

“The Lord’s Church” – The One:

Jesus built, Matthew 16:18.
 Jesus Purchased, Acts 20:28.
 Jesus is head of, Ephesians 1:22,23.
 Foretold in Isaiah 2:2,3.
 Which came into existence on the day of
 Pentecost, Luke 24:46,47; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,
 41, 47.

The One Described in The New Testament – With Reference To:

Its Creed, Hebrews 9:15-17.
 Its Organization, Philippians 1:1.
 Its Worship, Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Corinthians
 16:1,2; Ephesians 5:19, etc.
 Its Mission, Ephesians 4:12.
 Its Terms of Entrance (as summarized
 from book of Acts).

“Church” – In The Universal Sense

Includes all people who have an “in Christ”
 relationship, Ephesians 1:3; 2:16; 5:23.
 Does not have an earthly organization,
 Ephesians 2:19-22.
 Not composed of congregations or
 denominations.
 Consists of both the living and the dead,
 Hebrews 12:22,23.

“Church” – In The Local Sense, Revelation 1:10,11

Consists of saints in a given community who have
 banded together to work and worship as a local
 church, I Corinthians 1:1.
 May be joined, Acts 9:26.
 Has an earthly organization, Philippians 1:1.
 Consists of living Christians, I Thess. 5:27.
Note: In this study we are talking about the
 Lord’s church in the 21st century – why some
 local churches succeed, and why others fail.

Fact: The Lord’s church in the 21st century is patterned after the Lord’s church in first century.

God does not change, James 1:17; Malachi 3:6.
 Jesus Christ does not change, Hebrews 13:8.
 The New Testament does not change, Hebrews
 9:15-17; 1:1.
 It allows for no alteration, adding to, or taking
 from, Galatians 1:8-9; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 We will be judged by His words in that last
 day, John 12:48.

Important Principle – “Success” must be measured by God’s standard!

Joshua 1:7-8: “Only be strong and very courageous, that
 you may observe to do according to all the law which
 Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it
 to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper
 wherever you go. This book of the Law shall not depart
 from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and
 night, that you may observe to do according to all that
 is written in it. For *then* you will make your way
 prosperous, and *then* you will have good success.”

Churches that Succeed – Keep their focus! I Timothy 3:15

The Lord's church is a "spiritual house" with a spiritual mission, I Peter 2:5; Romans 14:17.

Its Mission is not merely to "meet and greet," but primarily it is to seek and save, Luke 19:10.

Note: A church which loses its focus is destined to fail!

Churches that Succeed – are Knit together in Love

Colossians 2:2: "that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love..."

Note John 13:34-35 – "... as I have loved you, that you also love one another, By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"

Note also I Corinthians 13:4-7.

Churches that Succeed – are united! Unity based on truth!

I Corinthians 1:10: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there *be no divisions among you*, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 1:27.

Are rooted and grounded in the truth, Colossians 2:6-7

Ignorance of the word of God has always been devastating! Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 5:13.

Note Paul's appeal to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Acts 20:28-32.

Note the charge to elders – "... by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict," Titus 1:9.

Engage in Enthusiastic Worship!

Singing that is uplifting and encouraging, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

Prayers that are fervent and sincere, Acts 2:42; James 5:16.

Where members are enthusiastic in attending worship, Hebrews 10:25.

Note: a church characterized by apathy in these areas, unless it changes, will fail!

Endeavor to be Scripturally Organized.

The organization is simple and congregational – "saints, ... bishops, and deacons," Philippians 1:1. cf. Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2.

Qualifications for bishops or elders, I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

Qualifications for deacons, I Timothy 3:8-13.

Resolve Differences Among Brethren.

Matthew 5:23-24 (Obligation of the offending party).
Matthew 18:15-17 (Obligation of the person who has been sinned against).
Note: When issues remain unsettled, over time they will destroy a local church.

Regardless of Size, they are “big enough” to:

Preach all the truth, Acts 20:26-27.
Accept all the truth. We don’t have the right to “pick and choose” what we want to accept either in doctrine or morals!
Expose False teaching, Matthew 15:3,7-8.
Condemn Worldliness, Titus 2:11-12.
Seek the Lost, I Timothy 3:15.

However! Local churches face many challenges in the 21st century.

The Challenge to maintain moral purity in a playboy world.
The Challenge to harmonize profession with performance.
The Challenge to make a difference.
The Challenge to convert the lost in a society that has lost faith.

Conclusion:

Four things that will kill a church – false teaching, division, worldliness, and indifference.
But membership in the Lord’s church is essential, Ephesians 2:16; 5:23.
What it takes to be saved from sin is what it takes to become a member of the Lord’s church.

What Must I do to be Saved?

Hear the Word, Romans 10:17
Believe the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16
Repent, Acts 2:38; 17:30
Confess faith in Christ, Acts 8:37
Be baptized, Acts 2:38; I Corinthians 12:13
Be faithful, Revelation 2:10