

# Why Join a Local Church?

*This is a great question that needs our attention.  
It is a question that has solid Biblical answers.*

## Why are there so many who believe in God, but do not join a local church?

- Some just don't know and need to be taught.
- Some do not want accountability and transparency.
- Some are overwhelmed with religious confusion.
- Some are wrestling with heavy weights of guilt, anxiety, fear, shame, etc.
- Some have been badly hurt by "churchy" people.

## So, why join a local church?

### #1 Because it is part of God's design for you and me.

- Let's first define "church" and use the Bible to explain the Greek word for "church."
  - *Ekklesia* – Assembly, congregation. Can be used for any assembly, even secular (Acts 19:32,39,41).
  - Two main uses of this word *ekklesia* in the New Testament.
    - **The universal sense.**
      - All Christians everywhere who are in the body of Christ.
      - **Ephesians 1:22-23** – The church, the universal body of Christ (Hebrews 12:22-23).
    - **The local sense.**
      - Groups of believers assembling, committing to each other and working together.
      - "Churches" (*ekklesia*) were meeting throughout the world during the New Testament.
      - **Bible examples of local churches** (Acts 15:41; 16:5; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 14:33-34; 16:1; Galatians 1:2; 1 Colossians 4:16; Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1).
- **Ephesians 3:10-11** – God's eternal design involved the church. The church displays God's wisdom.
- Jesus said He would build His church, and that the kingdom would be established, and that the heaven's doors would be opened and that nothing, not even death could stop it (Matthew 16:18-20).
- But how do we see Jesus' design for "His church" being played out in the New Testament? Through local "churches" (assemblies/congregations) of Christ-followers working together throughout the world.

### #2 Because a local church is God's designed result of obedience to the Gospel.

- **The Gospel is preached → People are saved → Local churches are formed.**
- **Acts 11:19-26** – Gospel of Jesus preached in Antioch, people believed and turned to the Lord. The "church" in Jerusalem sent Barnabas. Barnabas and Saul met with "the church" in Antioch for a year. Later, once again, this group of believers in Antioch was called a "church" (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23-28; 15:3,30-35).
- Acts 9:26 – Saul/Paul set us an example. After becoming a Christian, he sought to "join" a group of disciples.
- The local church is God's design for you when you become a Christian. This is the practical result of Jesus' design to build His "church." Jesus' church is built from community to community all over the world.

### #3 Because we were designed by God to be part of a community of believers.

- The weight of Biblical evidence from Genesis to Revelation is that God has always designed us to be part of a community of fellow believers and followers of Him.
  - You can take the Ephesian church as an example, just look at how the Holy Spirit through Paul describes them (family, army, household, stones making a temple, together, united, body, etc.).
- **Acts 11:27-30** – The church at Antioch took up a collection and sent funds to help those in Jerusalem who were suffering because of the famine. The local body of believers came together united in purpose to relieve the suffering of fellow believers. This is just one example in Scripture of local churches doing this.
- **The Corinthian “church of God.”**
  - Please know that Paul is writing to new Christians who have tried to leave the world of wickedness and now they are all coming into this congregation bringing all their baggage (Jews/Gentiles, carnal ways, etc.). It was causing quite a problem in the Corinthian church. Paul’s solution in was NOT “Keep Jesus, forget the church.” He wanted them to get “church” right, but that required that the individuals get right with God.

#### Saints together

- **1 Corinthians 1:1-2** – God called us to be “saints” but saints together with other saints.

#### Standing on truth

- **1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:16-17** – God designed local churches to stand unified on the absolute truth of the written word of God and to proclaim that word to each other, the community and the world (1 Corinthians 14:36-37; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2:13; 1 Timothy 3:14-15).

#### Worshipping together. Mutual edification.

- **1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 14:23-26** – God designed us to be saints together, meeting together, worshipping together, edifying each other “in church,” and also collectively reaching out to help others come to Jesus.

#### Devoted to each other in service.

- **1 Corinthians 16:15-16,18** – The household of Stephanas devoted themselves to the saints. The King James Version says that they “addicted” themselves to the ministry of the saints. Look at how this was an encouragement to the apostle Paul.

#### Holding each other accountable

- **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** – Look at the phrase “among you” in this chapter. One of the functions of the local body of believers is to hold each other accountable to Christ’s standards of morality. “Among you” is not possible if we have no idea who belongs and who doesn’t (see also 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

#### Following godly leadership.

- **Hebrews 13:7,17** – We are commanded by God to submit to our local church leaders because they are watching out over our souls. Those leaders will give an account for souls. Again, this concept tells us that there is a definable group of believers in a local area, there are leaders, and there is a level of commitment that we have to each other as we work together to follow Christ (Acts 14:23; 20:17-38; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

#### Considering how to encourage each other as we assemble together.

- **Hebrews 10:24-25** – We are to provoke each other to love and good works by assembling with each other.
- A special note about the prophet Elijah. When Elijah was discouraged, feeling all alone, God reminded him that there were 7,000 others who were like-minded followers of God. The Lord then sent Elijah to get with Elisha and continue in His work. We are not meant to be isolated followers of God.

#### Discussion Questions:

- How can we encourage those who are hesitant to join a local church?
- What may be hindering our vulnerability and transparency with each other?
- How can I “consider one another” to provoke them to love and good works? What does that look like?