



Matthew 16

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”17 Jesus answered and said to 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 also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.- 1 Peter 2

III.- Pastor Townsend’s church ????

IT IS JESUS’S CHURCH

III.- A billion downloads Bible ap- YouVersion

Is the church essential?

What is the purpose of the church?

How committed should you be to the church?

Does the Bible teach local church membership?

Your local church plays a significant role in your spiritual life. In most cases, the local church is the primary source of Bible teaching, worship, discipleship, accountability, admonishment, encouragement, and fellowship.

Considering the vital role the local church plays in spiritual growth, it's a wonder that so many Christians don't feel the need to identify with a specific congregation through church membership. Rather than planting with one church body and developing deep spiritual roots, too many believers today seem content to drift among multiple congregations, landing wherever they feel their needs and interests are best served.

That is not God's design.

- ❖ I'm a part of the universal church
- ❖ I don't need to become a member of a local church- but why not?
- ❖ I can run my own life just fine- no accountability

It's not about religion or tradition- it's about a personal connection with God and His children.

It's not just a duty, it's a declaration of desire to live for Christ with the body of believers.

The term *church* comes from the Greek word, *ekklesia*. Ekklesia in a literal sense means, "A called-out assembly."

A very important doctrinal study!

1. **The Body of Christ** – "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." ([Colossians 1:18 NKJV](#)). This metaphor emphasizes the church's unity, diversity, and dependence on Christ.
2. **The Bride of Christ** – "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." ([Revelation 19:7 NKJV](#)). This portrays the church's intimate relationship with Christ and its ultimate destiny.
3. **A Holy Temple** – "Now, hence, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord," ([Ephesians 2:19-21 NKJV](#)). This metaphor highlights the church as God's dwelling place and its sacred nature.

✓ **I am thankful for the local church!- The church is not a building, it's a people!**

The local church is where believers gather to worship, learn, and serve together. It's a place of fellowship, where we can "consider one another to stir up love and good works". The church provides:

- Teaching and preaching of God's Word
- Opportunities for service and ministry
- Accountability and discipleship
- Support and encouragement

Other members and pastors.

Philemon 1:7; Romans 15:32; 2 Timothy 1:16; 1 Corinthians 16:18; 2 Corinthians 7:13

The Bible establishes the foundation for the church's structure:

- Jesus Christ is the head of the church ([Ephesians 1:22](#), [Colossians 1:18](#)).
- The church is Christ's body, and He is its Savior.
- The New Testament outlines a simple structure involving pastors (elders) and deacons ([1 Timothy 3:1-13](#), [Titus 1:5-9](#)).

The Importance of Gathering as a Church

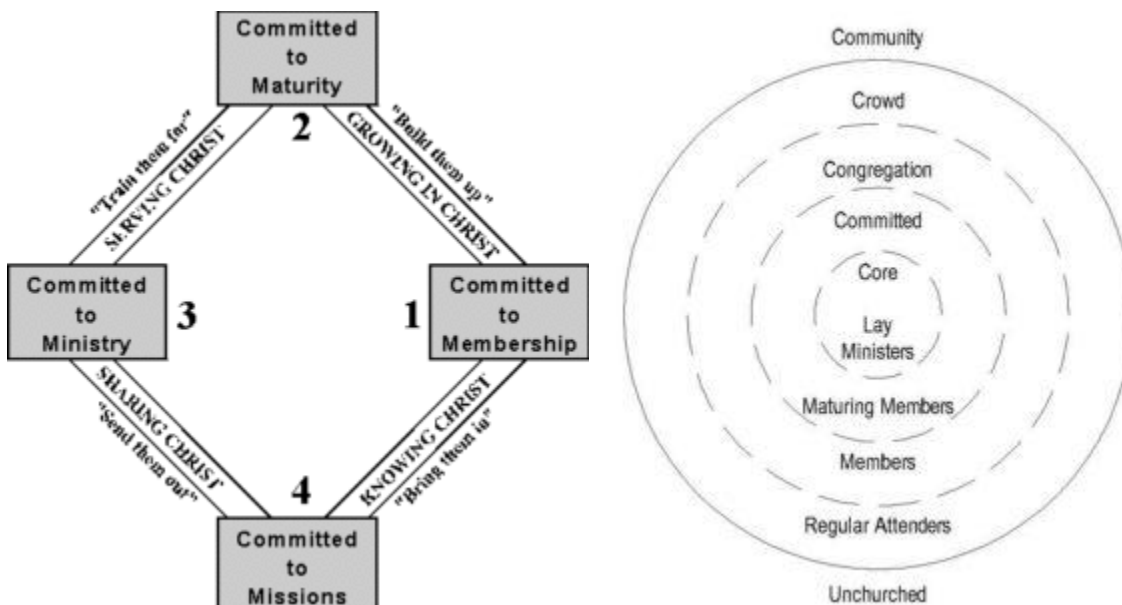
Gathering together as a church is essential for spiritual growth and fellowship:

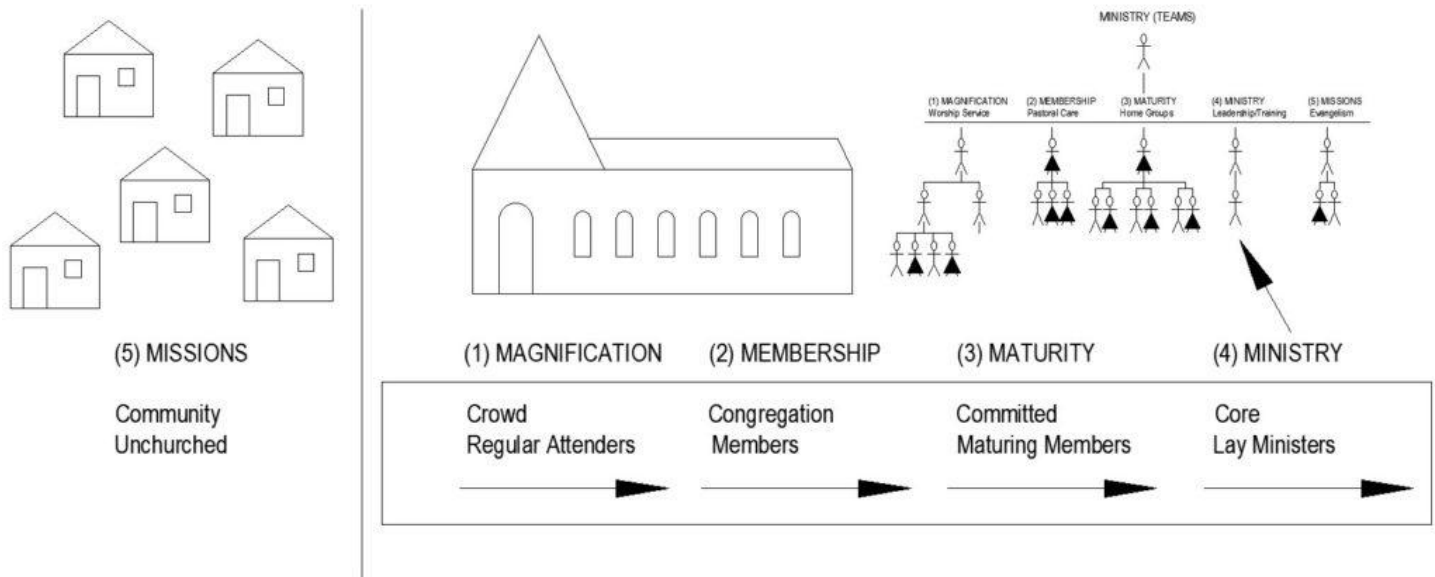
- It allows believers to worship collectively, pray together, and encourage one another ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#)).
- It provides opportunities for teaching, discipleship, and the exercise of spiritual gifts ([1 Corinthians 14:26](#), [Ephesians 4:11-16](#)).
- It fosters unity and love among believers ([John 13:34-35](#), [Ephesians 4:1-6](#)).

"And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." ([Hebrews 10:24-25, NKJV](#))

Acts 2:41-42

THE FIVEFOLD PURPOSE





➤ **WORSHIP**

Matthew 4:10- Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.

Psalm 34:3

➤ **MINISTRY**

Serving others is vital!

Faithfulness is often defined in terms of attendance rather than service and members just sit, soak, and sour.

➤ **EVANGELISM**

Matthew 28:19-20

➤ **FELLOWSHIP**

As Christians we are called to belong not just believe.

Ephesians 2:19- Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.- Living Bible

➤ DISCIPLESHIP

Colossians 1:28-

The church exists to edify, encourage, exalt, equip, and evangelize.

My notes from 2013-

(1) You Need the Local Church to Grow in Spiritual Maturity

The primary means by which we grow spiritually is through the steady intake of the Word of God. Regular Bible reading and study is vital to our spiritual health ([Ps 1:1-4](#)), but God has ordained preaching [to have a unique role](#) in our growth as believers. The local church setting is the place where you hear the Word of God preached, and you need this preaching to survive and thrive spiritually just like we need food to survive and thrive physically. “Man does not live on bread alone,” Jesus reminds us, “but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” ([Matt 4:7](#)). Paul makes a direct connection between spiritual maturity and biblical teaching when he writes, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” ([Col 1:28](#)).

Surely we can praise God for providing us with countless online platforms with which to hear the Word of God from gifted preachers and teachers. There is no substitute for teaching that comes to you within your local church setting. How can I say this? Because this preaching and teaching is intentionally tailored for the needs of your specific setting.

These men are excellent teachers of God’s Word, but they don’t know you; they don’t shepherd you; they don’t think about and pray for you by name and by face; they don’t spend time with you in long meetings in your home or on the phone. They are not accountable for your soul like a local shepherd is ([Heb 13:17](#)). These men preach to their congregations and you are able to listen in through a smartphone app or your web browser. That’s great, and God is worthy of praise for such good gifts. **But it is your local church where you are going to hear sermons each week that are crafted for you by pastors who are thinking about and praying for you by name.**

But Christlike maturity also comes through engaging spiritually with men and women in your local congregation. Preaching is essential, but our growth will be stunted without regularly rubbing shoulders and being in close relationship with folks in our church. This is another reason why a diet of online preaching can only get you so far in your walk with Christ: without relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ, you will be disabled from using your spiritual gifts ([1 Cor 12:1-31](#)) and cut off from vital rebuke, correction, accountability, and encouragement ([Matt 18:15-20](#); [Heb 3:12-15](#); [10:24-25](#)), both of which are crucial to your spiritual growth.

III.- develop pain in your neck- you go to people for recommendations and if that doesn’t work you go to the physical doctor for advice. What do you do when you have a spiritual issue?

(2) You Need the Local Church to Walk Faithfully with Christ

One of the reasons why Scripture commands the church to not neglect regular corporate gatherings is because it is in being together that we have the opportunity to motivate one another to serve Christ through love and good

works. The author of Hebrews is especially concerned that his readers understand this connection between faithfulness and the church's regular gathering.

[Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

The word for “consider” here carries the idea elsewhere in the New Testament of “notice,” “perceive” and occasionally “reckon” (see [Matt 7:3](#); [Luke 6:41](#); [Luke 12:24](#); [27](#); [20:23](#); [Acts 7:31](#); [11:6](#); [27:39](#); [Rom 4:19](#)). The idea in the context of Hebrews is that, in order to *think* about the ways we might motivate each other to walk in faithfulness to Jesus, we must first have the opportunity to get to know each other. The less I know you, the less I am able to spur you on to love in good works in specific, concrete ways. But as we are in proximity to one another, I can get to know you and observe how you exercise your gifts, talents, and interests. I can begin to understand your background, your place in life, and what opportunities God has afforded you. When I have this kind of information about who you are, I can offer encouragement and admonishment that is tailor-made for you and likely to be far more effective than the generic sentiments given by someone who barely knows you.

The word for “spur” is a strong word. Negatively, it is used to describe Paul's sharp disagreement with Barnabas ([Acts 15:39](#)). Here it is being used positively but with the same force. We are to consider specific ways to provoke the members of our church body to love and good works, not just merely suggest what they might or might not do in service to Christ and others.

But why does the author offer this admonishment? Because it is our natural tendency to drift away from the community of believers. It becomes easy to justify not gathering together with our local church when we are beset with busyness, fatigue, and, at this particular moment, fears of catching or spreading Covid-19. How easy it could become after a few months of shelter in place to settle into the habit of corporate neglect.

(3) You Need the Local Church to Persevere in the Faith. Immediately prior to vv. 24-25, the author of Hebrews exhorts his listeners to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...” ([Heb 10:22](#)) and then, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (10:23). The instruction to keep drawing near to God and holding fast our confession are exhortations to keep believing in Jesus; they are exhortations to keep the faith.

The commands to not neglect meeting together and stirring up each other to love and good works, therefore, are vitally connected with remaining in the faith, and the instruction to “let us consider how to stir up one another,” (v. 24) is an essential component of the author's entreaty to these believers to keep believing. Stirring up one another to love and good works isn't merely about fruitfulness; it's also about perseverance. We stir up each other to love and good works so that we don't become spiritually apathetic, complacent, and in danger of drifting away from Christ.

Everything the author said in vv. 19-25, including the exhortation to not neglect the meeting together is linked to the following statements in v. 26. The thought is this: you need the local body of believers in order to keep you from turning away from Jesus and sinning deliberately in unbelief.

We see a similar exhortation earlier in the book.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

[Hebrews 3:12-15](#)

“Take care, brothers, lest there be any among you with an evil, unbelieving heart.”

The argument of this passage is that each of us should be deeply concerned about every other member of our local church and make it our business to be regularly exhorting each other to not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

(4) You Need the Local Church to Find Out Your Identity

Who am I? What am I all about? Who am I supposed to be? Where do I find my purpose?

Paul knew who he was: “By the grace of God I am who I am” ([1 Cor 15:10](#)). Paul had a sense of identity and of self-knowledge. But he didn’t ground that sense of identity in himself. He grounded it in the grace of God and in the church. Notice how Paul locates our identity squarely in the church in [1 Corinthians 12:12-13](#):

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members are of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews and Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

[1 Corinthians 12:12-13](#)

Our process for implementing the purpose of God involves four steps:

We bring people in, build them up, train them, and send them out. We bring them in as members, we build them up to maturity, we train them for ministry, and we send them out on mission, magnifying the Lord in the process. That’s it! This is our total focus at Saddleback. We don’t do anything else.

Do you need the local church? The New Testament answer is an unambiguous “yes!” The local body of believers is essential for your spiritual growth, your faithfulness to Christ, your perseverance in the faith, and for knowing who you really are. Let us embrace this good gift from God and give ourselves wholly to his people, for his glory and our good.

III.- Pastor Townsend’s church