



When God reveals His will in Scripture, we **move** to line up with it as quickly as we can.

### **What is a church in the first place?**

According to the New Testament, the church is primarily a regular **assembly** of people who **profess** and give **evidence** that they have been saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone.

The idea of a **clearly defined** community of people is central to God's action in both the Old and the New Testaments. God has chosen to maintain a distinct and clearly separate people in order to **display** His character.

### **What is the use of the church?**

The church is the **manifestation** of the living God in this world.

#### **Membership Matters**

(Example 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2, Acts 6, 1 Timothy 5)

The evidence of church membership in the NT is not overtly abundant, but it is clear and it is **consistent**. And never does the NT conceive of the Christian existing on a prolonged basis **outside** the fellowship of the local church.

In that, the church across the board is really not a place, it is a people – it is **God's people** in Christ.

When a person becomes a Christian, he doesn't just join a local church because it is a good habit for growing into spiritual maturity. He joins a local church because it is the **expression** of what Christ has made him: a **member** of the body of Christ.

Being united to Christ means being united to every Christian. But the evidential background of the letters of the NT shows that that **universal** union must be given a living, breathing existence in a **local** church.

Hebrews 10:23-27

The church gives a visual presentation of the **gospel**

- when we forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us
- when we **commit** to one another as Christ has committed to us
- when we lay down our lives for one another as Christ laid down His life for us.

**Together** we can display the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way we just cannot by ourselves or even without that shared commitment.

If elders are going to make any difference at all in God's structure for the church that is His, **membership** must matter.

Don't just **attend** a church.

When you find a church you can **join**, you do so – for so many of the reasons we saw in Titus:

- so that non-Christians will hear and see the gospel,
- so that weak Christians will be cared for,
- so that strong Christians will channel their energies in a good way,
- so that church leaders will be encouraged and helped...

but mainly so that God will be **glorified**: so that the local church will exist as the manifestation of the living, saving God in this world in ways that are not possible **without** it.