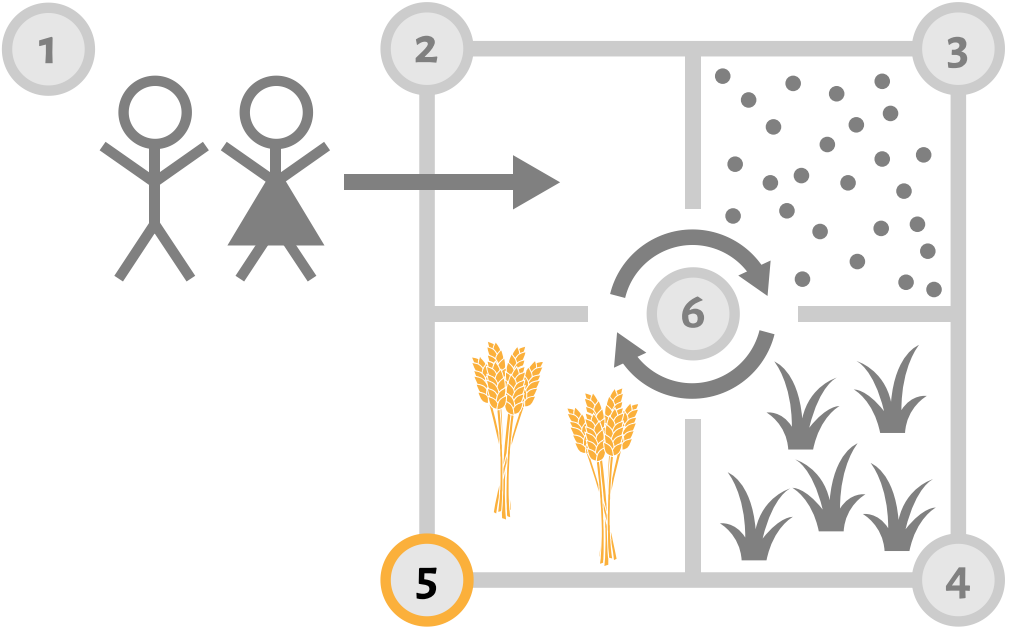
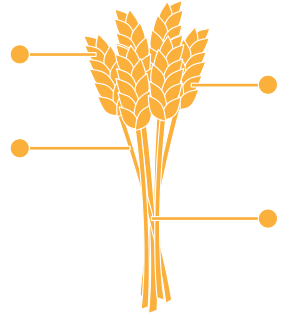


FORMING CHURCHES



To be effective in seeing the kingdom of God grow, we must know how to gather followers of Jesus together. Followers of Jesus gather in local churches which seek to see God's kingdom grow.

We can understand characteristics of a church from the Bible.



Acts 2:37-47:

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. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

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

From these verses and other places in the Bible, we know characteristics of a healthy church. We can answer the following five questions about a church.

1 **Who is a church?**

From Acts 2:41, we can see that a church is those who **receive** the gospel, are **baptized**, and **identify** as a local church.



2 **What does a church do?**

From Acts 2:37-47, we can see that a church obeys at least the following seven commands:

- (1) Repent and believe** (v. 38)
- (2) Be baptized** (v. 38)
- (3) Pray** (v. 42)
- (4) Make disciples** (v. 47)
- (5) Love** (vv. 44-47)
- (6) Receive the Lord's supper** (v. 42)
- (7) Give** (v. 45)

3 Where does a church meet?

Read Acts 2:46, Acts 5:42, Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33-34, Acts 18:7-8, Romans 16:3-5, and Colossians 4:15. The pattern in the Bible is for churches to meet in **houses**.

4 When does a church meet?

Read Acts 2:46 and Hebrews 10:24-25. A church meets **day by day or regularly**.

5 Why does a church meet?

Read Habbakuk 2:14. A church meets to **make God and his glory known**.

We can understand essentials of a healthy church from the Bible.

From several places in the Bible, we can find that the following five essentials are needed in a healthy church.



1 One head

(1) Jesus Christ

From Ephesians 1:22-23, we know that Jesus Christ is the head over

all things given to the church. All members of a church have equal access and responsibility to Jesus as the head.



2 Two sources of authority

There are two sources of authority in a church. These sources of authority never contradict one another and confirm one another.

(1) God's Word

From 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we know one

source of authority for a church is God's Word in the Bible.

(2) Holy Spirit

From John 14:26 and 1 Corinthians 2:12-16, we know that a second source of authority is the Holy Spirit.

3 Three roles

(1) Pastor

From 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 we know one role in a church is the role of pastor, also known as a shepherd, overseer, or elder. A pastor functions as a shepherd, overseer, and leader of the church.

(2) Deacon

From Acts 6:1-15 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 we know a second role is the role of deacon. A deacon is a servant in the church who fulfills responsibility in a specific area.

(3) Priests

From 1 Peter 2:9-10, we know that all who

believe in Jesus are a priesthood. As priests, all followers of Jesus are qualified to lead people to God.

4 Four signs of health

(1) Self-governing

From Acts 6:1-7, we know that the church made deacon appointments by itself. A healthy church makes decisions for itself according to the authority of the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

(2) Self-supporting

A healthy church should support all it does from the stewardship of its own resources. Some places we see this pattern in the Bible are Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:34-36, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, and 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

(3) Self-reproducing

A healthy church should be faithful in seeking the growth of the kingdom of God. The gospel should be proclaimed by

abiding followers of Jesus to people who do not believe in Jesus. Those who come to believe in Jesus should be led to become more like Jesus and gather as local churches. We can see this example in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8. The church in Thessalonica was established in as little as three weeks (Acts 17:1-9), yet was an example in spreading faith in Jesus.

(4) Self-correcting

From 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we know that God's Word in the Bible is profitable for guiding a church toward every good work. A healthy church will be guided by right understanding of God's Word and correction will come within the church.

5 Five functions

(1) Worship

In Matthew 22:36-38, we are commanded to love God. Anything a church does as an expression of love toward God is worship. Worship can include reading scripture,

singing, giving, praying, and obeying God.

(2) Fellowship

In Matthew 22:39, we are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves. We know from Acts 2:42-47 that the early church was devoted to the fellowship of followers of Jesus. Fellowship could include praying for one another, carrying one another's burdens, and reminding one another of truths of the gospel.

(3) Discipleship

In Matthew 28:18-20, we are commanded to teach disciples we make to obey what Jesus has commanded. In Acts 2:42-47, we see that the early church was devoted to the apostle's teaching, which is now recorded in the Bible. Discipleship focuses on leading people to become more like Jesus and grow in their relationship with him.

(4) Service

In Matthew 22:39, we are commanded to

love our neighbor as ourselves. We know from Acts 2:42-47 that the early church distributed resources to people as any had need. A healthy church should be involved in service to people as a means of communicating God's love.

(5) Evangelism

In Matthew 28:18-20, we are commanded to make disciples of all nations. In Acts 2:47, we see that people were added to the church day by day as they received the gospel of Jesus. Evangelism is sharing the gospel of Jesus with the aim to lead someone to believe in Jesus. Evangelism should be a regular practice of members of a healthy church. A church should be committed to the growth of God's kingdom in every place and people on earth.

What could a church meeting be like?

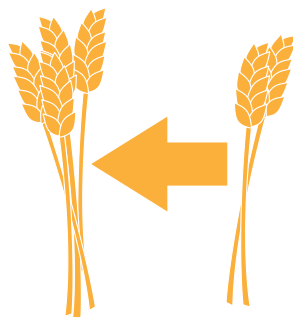
Now that we have examined the characteristics and essentials of a healthy church, we can form an outline that a church meeting could follow. Each church should discern what a church meeting should be like in their context, subject to the authority of the Bible and the Holy Spirit. An outline that might be helpful follows.



- 1 Worship** Pray and sing
- 2 Fellowship** Prayer request and testimonies
Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- 3 Discipleship** Bible study, practice, and making commitments
- 4 Service** Collect gifts and use to serve other people
- 5 Evangelism** Share the gospel inside and outside the church

How can we form a church?

Forming a church begins with inviting baptized followers of Jesus to identify as a church. Once this commitment is made, we should seek to help the church become healthy. Meet with the church for discipleship using the outlines provided for seven commands of Jesus (see *Discipleship*). It may be helpful to make similar outlines to continue discipleship with the church (see *How to Create More Outlines*). Teach the church the characteristics of a church, essentials of a healthy church, and a pattern for a church meeting (see *Forming Churches*). Over time, we should encourage the church to adopt more of the characteristics and essentials of a healthy church. Continue to visit and encourage the church often, multiplying leaders in the church (see *Multiplying Leaders*). We can illustrate the process of forming a church as follows.





Lead baptized followers of Jesus to identify as a church



Disciple the church, beginning with seven commands of Jesus
(see *Discipleship*)



Teach characteristics, essentials, and meeting pattern of a healthy church
(see *Forming Churches*)



Continue to visit and encourage the church often, multiplying leaders in the church
(see *Multiplying Leaders*)

For Kingdom Growth

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Many thanks to all who have contributed to this material for kingdom growth. Your service in the Lord is never in vain.