

# THE FAMILY OF GOD

1. DISTINCTION BETWEEN UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL CHURCH.
  
2. JESUS REFERS TO CHURCH
  1. Mat. 16:18 - Upon this rock...(the spiritual, universal church)
  2. Mat. 18:17 - Tell it to the church (the local church).
  3. Distinction between church and churches.
    1. Acts 14:23 - *"...appointed them elders in every church..."*
    2. Acts 14:27 - *"when they were come, and had gathered the church together."*
    3. Rom 16:5 - *"Salute the church that is in their house..."*
    4. I Cor. 4:17 - *"Even as I teach everywhere in every church..."*
    5. I Thes. 2:14 - *"The Churches of God are in Judea in Christ..."*
  4. Need for assembling
    1. Heb. 10:25 - *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*
    2. Acts 20:7 - *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..."*
  
3. PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL EXPRESSION
  1. Prayer, worship, praise
  2. Counsel
  3. Fellowship
  4. Training

5. PROMOTES ORDER AND DISCIPLINE

1. Dispute between believers (Mat. 18:17)
2. Questions of doctrine (Acts 15)
3. Discipline of moral conduct (1 Cor. 5:11)- *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."*

4. WHAT BETTER WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THAN THROUGH A FAMILY SETTING?

1. Family represents permanent relationship.
  1. When natural family members have problems and strife among themselves they realize the need of reaching a resolve because they are going to have to live together as a family.
  2. To every natural family there is a defined membership
  3. God has set the solitary into families (Ps. 68:6).
  4. God has placed every child in the world under a set of parents which are to oversee the growth and development of that child.
2. In the realm of the spirit, God has done this by providing local assemblies which are visible local expressions of the invisible, corporate, world-wide family of God.
3. True pastoral care, nurturing, admonition, and discipline can never be truly effective where there are no committed relationships.
4. For this reason the question of membership needs to be considered.

5. SOME GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

1. Church membership is implied by the numbering and accounting in the early church. Acts 12:1-2; 6:7 - *"...number of disciples multiplied greatly." "...added to the church daily ..."*
2. Church membership is implied in other New Testament terminology
  1. "Brethren, among you, in the midst of you, one of you, anyone of you, and one another" Indicate that there was some knowledge of who was a part of them and who was not.
  2. All of these presuppose a definite group in which people know each other, where they can distinguish those who are among them from those who are without--where they can admonish one another, care for one another, encourage one another, etc.
3. Church membership is based on certain conditions and is therefore exclusive
  1. You are a member of the Universal Church by being rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ.
  2. The accepting of the unregenerated as church members is totally incompatible with the teaching of the New Testament
  3. Tho membership in the New Testament church is meant to be exclusive, church attendance is certainly to be open to all--it should be a place of refuge to the spiritually weary
  4. Fellowship with Christ precludes fellowship with his body.
  5. If we have a low level of commitment to Christ's seat of authority in the earth, we have a low level of commitment to Christ
4. Church membership is a means of accountability .
  1. God has given the leadership of the church the responsibility to care for his people as shepherds over the flock of God.

2. Again, it would be virtually impossible to take proper care of God's sheep if no one knew where they were or where they really belonged.