



D.J.G. Study

## what is the church?

### Lesson one - church history

#### Acts

#### What is the Church anyway?

*I want you to think for a few minutes about the church. What do you know about how it started? Who was responsible for starting it? When did the first church service meet? What type of a service did they have? Did they sing Amazing Grace at that service? Take a minute and rack your brain – See how much of this you can come up with on your own. How much can you remember about how the church started – but no Bibles!*



#### How it got started

*Well let's take a few moments and investigate the Scriptures, shall we? Where did Jesus say He was going to build a church? Twice! Both in Matthew. Matthew 18.16, 17 and 16.17, 18.*

*Matthew 16.17, 18(read in the NLT, the NIV, and The Message)*

*Jesus did not come to set up a collection of buildings and groups. The church is simply a name ascribed to the body of Christ. There are smaller gatherings that make up the church, but the church as a whole includes all Christians across all time.*

*Jesus chose to use Peter and the other Apostles to build the church as we know it now. In fact, the Catholics believe that Peter was the very first Pope. The church was started by Christ. But what is the Church really?*

*The church was a gathering of fellow Christians together. But what did they do when they gathered together? Let's explore this idea a little closer. Look up Acts 2.42-47 for me.*



42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

*So here we have a brief look at what the early church looked like, what they did. There are three things that the early church did together when they gathered.*



*They listened to the Apostle's teachings. But they didn't just listen, they devoted themselves to the teachings. This means that they took them home, and actually lived like the Apostles taught them to! They devoted themselves to each other, lifting each other up and calling each other out when they were wrong. They pooled their resources. They ate together. They praised God together.*

*These were people who did not just come to the Temple and hear a sermon and go home. These were people who sacrificed everything, time, money, lifestyle, money, food, money, comfort, and money! They were people coming together to glorify God and did not hold onto anything in their own lives as being more important. And in the end, many, many, many of these Christians were killed for what they believed in.*

*They met in houses, basements, caves outside the city. A lot of the time they had to hide because they were being persecuted. Paul, author of most of the New Testament, persecuted, hunted down and killed many Christians before He became one himself.*

*But did the Church start with Jesus? No. The church started with Adam. Christianity grows out of Judaism, which is what was around since forever. The church is simply a more formalized look. The church is the gathering of all Christians. Early Christians called themselves "The Way."*



How it has looked throughout the ages

*So what happened after the first century? Well, around the 3<sup>d</sup> century, Christianity became the "official" religion of the Roman Empire, the largest world*

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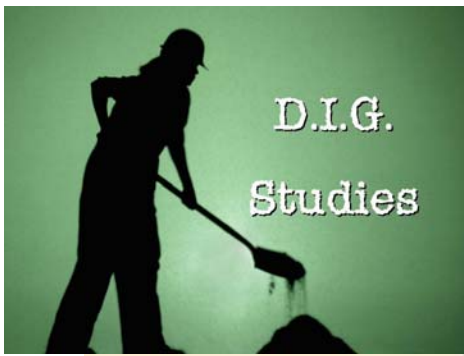


*power at the time. It was no longer a "secret" religion. And it has remained a strong power since then. Wars were fought in the Church's name (the Crusades, anyone?), minorities were marginalized in the Church's name, people were murdered in the Church's name. But people were saved from disaster in the Church's name. People were fed, clothed, given homes in the Church's name. People were taught how to read by the Church. The church has gone through a tumultuous time since it started. And next week, we'll look at how it looks today.*



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### Lesson two – the church today

*Refresh on what we covered last week - Who started the church, what was some of the history, and how it got to where we are today.*

#### ***Splits in the church***

*Why are there so many different churches? Well, basically the practice has been to split into different churches when people disagree on something. Some churches have even split for reasons as small as “We should not have musical instruments in our church” and “We should not have a Youth Ministry in our church.” There have been churches that have split for big reasons like “We should not have women in leadership positions” and “We think you should be able to live a life of sin and still be a pastor.”*

*These splits have created literally THOUSANDS of different churches. So I did my best to combine these churches in 3 categories that will help simplify the breakdown in your minds.*

#### ***Mainline Churches (LITURGICAL)***

*These churches are characterized by many things. The main thing is that these churches are liturgical. What I mean by this is that these church's services are very ordered, very scripted. There are creeds and prayers that are repeated week in and week out. The congregation typically reads a lot of prayers, creeds, and liturgical responsive readings together in unison. The most prominent form of music you will find in these churches are the hymns. The whole service is performed very professional with little to no deviation from the script. The majority of the body in these churches is older. We're talking 60's and up. These churches have a National (and sometimes international) governing body that decides what things the church believes and what the Church can and cannot do on issues like Abortion, and Homosexuality, and marriage, and communion.*

*Some Good Examples of Mainline Churches: Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, etc.*

#### ***Non-Mainline Churches (NON-LITURGICAL)***

*DISCLAIMER\*\* The Non-Mainline and Non-Denominational are split in this manner only by Worship Style differences from the Mainline. These categories are not entirely Theological Differences.*

*Usually characterized by being a lot looser than the Mainline churches. These churches are typically more progressive when it comes to music and teaching. They are typically churches that you will find in the middle of nowhere, or churches that have a body that is more younger to middle age than anything else. There is a little more room for flow in the Gatherings that these churches pull together. There is an order to the service, but there is a little more ebb and flow. There is room for things to change, and there are very few, if any liturgical readings. These churches have a*



national governing Body, but sometimes these churches can choose not to follow what their Governing Body decrees. There is a little freedom with the edicts cast down from these churches' Government. Some churches in this category are even autonomous and govern themselves.

*Some Good Examples of Non-Mainline Churches: C&MA, Saddle Back in CA, Friends, etc.*

### ***Non-Denominational and Charismatic churches (PROGRESSIVE / EMERGENT)***

*DISCLAIMER\*\* I have lumped Charismatic Churches in with this group only due to their freer style of worship*

*These churches are REALLY loose compared to the Mainline churches. They are usually full of people who are loud, energetic, rarely will bring in older music, and have a body membership composed of mostly younger people. There is virtually no liturgy to be found in these churches, and in some of the Charismatic churches you may even find yourself surrounded by people dancing, shouting, and praising God in other languages during times of singing, prayer, and the sermon itself! Many of these Non-Denominational churches have no National Governing Body and are entirely autonomous. Some have one, but many of these churches*

*Some Good examples of Non-Denominational Churches: Willow Creek in Chicago, Mars Hill in MI.*

*Some Good Examples of Charismatic: Assemblies of God, Praise and Worship Center, etc.*

### ***Churches that aren't really churches or***

*Some churches claim to be Churches that follow after God, but really aren't parts of the Body at all.*

### ***Jehovah's Witnesses***

*I do not know a massive amount about the Jehovah's Witnesses, but I can tell you a few things that make them unable to be a church.*

*(Notes from the CULTS book)*

### ***Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)***

*Mormons believe many un-Biblical doctrines. Baptism is not required for salvation. God did not start out as a human being, and we do not become gods when we die. The Book of Mormon is not a book that came from God himself (or through an angel). There is no sin that God says His blood cannot forgive, but ours can. The list can go on.*

### ***So What Makes a Church a Church?***

*For a church to truly be a church of God, they need to follow the Bible primarily. They need to see the need for Humans to confess their sinfulness to God and then follow Him in obedience in their own lives. A true Church of God will not have ridiculous restrictions on who can practice worship, or who can drink this substance, or who can drive*

*this type of car (and by ridiculous I mean that these demands cannot contradict what Scripture has to say on the subject). A true Church will seek to edify (lift up) its members and seek to impact the community around them for Christ. A true church is a church body that will seek God's will first, and their own only after that. A True church will call people out on their sins in a Biblical way. There are more, but we will get into that next time.*



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