

"Can I Go to Church on TV?"

or

Study 2: What Is a Local Church?

- A. **No Formal Definition:** The New Testament gives no real definition, but we can describe what a church ought to be like from the examples there.
- B. **Working Definition:** "A local church is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God's will." (Charles C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, p. 141.)
 - 1. an assembly of **professing believers** in Christ:
 - a. New Testament letters are written to professing believers: "Paul ... to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia" 2 Cor. 1:1
 - b. Even Jesus, however, predicted there would be some "tares among the wheat" (Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43). Not all would be genuine "born-again" Christians. Not every person who attends a local church and professes to be a believer in Christ is, in fact, a believer.
 - 2. who have been **baptized**: The Bible expects all believers will get baptized. The New Testament knows of no unbaptized Christians.
 - a. Matt. 28:18-20. Jesus, granted all authority in heaven and upon earth, commanded his followers, {19} "as you travel, therefore, disciple (make learners of) all the nations, immersing (baptizing) them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to be keeping all things whatever I commanded to you. And pay attention -- I -- with you I am -- all the days until the completion of the age." (JTB Transl.)
 - b. Acts 10:38-48. As Peter explained Jesus and the forgiveness of sins to all who believe in Him to those gathered in the home of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Peter said, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" They were immediately baptized.

3. who are **organized**: In the New Testament, organization was obtained as soon as possible. It would seem that church leadership called "elders" constitutes the minimal level of organization.
 - a. Acts 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas, as they revisited churches in modern-day Turkey that they had just begun, appointed elders in each of those churches.
 - b. Titus 1:5 Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order and to appoint elders in each city.
4. to **do God's will**: This would include
 - a. Observance of the ordinances, including communion (Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 12:23-32) and baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41; 8:12-16, 36-39, etc.).
 - b. Discipling (causing to learn) as many people throughout the world as possible, teaching them to obey Jesus' commands (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). There are no restrictions on people groupings or on age.
 - c. Acts 2:40-47. The early church provides us with an excellent role model of doing God's will. Here is a brief summary of a key passage.
 - 1) Evangelism (38-41, 47)
 - 2) Baptism (41)
 - 3) Apostolic teaching (42)
 - 4) Fellowship (42)
 - a) Communion ("breaking of bread")
 - b) Prayer
 - 5) Expectancy (43)
 - 6) Sharing/Giving (44,45)
 - 7) Unity (46)
 - 8) Assembling together (daily)

- 9) Eating
- 10) Joy
- 11) Praising (47)

C. What is a church not, according to this definition?

- 1. 2 or 3 gathered together
- 2. A building
- 3. Parachurch groups such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth for Christ, Bible Studies, Navigators, Inter-Varsity, Mission Boards, Christian Schools

D. What is unspecified according to this definition?

- 1. What kind of building if any
 - a. For awhile (but only temporarily) the early church met in the temple - Acts 2:46
 - b. They met from house to house - Acts 2:46
 - c. Acts 20:8-9 -- they met in a third story room
 - d. They met in houses (Ro 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Philemon 1:2)
- 2. How many meetings
 - a. (although for at least awhile, the early church met daily - Acts 2:46)
 - b. There is evidence of regular meetings on the first day of the week - Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2

Can I Go to Church on TV? Yes / No

-- The best answer? No. You can (sometimes) receive good instruction from God's Word on TV, but you cannot participate in **corporate** worship or fellowship or unity or prayer or sharing of meals. Nor can you be held accountable by the elders of a local church. TV can never substitute for a church, though for invalids, it may provide a necessary alternative.

-- WordExplain urges you to become an active participant in a local church that teaches the Scripture as God's Word to man (not merely human ideas) and that deliberately seeks to obey Jesus and fulfill His Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

WordExplain has access to a fairly extensive network of good churches in the United States. Occasionally we can help you locate a good church in other countries. Contact jbartsch@wordexplain.com if you desire some assistance.

Can I Go to Church on TV? (What is a Local Church?)

This document serves as a key to Study 2: Can I Go to Church on TV? (What is a Local Church?) <http://www.wordexplain.com/PDFdocs/Church2bibstd.pdf>

Study 2: Can I Go to Church on TV? (What Is A Church?)

Prepared by James T. Bartsch

January, 2007

Published Online by WordExplain.com

Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com