

# The Local Church 1 - Part 4

by William MacDonald

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*The local church is a spiritual gathering of people, conducted on a spiritual basis, to display the universal church, and its test is not the number of people, but the holiness of its members.*

**Duration:** 8:44

**Scripture:** John 10:11, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:21-22, Revelation 1:20

**Topics:** "Church Government", "Holiness"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of the local church reflecting the spiritual basis and conduct of the universal church. Each church is meant to be autonomous, self-ruling, self-financing, and self-propagating, directly responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ. While independent, there is also a call for inter-assembly fellowship among believers. The true measure of a church is not its size but the holiness of its members, highlighting that God values purity over numbers.

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## Transcript

Misses God's intention for the church. The church is a spiritual gathering of people, and it's to be conducted on spiritual basis. Again, I say a local church should be a miniature and display of the universal church.

People should be able to look at that local church and say, that's the way the universal church is as well. They should say or do nothing that would deny the truth of the universal church. In the New Testament, every church is autonomous.

That means self-ruling. Self-ruling. It's independent of any other church.

And this is very important. It's not only autonomous as far as self-governing, it's also self-financing and self-propagating. This is very important to emphasize this, I believe.

Self-governing, self-financing, self-propagating. In Revelation chapter 1, you find the Lord Jesus standing in the midst of seven churches. And there's nothing between him and the seven churches.

There's no intermediary body at all. They're responsible directly to him. And this is what's meant by the indigenous church.

Indigenous. There you go, McDonald, using big words. Well, we don't have to be afraid of the word indigenous.

Indigenous really means native. For instance, if I say to you, orchids are not indigenous to the Arctic Circle. Well, that means they don't grow naturally there in the Arctic Circle.

If you see one there, it's a surprise. You don't expect to see it there. It must be in a hothouse.

Native. Well, this is God's plan for the church, that every church should be individual, should have its own elders, should have its own propagating, evangelizing, as the church in Thessalonica was, and should be self-financed and directly responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. But the New Testament also suggests that while each church is independent, there is such a thing as inter-assembly fellowship.

Inter-assembly fellowship. We recognize other believers and join with them as far as we can in accordance with the principles of the word of God as we see them. I rejoice whenever I meet another Christian.

When he's a true believer, I rejoice. I rejoice when I come across other Christian churches. It doesn't mean I can do everything they do.

What I have to do is be faithful to the word of God and to go by what I see in the word of God. Let me emphasize this. Let me emphasize this, that the test of a local church is not the number of people in it, but the holiness of its members.

I think that's very good to remember. Because in the United States today, there's such emphasis on numbers. And the bigger the church is, the more successful.

That isn't true in the word of God. God doesn't emphasize numbers. He can use the weak and the poor and the base and despise to bring to naught the things that are that know flesh and glory in his presence.

So let me say that again. The real test of a New Testament assembly is not the number of its members, but the holiness of its members. I think it's marvelous to remember that the local church, the church, is the only society on earth where it's your unfitness that makes you eligible.

Isn't that wonderful? That isn't true with the fraternities and the sororities of this world, is it? They want you to be somebody. They want you to have something in the bank. You have to have these assets to your account.

But God takes sinners, lost, hopeless, helpless sinners, saves them by his marvelous grace, makes the members of the church to be with him and like him for all eternity. It's surprising. We aren't more surprised.

The church is used in various types of the church in the New Testament. I'll just go over them rather quickly. First of all, it's a temple.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, you, plural, are a temple of God. Temple is a place of worship, speaks of the church as being a gathering of people who worship the Lord. And that's true, because you know, the Lord gets precious little worship.

Did you know that? Precious little thanksgiving and precious little worship. And I'm interested when I come across a group of Christian people who are worshippers, who can pour out their hearts and love and

praise and adoration to the Lord Jesus Christ for who he is and for what he has done. The church is a flock to be shepherded.

The Lord Jesus is the good shepherd. He gave his life for the sheep. That he might have not only one foal, but one flock.

And the church is that flock. It's a garden plot to be useful for him, to be fruitful for him. A tilled field is really the word that's used in 1 Corinthians 3, 9. A tilled field, a garden plot for the Lord.

That's a beautiful picture of the church. Are we bearing fruit for him? It's a building. A building to be enlarged and a building to be added to all the time until the last stone is added, the last believer is saved, and the rapture takes place.

The church is a new man abolishing differences between Jew and Gentile, as we've already said. It's a habitation of God through the Spirit. I think that's interesting.

The church is a gathering of people where God may feel at home. Isn't that wonderful? A habitation of God through the Spirit. And of course, the church is spoken of as the bride of Christ.

How can you have anything that speaks more of affection and intimacy than that? We believers are members of the bride of Christ. That was never said of Israel in the Old Testament. And we're going to reign with him over the earth for a thousand years, come back with him and reign over the earth for a thousand years.

The church is the house of God, where God teaches order and discipline. You have that in 1 Timothy 3, 15. It's the pillar and ground of the truth.

The pillar was used in those days for making notices, for propagating facts, and the church is the pillar. And it's the ground of the truth. It holds fast to the truth of God, making sure that it's not attacked.

Is the assembly important? I say yes. The assembly is very important. It's the only society on earth to which the Lord has promised perpetuity.

You say, what do you mean? I mean, it's the only society on earth that the Lord has promised it will never vanish. And you know, that was a marvelous prophecy. When you think of all the church has endured down through the years, it's a marvel it hasn't passed.

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