

UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH

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There are many misunderstandings about the Church leading to quarrels and divisions. Many cannot stay in an assembly for a long time due to lack of understanding and discipline. An understanding of the church makes it possible for believers to fit in and function better where they are planted. Every Christian need to be located where he or she will be at peace and function effectively, thereby enhancing the growth of the church. Having been located in the right church, the believer needs to submit to the word of God and the leadership of the assembly, and walk in good relationship with fellow believers.

I pray that God will give you understanding about the church through this study.

1. The church is the body of Christ

Eph 1:22

*22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,
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Col 1:18-19

*18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.
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2. The Church is a combination of all who are baptized into Christ.

1 Cor 12:13

*13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
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3. The Church is a fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Matt 18:20

*20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."
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Heb 10:25

*25 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.
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4. The Church is universal and is for all free born in Christ.

1 Cor 12:13

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

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Gal 3:26-4:1

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

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5. Jesus Christ is the head (Leader) of the Church.

Col 1:18

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

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Eph 1:22-23

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

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ASSEMBLIES AND DENOMINATIONS

It is true that there is no place in the Bible where it was commanded or indicated that local assemblies will go by different names and be denominationized.

Many factors have led to this position of the church today.

1. Inability of brethren to work together in harmony.
2. Differences in interpretation of scripture (Doctrinal issues)
3. Inability and difficulties in accommodating opposing views and different ministries and assignments that the Lord Jesus gives his different children.
4. The Lord's will to set up different congregations for different people - Congregations for all kinds of groups and calibers of men.
5. For faster expansion of the Kingdom of God as his messengers run with their visions at their own pace to the best of their ability.
6. For dynamism. Each messenger with a different approach, different emphasis, different personality and different congregation leading to

different results. E.g. Prayer based ministries, prosperity based churches, Deliverance based churches, Faith ministries, Holiness ministries, Love ministries, Evangelical ministries, Ceremonial congregations, Vibrant, dancing congregations etc.

NOTE: - Despite the differences in vision doctrines and approach, all congregations belong to the same body of Christ and head which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

- There is no need for segregation and criticism. All you need to do is to prayerfully decide the one that suits you. Where your spirit finds rest, rest there and serve your God.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

1. The church is the place of fellowship.

Matt 18:20

20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

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Heb 10:25

25 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.

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2. The church is a place of training and discipleship.

Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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.

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3. The church is a place off restoration, encouragement and revival in times of hopelessness, failure, disappointment and sin.

Heb 10:25

25 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.

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1 Thess 5:14

14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

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1 Cor 14:3

3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

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4. The church is a place of healing from the hurts of life.

James 5:15-16

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

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5. The church is a place of refocusing on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Heb 12:2

2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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6. The church is a place we learn to serve God with our talents, gifts, training, resources, time and energy.

1 Cor 12:4-12

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the

interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

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Acts 2:45-47

45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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.

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7. The church is a place where we care for one another. We become our brother's keeper showing love and care as one family.

Rom 12:9-21

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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1 Cor 13:4-7

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

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Acts 11:27-30

27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

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8. The church is a place where the redeemed in Christ learn and grow in the act of worshipping God.

Acts 2:45-47

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.

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9. The church is a place where the redeemed express their love, appreciation and commitment to God their Saviour by joining together to evangelize their community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

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Read Acts 2.

10. The church is a mission organization to reach the un-reached, and encourage and revive the reached.

Acts 8:1-3

1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

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- It gives opportunity for believers to go on mission to unfamiliar and familiar areas of the world.

- It gives opportunity for business and working class people who cannot go on missions to send and support those who are willing to go with their prayers and finances.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

1. The church is God's Kingdom here on earth. And as a result carries the backing and authority of God in Christ.

Luke 17:21

1 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

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Eph 1:18-23

19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

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Eph 2:6

6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

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2. The church has power to decide what happens here on earth and it will come to pass.

Matt 18:18

18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

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AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY

1. The local Assembly is headed by a Pastor who is the chief shepherd of the church.
2. There may be other Pastors called associate Pastors. In some churches they are called Assistant Pastors. But there is no office called Assistant Pastor in the Bible.
3. The Pastor is the shepherd overseer or caretaker of the local church.
4. The Pastor is God's man. He stands and speaks for God. He is the highest authority in the local assembly.

5. If he is under a denomination or a branch Pastor, he is subject to his Senior Pastor, area Pastor, Zonal Pastor, state Pastor and General overseer as the case may be, depending on how big the denomination is a

THE COVENANT PROMISE THAT ESTABLISHES THE CHURCH

1. Each church (Local assembly or denomination) has a covenant promise establishing her.
2. It is a corporate covenant. It covers every legitimate member who believes in the articles of faith, vision and leadership.
3. The blessings of the corporate covenant will manifest in the lives of every legitimate member. If you are not a part of the covenant, you can't reap the full blessings of the covenant.
4. If you are part of the covenant, you won't work against the vision and corporate existence of the church.
 - You can't work against it and reap the blessings of the covenant.
 - You can't be against leadership and reap the blessings promised leadership.
5. Follow the leadership of the church as the leader follows God.

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

In every family or organization, there must be discipline for sanctity to be maintained.

It is true that we are under grace, but God still remains God - He is orderly, meticulous, expects his laws and principles to be obeyed.

1. He killed Ananias and Saphira when they lied and almost destroyed the love, sincerity and openness of the people.

Acts 5:1-11

1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.
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2. Disciplinary instructions in the church.

Prov 27:5

*5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.*
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1 Cor 5:1- 12

5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast-as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people- 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

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Matt 18:15-20

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

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1 Cor 7:10-11

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

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1 Tim 5:20

0 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

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2 Tim 4:2-3

2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction.

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Titus 1:13

13 This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith

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Titus 2:15

15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

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Titus 3:9-11

9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. 10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. 11 You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

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