

Why The Church Exists

Before anyone joins any organisation they need to know why it exists.

This should be the same before you commit your allegiance to any church.

1 Corinthians 1:10 [Living Bible] “... *let there be real harmony so that there won't be splits in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.*”

To have unity and peace in a group all involved need to have a common goal and be of one mind as to how that goal will be reached.

What is the purpose of the church?

This can be summarised in a single sentence based on two key scriptures.

The church exists to fulfil here on earth the great commandment and the great commission given us by Jesus Christ.

The great commandment –

Matthew 22:36-40 [NIV] “‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

The great commission –

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

This command and commission can be broken down into four areas of church life.

The church exists to worship God –

That is to love the Creator God with all our body and mind.

The Church exists to celebrate God's presence through songs, music, corporate prayer, reading and expounding of God's Word.

John 4:23 [NIV] “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.”

One of the reasons we exist as individuals and as a Church is to fulfil God's desire to have His Creation worship Him.

Matthew 4:10 [NIV] “Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”’”

We worship God first, then serve Him.

How do we worship God, express our love to God? –

Through service and commitment.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

This is talking about a total commitment to God, the Greek [“*soma*”] indicates the whole body, pointing back in scripture to the Old Covenant burnt offering sacrifice, when all was burnt, even the skin of the animal.

The temple sacrifices were the central focus of Old Covenant worship and our total commitment of our body, mind and human spirit [**Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Proverbs 20:27**] to serve God should be the central focus of our worship.

Through singing and hearing scripture read.

Ephesians 5:19 [NIV] *“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,”*

Note Psalms, part of scripture is included. The psalms were written to be sung as well as a means of teaching us about our Creator.

John 17:17 [NIV] *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

As we read God’s Word we are sanctified, set apart from this world to worship our Creator.

Through giving of our substance to those in need.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 [NIV] *“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”*

This is an intricate part of worship that is not restricted to the offering that may be taken on the Sabbath.

Matthew 25:31-40 [NIV] *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”*

Giving to those in need is a day-to-day aspect of our lives that shows our honouring of our Creator, by being His messenger of mercy.

This is an act of worship.

Through baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Romans 6:3-4, 19 [NIV] *“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” ... “I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”*

To be symbolic of the death of our old way of life baptism has to be by total immersion.

Our new life in Christ and our yielding to the directive of the Holy Spirit is the pathway to Holiness that prepares us to be in the presence of the Holy Creator God.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 [NIV] *“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”*

Partaking of the bread and wine reminds us of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ and stimulates within us love for Him, and is thus an act of worship.

Through meditation.

Psalms 46:10 [King James] *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

In this life of continual haste and pressure it is all too easy to leave thoughts of God completely out of the picture.

We all need a “*quiet time*” every day when we can set aside all thoughts of material needs and satisfy our spiritual needs in the presence of our Creator, who placed in us the spiritual aspect of our nature.

Job 32:7-8 [NIV] *“I thought, ‘Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.’ But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”*

Godly wisdom can only be received through the human spirit in humans being activated by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:6-15 [NIV] *“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him,’ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:”*

The only way we can receive such revealed wisdom is in a “*quiet time*” as we detach ourselves from this world's hubbub and come to know God in that stillness.

Habakkuk 2:20 [NIV] *“But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”*

Through prayer.

Psalm 95:6-7 [NIV] *“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,”*

Prayer on our knees reminds us that our relationship with God is one of Creator and created.

By bowing before God submissively on our knees we acknowledge that He is sovereign and we belong to Him.

John 15:5 [NIV] *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

It is through prayer that we are joined to our Creator and the only way we tell Him of our hopes, desires and needs.

Through prayer, combined with study of God’s Word, we have the conversation with our Creator which builds the reconciled relationship God wants with us.

Why corporate worship?

Do we really need to gather with others to worship the Creator?

Malachi 3:16 [NIV] *“Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.”*

We honour and worship God by gathering together to talk about God’s influence in our lives.

John 13:34 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*

We are only able to give this testimony of love when we come to know each other’s needs in fellowshiping together.

Hebrews 10:25 [NIV] *“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.”*

Encouraging one another is an expression of love and therefore a form of worshipping God.

Acts 2:42-43 [NIV] *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”*

Corporate worship binds us together as an effective team that God can use in a miraculous way.

Three styles of corporate worship.

A Celebration.

Psalm 122:1 [NIV] *“I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”*

We worship our Creator by rejoicing in His presence as we gather to sing His praise in song and music.

Inspiration.

Isaiah 40:30-31 [Living Bible] *“Even the youths shall be exhausted and the young men will all give up but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...”*

The presence of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of like-minded brethren encourage and energise us to face the trials and pressures of day-to-day life.

Preparation.

Ephesians 4:11-13 [Living Bible] *“Some of us have been given special ability as apostles; to others He [Jesus Christ] has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust Him as their Saviour; still others have a gift for caring for God’s people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God. Why is it that He gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God’s people will be equipped to do better work for Him, building up the Church, the Body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity, until finally we all believe alike about our salvation and about our Saviour, God’s Son, and all become full-grown in the Lord, yes, to the point of being filled full with Christ.”*

Notice that apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers are **a gift from God** to help others in the fellowship to become more like Jesus Christ.

The Church exists to communicate God’s Word

“Go and make disciples of all nations” – part of the great commission.

Ephesians 3:10 [NIV] *“His [God’s] intent was that **through the church** the manifold wisdom of God should be known...”*

Note it was *“through the church”*, by personal evangelism that God was to become real to non-Christians.

Ephesians 3:8-9 [Living Bible] *“Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the most useless Christian there is, yet I was the one chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles the Glad News of the endless treasures available to them in Christ; and to explain to everyone that God is the Saviour of the Gentiles too...”*

I, and perhaps you also, can relate to that encouraging and challenging confession and testimony of our brother Paul.

Romans 10:13-14 [Living Bible] *“Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how shall they ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?”*

The vast majority of new people come to join the church as a result of personal evangelism, one person sharing with another what Christ and His Church have done to make their lives more fulfilled and joyous.

The Church must never stop growing.

a) Because God loves people

2 Peter 3:9 [NIV] *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

The Church believes that every person in the world needs Jesus Christ in their lives, and a relationship with Him, for if they don’t scripture tells us they will perish.

Because God loves people, Christians, those becoming like Jesus Christ, should love people also.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 [NIV] *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”*

The very love of God in us compels us to share this Good News with other people who need and will receive Christ.

Luke 15:7 [NIV] *“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*

Just as we all rejoice at the birth of a new baby into this world, so heaven and the Church rejoice over the sinner who repents, accepts Christ as their Saviour and starts a new life in Christ by being “born again”.

Matthew 9:13 [NIV] *“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Christ’s approach to sinners was the very opposite to the religious leaders of His day, the scribes and Pharisees, the Church should follow the same path as Christ.

Jesus is saying here *“I did not come to invite people who are so self-satisfied that they are convinced of their own goodness and that they do not need anyone’s help. I came to invite people who are very conscious of their sin and desperately aware of their need of a Saviour.”*

The tragedy is that this view of religion the Pharisees and scribes had is still active in churches today.

The scribes and Pharisees were more concerned with the preservation of their own Holiness than with helping another repent of their sins.

They shrank away in fastidious disgust from the sinner, they were far more concerned to save their own lives than to save the lives of others.

Christ is **not** in a church with such an attitude, it is based on Old Covenant righteousness by ritual sacrifice not New Covenant love sacrifice of laying down our own lives for others, as Christ did for us all.

b) Because it commands us to reach out to other people.

Luke 14:23 [Living Bible] *“... go out into the country ... and urge anyone you find to come so that My House will be full.”*

Acts 1:8 [NIV] *“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.”*

The Holy Spirit has come.

“You will”, is a command not an option, and only if we feel like it and are having a “good day”.

No, this is a direct command from our Creator.

This is the very reason for our creation and calling by God.

This is a command to each of us personally.

God has custom-designed each of us with a unique combination of personality, temperament, talents and backgrounds, and He now wants to harness and use these in His Mission to reach this messed-up society with His Good News of what Jesus Christ has done and can do for everyone.

c) Because growth is God's Will.

Colossians 2:19 [Good News Bible] *"... under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God wants it to grow."*

God uses the analogy of our own human bodies to describe how His Church is to function.

Just as a human baby grows as it is nourished, so the Church must grow as it is nourished by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 16:18 [Living Bible] *"... I [Jesus] will build My Church ..."*

God is increasing the size of His Church just as a building gets larger as it is constructed.

God is interested in numbers, because each number is an individual with whom He desires a personal loving relationship.

God's family, the Church, will never grow too big for God to love and nourish, for He is omnipotent.

He is the source of all power and everything He does is without expending energy that has to be replenished for He is a self-sufficient, infinite being.

d) God wants both quality and quantity in His family.

Matthew 5:48 [NIV] *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

God wants all His children to be mature and accomplish the goal He has planned for them, this is what being perfect means.

Isaiah 9:6-7 [Living Bible] *"For unto us a child is born; unto us a Son [Jesus Christ] is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. These will be His royal titles: Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. His ever-expanding, peaceful government will never end."*

Just as the physical universe is ever expanding into space so will God's Kingdom, His family, grow bigger.

In Christ, by accepting Him as our Saviour and allowing Him to live His life again on earth in us, we become a New Creation.

Romans 6:3-4 [NIV] *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

Scripture indicates that this new "spiritual creation" is going to extend to the physical creation by creating new heavens and a new earth.

Revelation 21:1 [NIV] *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."*

As man explores a small portion of the heavens he sees only death and decay, needing to be renewed.

Isaiah 51:16 [Amplified Bible] *“I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of My hand, that I may fix the new heavens as a tabernacle, and lay the foundations of a new birth, and say to Zion, you are My people.”*

Does this scripture indicate the future that our Creator God has planned for us, His people, Christians, an expanded, renewed universe to be our everlasting dwelling place?

This certainly will be an exciting future for us to have as our goal!

It is good to dream of such a future, but first we have a job of work to perform.

Matthew 24:12-14 [NIV] *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*

Notice the Good News will be preached in the form of a testimony, our personal example of the changes for good that accepting Christ into our lives can make.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Love among the brethren is the most powerful testimony the church will ever be able to give.

How does the church accomplish this testimony?

To grow bigger, by others joining our fellowship we have to grow smaller, through small groups where God’s Love in us can be expressed in a one-to-one relationship.

Small groups are where our friends and neighbours can be invited to fellowship with us and see the Love of God in action.

The Church exists to educate God’s people.

Hebrews 6:1-3 [NIV] *“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”*

God wants us to mature, to grow up and not remain newly born spiritual babies.

The Bible calls this growth discipleship, where the student listens to the Teacher, the Holy Spirit, and takes on the nature of the Teacher.

2 Peter 3:17-18 [NIV] *“Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”*

The Church is to protect God’s people from being drawn away from the fellowship by error and to nourish it with knowledge of God and His nature, so we can become that same nature.

How is this accomplished?

Ephesians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

Notice that these leaders in the church are God's gift to the church and are God's servants to minister to the church's needs to bring about maturity.

The Church exists to demonstrate God's Love.

John 13:35 [NIV] *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

The love we have as Christians will be noticed by all who come in contact with us.

1 John 3:16-18 [NIV] *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."*

The Christian life is one of giving, true love can only be expressed by the actions that come with the words.

Hebrews 13:16 [NIV] *"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."*

Love involves sacrifice, sacrifice of our time [our life] and of our possessions, that others' needs may be satisfied.

Romans 12:13 [NIV] *"Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."*

The example given us by the early church was one of hospitality.

It is recorded that the early church *"had all things in common"* and *"went from house to house eating meals with each other"*.

The heartbeat of any church fellowship is the service each member offers in love to others, those in or out of the Church.

Without such ministry that church is without any active life.

Serving one another causes the life blood of the Church to pulse around the body of the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 27 [Living Bible] *"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God but it is the same Lord we are serving." ... "Now here is what I am trying to say, all of you are the one body of Christ and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it."*

Every member of the Church is a minister serving the rest of the body.

Every task is essential to the well-being of the body as a whole.

Every member has been gifted by God to be a "10" in some area of the life.

The church is the vehicle through which we use our God-given gifts to serve others.