visit one of these congregations on a Sunday morning, you'll find a warm welcome. Churches of Christ are spiritual families who come together with a common faith, hope, and love. They are brothers and sisters to one another, but there is room in their hearts for someone new. They care about your soul, your well-being, and your family. Churches of Christ generally have Bible classes for all ages on Sunday mornings. Now these classes study the Bible closely to learn the truth about God and how we should serve Him.

Churches of Christ gather each Lord's day, which is the first day of the week or Sunday, to worship the Lord. They look to the Scriptures to see how God wants them to worship. They pattern their worship today after the examples and instructions given in the New Testament.

Worship is a time to draw near to God and to express our love, our praise, and our thanksgiving to God. Worshiping God reminds us of how holy God is and how we stand in need of His grace and forgiveness. Worship is a time of humility and reverence toward God.

Christian worship to the Lord consists first of prayers. 1 Timothy 2:1 to 2 says, "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." As Christians we pray for those in need. We thank God for all His blessings and for peace. We pray for strength, courage, and comfort. We even pray for our enemies. We pray especially that God will open a door for the Word, so that men may learn the will of God.

During worship we enjoy the reading of Scripture. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." Scripture nourishes our hearts and builds us up. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20 verse 32,

“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.” God’s Word builds us up and gives us our inheritance. We need God’s Word in our lives every day.

Churches of Christ sing from their hearts, because they want to praise God and to edify one another. Ephesians 5:18 to 19 says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, (or moral looseness) but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.” Colossians 3 and verse 16 says, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

The music in Christian worship in the New Testament was by means of vocal singing, and every member of the congregation participates. The New Testament gives no example or instruction for Christians to worship with instruments of music. We seek to follow the New Testament teaching in all things, so we simply sing. We know this pleases God, because the early church didn’t use instruments of music in worship for many, many centuries. Now since our worship is to glorify God, our desire is to please Him by following His instructions in the New Testament for Christian worship. Hebrews 13 and verse 15 says, “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”

Now each Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, we commune together in the Lord’s Supper. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:23 to 26, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” The Lord’s Supper is a simple memorial meal, and every member of the church partakes. Christians remember the body and the blood of Jesus sacrificed for them so they might have the forgiveness of their sins.

Now each first day of the week, Christians contribute to the Lord for the work of the church. They believe 2 Corinthians 9:6 to 7 where Paul said, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Churches of Christ do not send bills or expect a tithing or ten percent. They urge members to give cheerfully as they have prospered and as they purpose in their hearts.

During worship a preacher or minister will preach the word of God to build up and encourage brethren to live faithful and holy lives, to know the Lord and His truth, and to keep on doing good and reaching out to others with the gospel. Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 2 to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” Preachers have the responsibility of persuading the lost to come to Jesus and of strengthening the brethren. They must teach the whole counsel of God, and that means they must speak against what is false and immoral. They must call men to repent of their sins and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church is a family made up of brothers and sisters. In fact, 1 Peter 2 and verse 17 tells us to “love the brotherhood.” Now no one is above or better than anyone else. Each member of the body is loved and valued. The Lord Jesus said to the apostles in Matthew 20 verses 25 to 28, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall

not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The church Jesus built wasn't divided into clergy and laity. Each congregation had its own leadership, and no leader held power over several congregations. The idea of an archbishop or a hierarchy over many congregations is foreign to the New Testament. That was a development brought about by men over the centuries. In the New Testament a plurality of elders or shepherds oversaw the work of each congregation. They didn't have a bishop over the elders in a local church. When Diotrephes in Third John put himself first and tried to run the church, the apostle John rebuked him.

The Lord Jesus refused to let His followers assume a title that put them above others as some of the Jews did. Jesus said in Matthew 23:8 to 12, “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” For this reason, ministers and others in the church of Christ refuse to be called “Reverend” or “Father.”

In the Lord's church every member is called a “saint”; there isn't any special class of saints above other Christians. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 2, “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” Now every person washed in the blood of Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit is a saint.

In the Lord's church every member is a priest. Peter said to the whole church in 1 Peter 2 verse 9, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Now Israel may have had a special tribe of priests, but the church doesn't! According to 1 Peter 2 and verse 5, every Christian is a priest offering up “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Every Christian has the task as a priest to serve God, to worship, and to teach others about God.

While the church Jesus built, that is the church that belongs to Christ, is not a denomination, no, or even a sect, you can find it today in identifiable congregations. And you can be a member of the Lord's church! You see, the same seed that made members of the church in the first century makes members of the church today. Well what seed is that? It is the Word of God. 1 Peter 1:23 says that Christians are “born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” You see if you have the same seed, you have the same church. If you change the seed by mixing it with human traditions and doctrines, you have something different. Let's stay with God's Word and remain pure.

Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father we're so grateful that You have given to us, in Your word, the pattern that You would have Your church be. And how we should live and what we should believe and practice. Help us Heavenly Father, out of love, to want to serve You every day of lives. And to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 to 27, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man

who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

My friend, you’re building your religious house; and what you build will determine your eternal destiny. Be wise; listen to the words of Jesus and do them. Go to the New Testament, all of it, and find everything Jesus taught. Don’t build your house on human traditions or doctrines and then expect to have a firm foundation. Go to the Bible alone to find the rock. In churches of Christ, it’s our passion to listen to the Lord’s words found in the New Testament and simply obey them. We don’t want to add to them or take anything from them.

Become a Christian by putting your faith in the Lord and obeying Him. If you love Him, turn away from every sin and serve Him; confess Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God; and be baptized, immersed in water, in His name for the forgiveness of your sins. Romans 6:3 to 7 says that, when we’re baptized into Christ, we are baptized into His death. Baptism unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. When we are united with Christ, God sets us free from sin, and we become children of God and members of the church. Churches of Christ today are simply made up of people who trust and obey the Lord according to His teaching.

Now we’re offering a free Bible study, entitled, “The Church of Christ.” It’ll be a blessing to you. If you want a copy 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). You can also find us on YouTube at SearchTVMinistry. Subscribe to it and tell others about it.

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Please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll be happy to help you find one. Well we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us. Tell a friend about the program, that you watch it. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.