

November 8, 2020

Viewpoint from the **Valley Grove Church Of Christ**

The Church Is Not . . .

By Don Wright

There has always been a great misunderstanding about the church that Christ built. Many believe that the church is something that it is not. Let us consider a few things that the church is not.

The Church is Not Plan B

Premillennialists believe that the church was never supposed to exist. If the Jews had not rejected Christ, the kingdom would have been established, the thousand-year reign of Christ would have commenced, and Jesus never would have built the church.

There are several problems with this theory, not the least of which is that both the prophets and Jesus tell us that the kingdom would be established in the first century (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1). We know from the inspired writings of the New Testament that the kingdom was in existence at that time. Paul told the brethren at Colossae that they had been translated into it (Colossians 1:13). How can someone be translated into something that does not exist? Instead of the church being an afterthought, the Bible teaches that it is a part of God's eternal plan (Ephesians 3:10-11).

The Church is Not Made Up of Denominations

The word denomination is defined as "a name or designation, especially a general name for a category." Religiously, a denomination is an "organization whose congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices" (Webster). A denomination, then, is something that is set apart into a category, separated from others of its kind. It is a part of the whole.

The church is not a part of anything. It is the whole or entire people of God. It is made up of all the saved. When a person obeys the gospel of Christ,

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***Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our
worship together and hope to see you again.***

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he or she is automatically added to the church (Acts 2:47). What church? The church that Jesus built and that belongs to Him. That is why the church is referred to as the church of Christ in the Bible (Romans 16:16). It is a designation of ownership.

Biblically, the church is made up of individuals, not churches. From an organizational standpoint, a denomination is a church of churches, something never seen in the Bible. The church is simply composed of people — God's people, wherever they may be found.

This is important to understand because many believe that all denominations make up the church. The problem is the church is never viewed as such in the New Testament. Denominational churches did not even exist in the first century, so how can they be a part of the church you read about in the Bible. The real point is that the New Testament church is composed of people, not denominational churches. The people that make up the church are those who have truly obeyed the gospel. Since denominational churches do not teach the right plan of salvation, they cannot be composed of the saved.

The Church is Not a Social Club

The religious world today leaves the impression that the church is a social club. Denominational churches spend their money on building gymnasiums, fellowship halls, and life centers, where the main emphasis is on physical things. They have basketball and softball teams and classes teaching everything from sewing to aerobics. They teach mechanics and other secular skills, donate blood, and some even have tattoo parlors. Many denominations offer academic classes that can lead to one getting a G.E.D. diploma. The social gospel has become so embedded in the minds of people that most would read this and think that there is nothing wrong with these things. Many would conclude that any church not engaged in these kinds of social programs is not a very good church.

. . . not a very good church.

The church you read about in the Bible never used the Lord's money to finance fun and frolic, recreation, or entertainment. The work of the church, that is, the local church, is limited to benevolence for saints, evangelizing the lost, and spiritual edification. That is the only work the church is authorized to do today (Colossians 3:17).

Are you a member of a church that has the characteristics of the New Testament church, or are you a member of a denominational church that does not look anything like what you read about in the Bible? The choice is up to you. Find the church that is what the Bible says it is — the church that really belongs to Christ, and become a member of it by obeying the gospel.

When The Local Church Feels Unnecessary

By David Diestelkamp

What if we, way in the back of our minds, have kind of liked not assembling with the church during the pandemic? Maybe it's just the slower pace of Sunday mornings, or more family time, or just the freshness of change of online studies. Maybe there's a slight disappointment when church assemblies start again, a feeling of not being ready yet. We have missed the people, but not the worship or the sermons or the work or the serving. Or maybe we haven't missed each other all that much and Zoom meetings feel good enough. An uncomfortable thought pops up: The local church feels unnecessary.

The local church feels unnecessary.

It's about God. Serving God can easily slip into serving in a way that respects our likes and preferences over His. We have to remind ourselves that assemblies are about God and His will, not “me” and “my” will.

God knows that when we're together it is a great time to “stir up love and good works...” and to exhort one another (Heb. 10:25). Assemblies are a great time to remember our Lord in the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34). Assemblies are a great time to focus on the text of Scripture (Col. 4:16), to pray and sing. Assemblies can even be an opportunity for spiritual warnings, discipline to remove evil influences and to save the erring (1 Cor. 5:4-5).

Some may suggest that what they've done at home has even been more helpful and meaningful, more intimate than what is done in a church assembly. God says there is value in assembling and so we will make it about Him by assembling. However, if assemblies are not edifying, we need to be present to help make them edifying. The Corinthians were not told to stay home because their assemblies were chaotic (1 Cor. 14:26) and divisive (1 Cor. 11:18-19). Our positive experiences at home during the pandemic can teach us what we should have been doing at home all along, and we can also bring what we learned to make assemblies more edifying.

It's about others. Most discovered that, with a little creativity (like home delivery), we could be self-sufficient during the pandemic (of course, not really since we all depend on supply chains). Maybe we will be tempted to feel this spiritually — that we don't need one another.

A lot of “one another” things happen when the church assembles. Others need you to stir them up, edify and exhort them, and set an example for them.

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Although the relationships, forbearing, submission, and cooperation that assemblies require can be challenging, local church assemblies give us opportunities to express our love in all these things!

It's about me. We are often not the best judges of our own spiritual needs. We may need the stirring up and exhortation of an assembly (Heb. 10:24-25) without realizing it. A group brings a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and experience to worship and studies. Assembling gives us an opportunity to have fellowship, to literally not be alone in serving the Lord. The Lord values this and so we value it too.

I heard a brother recently lament that “Satan is sifting us” with this pandemic. It’s an allusion to Satan’s request to test Simon Peter in Luke 22:31. Assembling with local churches at this time may be a test of Satan. We may find assemblies to be awkward, non-traditional, uncomfortable, distracting, less connective, and maybe less edifying than in the past. Giving up on assembling isn’t the answer. The Lord has made assembling with the church important. Now it is up to us to make it equally important to ourselves.

Study Your Bible

November Birthdays:

The 9th Jesse Green; The 20th Joann Haynes; The 17th Sandy Merriitt.

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Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.

Worship 10:30 A.M.

Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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