

## How to Start a Church

### I. What is a church?

1. Church *n.* - I. The (or a) Christian community, and its ecclesiastical organization. 4. a. The community or whole body of Christ's faithful people collectively; all who are spiritually united to Christ as 'Head of the Church'.
2. A church is a congregation (**Heb 2:12 c/w Psalms 22:22**).
3. Congregation - 1. The action of congregating or collecting in one body or mass.
4. A church is the body of Jesus Christ (**1Co 12:27**).
5. A church is a group of believers that *assembles* together (**Heb 10:23-25**).
6. A church is a group of baptized believers who continue in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread (communion), and prayers (**Act 2:41-42**).
7. A church is a group of believers that are of like faith and have the unity of the Spirit (**1Co 1:2,10; Rom 15:5; Phi 2:2; Eph 4:3**).
8. A church is a group of believers who keep Christ's ordinances as delivered (**1Co 11:2**).
9. Knowing what a church is will help us to know how a church is started.

### II. Adding members to an existing church.

1. Church members are to *receive* one another (**Rom 14:1; Rom 15:7**).
  - A. Receiving is the opposite of casting out (**3Jo 1:10**).
  - B. The church is held accountable for whom it considers members (**1Co 5; Rev 2:14-15; Rev 3:4**).
  - C. A mutual receiving of one another is necessary for determining who is in the church and who is not.
2. The pattern for adding members to a church is given in Acts 2.
  - A. The church in Jerusalem had 120 members prior to the day of Pentecost (**Act 1:15**).
  - B. On the day of Pentecost, many Jews heard the gospel and were exhorted to repent and be baptized (**Act 2:37-40**).
  - C. About 3000 of them were baptized and added to the church that day (**Act 2:41-42**).
  - D. While the apostles baptized them and added them outwardly to the church, the Lord through the Holy Spirit added them inwardly to it (**Act 2:47 c/w 1Co 12:13**).
  - E. Therefore, there is addition to the church by consensus of the members and addition by the Lord.
3. When a person is baptized into a local church, they enter into the kingdom of God which is likewise entered by baptism (**Luk 16:16 c/w Luk 7:29-30 c/w Mat 21:31-32**).
  - A. Church members are citizens of the kingdom of God (**Eph 2:19**).
  - B. Each local church is an embassy in God's kingdom, which is why preachers are called *ambassadors* for Christ (**2Co 5:20; Eph 6:20**).
4. Knowing how a church is added to will help us to know how a church is started.

### III. Who starts churches?

1. The New Testament church is a spiritual building whose foundation is Christ and the apostles (**Eph 2:19-22; 1Pe 2:5**).
2. Jesus built the first New Testament church upon Himself (**Mat 16:18**), the rock and chief cornerstone (**Eph 2:20**).
3. The apostles built churches.
  - A. Paul built new churches out of new Gentile converts (**Rom 15:16-20**).
  - B. Paul was a wise masterbuilder (**1Co 3:5-11**).

4. Evangelists start churches.
  - A. An evangelist was a minister in the NT church (**Eph 4:11**).
  - B. Philip was an evangelist (**Act 21:8**).
  - C. Philip went down to Samaria and preached the gospel there and baptized a group of people (**Act 8:4-12**).
  - D. We subsequently read of a church in Samaria (**Act 9:31**).
  - E. It can be therefore deduced that Philip the evangelist started the church in Samaria.
5. Pastors are to do the work of an evangelist (**2Ti 4:5**).
  - A. Therefore pastors build churches.
  - B. Pastors are given for the *edifying* (building) of the body of Christ (**Eph 4:11-12**).
  - C. Every time a pastor baptizes a new convert, that person, as a living stone, is laid upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and the church is built up.
6. Ministers are able to make declarations regarding persons and conditions by applying the word of God to those persons and conditions (**2Ti 3:16-17**).
  - A. They declare who qualifies for baptism and church fellowship making specific applications.
  - B. They declare who is worthy of exclusion or restoration making specific applications (**1Co 5; 2Co 2:6-8**).
  - C. They describe what a false teacher is and make specific applications (**Rom 16:17; 2Ti 2:17-18**).
  - D. By God's word they declare whether a group is or is not a church of Christ.
  - E. If a group of people meet the qualifications to be a church and are willing to receive one another as members of a church, it is right in the eyes of God for a minister to pronounce that they are a church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to minister to them as such.

#### IV. Starting a church from new converts.

1. Starting a church from new converts is done by a pastor baptizing a group of people, and declaring them to be a church, who have agreed to receive each other and function as a church.
  - A. This fact can be deduced from the following facts:
    - i. Ministers, who preach the gospel and baptize, are church builders. (See Section III - Who starts churches?)
    - ii. Baptism adds one to a local church (**Act 2:41-42,47**). (See Section II - Adding members to an existing church.)
    - iii. There are examples in the Bible of groups of people being baptized which are later referred to as a church. (See Section IV, 2 - Biblical examples of churches being formed by baptizing new converts)
  - B. The newly created church will be the body of Christ who are all of like faith, assemble together regularly for worship, and keep the ordinances as they were delivered by the apostles. (See Section I - What is a church?)
2. The following are Biblical examples of churches being formed by baptizing new converts:
  - A. The church in Samaria
    - i. The church in Samaria was started by Philip preaching the gospel and baptizing a group of believers (**Act 8:4-12 c/w Act 9:31**).
    - ii. Notice how the believers heeded the gospel which Philip preached *with one accord* (**Act 8:5-6**), which is a characteristic of a church (**Act 2:1**).

B. The church in Antioch

- i. When the church in Jerusalem was scattered due to persecution, some preachers went to Antioch preaching the gospel (**Act 11:19-20**).
- ii. A great number in Antioch believed and turned to God (**Act 11:21**).
- iii. When people repent (turn to God) and believe the gospel they are baptized and added to a church (**Act 2:37-38,41**).
- iv. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about Antioch receiving the gospel, they sent Barnabas to them and more people were added to the Lord (**Act 11:22-24**).
- v. Then Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch and they *assembled themselves with the church* in Antioch (**Act 11:25-26**).
- vi. The church in Antioch was therefore started by a group of people believing the gospel and being baptized.

C. The church in Corinth

- i. On one of his evangelistic trips, Paul went to Corinth (**Act 18:1**).
- ii. Paul preached the gospel there and *many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized* (**Act 18:8**).
- iii. Paul continued there a year and a half teaching the word of God among them (**Act 18:11**).
- iv. This is descriptive of a church, which *continues in the apostles' doctrine* (**Act 2:42**).
- v. The Corinthians who were baptized were formed into the church at Corinth (**1Co 1:2**).

V. Starting a church from existing church members.

1. The Biblical pattern is for churches to be established and have their own elders in every city, not to have one "mother church" with members in every city (**Tit 1:5**).
2. Scripture permits transfer of membership from one local church to another (**Act 9:19, 26-28; Act 11:25-26 c/w Act 13:1**).
  - A. Transfer does not change the spiritual fellowship one has in a local church; it only transfers the place where it is had.
  - B. This permits a group of believers in a local church to transfer membership by becoming a new local church.
3. If a church has enough nonresident members in another area to form a church, then a church can be formed there.
  - A. Being church members, they have already been baptized and made citizens of the kingdom of God. (See Section II - Adding members to an existing church.)
  - B. If they were to transfer to another church of like faith, they would not need to be rebaptized because they were just moving to a different embassy of the kingdom of God.
  - C. Therefore, the same process would apply for them to be formed into a new church as it would for new converts to be formed into a church, with the exception of baptism. (See Section IV - Starting a church from new converts.)
    - i. If the group of baptized church members agree to receive each other and to be formed into a church and function as such, then a pastor would declare them to be a new church.

- ii. The newly created church will be the body of Christ who are all of like faith, assemble together regularly for worship, and keep the ordinances as they were delivered by the apostles. (See Section I - What is a church?)
- 4. Prior to the constitution of the new church, their current church would agree to release them from membership in good standing in order to be formed into their own church.
  - A. There is Biblical precedent for a church approving of people by letters (**1Co 16:3**).
  - B. It is prudent to have written records when building the house of God (**Ezr 6:1-7**).