

Do You Have To Go To Church To Be a Christian?

Many say “I don’t have to go to church to be a Christian” - lack of understanding the church

Would the church continue to exist IF...?

- Would the church continue to exist if all the buildings were confiscated?
- Would the church continue to exist if we were no longer permitted to preach in Jesus’ name?
- Would the church continue to exist if we could not hold public gatherings?
- Would the church continue to exist if all the leaders were thrown into prison?
- Would the church continue to exist if there were no programs, worship teams, youth groups?

Church - Ekklesia - to call out (an assembly) -- **people gathered** for a purpose (**a family**)

- What church do you go to? → What family do you go to?
- What time does church start? → What time does the family start?
- What programs does your church have? → What programs does your family have?

So what exactly is Jesus building?

Mat 16:15-19 ESV He said to them, **"But who do you say that I am?"** 16 Simon Peter replied, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** 17 And Jesus answered him, **"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.** 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build my church**, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Initiation - in response to the message of Jesus is Lord they were added

There was an initiation of sorts “repent, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” that moved a person into fellowship with Jesus and as a result into a fellowship with other believers who are in fellowship with Jesus -- they WERE ADDED (added to what? - The group, the fellowship, the family)

Act 2:36-38 & 41 ESV Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both **Lord and Christ**, this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now **when they heard this** they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, **"Brothers, what shall we do?"** 38 And Peter said to them, **"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.....41** So those who received his word were baptized, and **there were added that day about three thousand souls.**

- It was the message that Jesus is both LORD and CHRIST - “who do you say that I am?”
- This was in answer to the question “What Shall We Do?” (repent, be baptized, receive Holy Spirit)
- Those who responded were baptized and ADDED (added to what - the church, their number vs 47)

Devotion - these are the things we do to keep our faith vibrant

Strong’s definition of Devoted - to be earnest towards, that is, (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent, or (in a place) to attend assiduously all the exercises, or (to a person) to adhere closely to (as a servitor).

42 **And they devoted themselves** to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

- Apostles Doctrine
- Fellowship
 - Devotion to Fellowship is about Relationship (Jesus and us) (participation, share in common)
 - 1Jn 1:3 ESV that which **we have seen and heard we proclaim** also to you, so **that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.**

- Devotion to the Fellowship is about Participation in the Work
 - Php 1:3-5 ESV I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your **partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now.
- Devotion to the Fellowship is about Caring for Others
 - Rom 15:26 ESV For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some **contribution** for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.
- Breaking Bread (vs 46) - eating meals together (see vs 47)
- Prayer

The Divine Affect

43 And **awe came upon every soul**, and many **wonders and signs** were being done through the apostles.

44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were **selling their possessions** and belongings and **distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need**. 46 And day by day, *attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes*, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 **praising God** and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

- Signs and wonders
- Generosity
- Praise
- Evangelism

The reason I call this grouping DIVINE AFFECT is because of the phrase “**awe that came upon every soul**”. When you see how the word **awe is used in the NT** -- the “awe” was obvious when there was a manifest presence of God - as in these examples.

- Mat 14:26 when they saw him walk on the sea
- Mat 28:4 when the keepers at the tomb saw the resurrection
- Mar 4:41 when the wind and sea obeyed him
- Luk 1:12 when Zecharias saw an angel
- Luk 2:9 when the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds
- Luk 5:26 when the lame man was healed

Do you think any of these would have asked “Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?”

Act 4:29-35 ESV And now, Lord, look upon their threats and **grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness**, 30 while you stretch out your hand to **heal, and signs and wonders** are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had **prayed**, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and continued to **speak the word of God with boldness**. 32 **Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul**, and no one said that **any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common**. 33 And with **great power** the apostles were giving their **testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**, and great grace was upon them all. 34 **There was not a needy person among them**, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was **distributed to each as any had need**.

Initiation --- Lordship, repentance, baptism, filled with the Spirit

Devotion --- Word, fellowship, eating together, prayer

Divine Affect --- What is the LORD speaking to you? - How will you respond in obedience to Him