

Marks of a New Testament Church

Acts 2:42-47

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (200-258 AD) famously wrote¹: "Outside the church there is no salvation." He also said: "A person cannot have God as his father who has not the church for his mother."

I. The **Birth** of the Church

- 1) **The Father Envisioned the Church** - *Deuteronomy 7:6*: "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."
- 2) **Jesus Established the Church** - *Matthew 16:18*: "...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
- 3) **The Holy Spirit Empowered the Church** - *1 Corinthians 12:13*: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..."

II. The **Beauty** of the Church

- 1) **The Church as the "Ekklesia"** (Called-Out Ones) - The word church is used 110 times in the New Testament, with 93 of those referring to a local church.
- 2) **The Church as the Body of Christ** - *Ephesians 1:22*: "And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church..."

- Even the smallest parts of the body are essential. A stapes (a tiny bone in the ear) is small, but without it, hearing is impossible. Likewise, every believer is significant.
- 3) **The Church as the Building of God** - *Ephesians 2:19-22*: "You are... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone."
- 4) **The Church as the Family of God** - *Ephesians 2:19*: "You are a member of God's very own family and you belong in God's household with every other Christian."
- 5) **The Church as the Bride of Christ** - *Ephesians 5:25*: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." Jesus takes our treatment of the church personally. When Saul persecuted the church, Jesus said: "Why are you persecuting Me?" (*Acts 9:4*)

¹ Cyprian of Carthage, "On the Unity of the Church (De Ecclesiae Unitate)", sections 6 and 8. For an English translation, see: The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 5.

- 6) **The Church as the Flock of God** - Acts 20:28: *"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..."*

III. You **Belong** to a Local Church

How Should I Treat My Church?

- 1) **Join** - Acts 2:41: *"...those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."* "join" means "to glue or cement together, to unite, to join firmly." It doesn't refer to an informal, merely assumed sort of relationship, but one where you choose to "glue" or "join" yourself firmly to others. That language only makes sense in the context of membership.
- 2) **Attend** - Acts 2:42: *"They continued steadfastly..."* V.46: *"continuing daily in the temple and house to house."*
- 3) **Learn** - Acts 2:42: *"...in the apostles' doctrine..."* Hebrews 13:17: *Obey your leaders and submit to them...*
- 4) **Fellowship** - Acts 2:42: *"...and fellowship..."* v.46: *"ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart."*
- 5) **Pray** - Acts 2:42: *"...and in prayers..."*
- 6) **Protect Unity** - Acts 2:44: *"All who believed were together..."* Canadian Geese Illustration: Flying in a "V" formation increases their range by 71%. The church, like the geese, must support each other to go farther together.
- 7) **Give** - Acts 2:45: *"...they sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need."*
- 8) **Serve/Minister** - Acts 2:45: *"...as anyone had need."*
- 9) **Worship** - Acts 2:47: *"...praising God..."* V.42: *"breaking of bread"* (one of the ordinances - communion)
- 10) **Welcome Others** - Acts 2:47: *"The Lord added to the church daily..."*

Why Join a Church? (P-A-S-T-O-R-S)

- P** - ublic Commitment to a Group - Romans 12:4-6: You belong to one another. Acts 2:41 – Those who followed Jesus were baptized and identified themselves with local believers.
- A** - llows Spiritual Leaders to Shepherd, Direct or Correct - Hebrews 13:17: Obey those who watch over your souls. Scriptures that speak of church discipline suggest some type of formal list or association (e.g., Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Scriptures that address pastoral leadership and oversight imply a recognized congregation (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:5).
- S** - upports the Weak, Tempted or Struggling
- T** - ells Others You Love What Jesus Loves – Eph. 5:25: Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.
- O** - utlet for Spiritual Gifts
- R** - emedy for Consumer Christianity
- S** - hows Who Can Be Counted On - 1 Corinthians 12:27: You are members of the body of Christ.

**Jim Elliot: "Wherever you are, be all there.
Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God."**