

What Is A Healthy Well-Balanced Church?

The Greek word *ekklēsia* (church) refers to a meeting of a people called out (Gk. *ekkaleō*) and summoned together. In the New Testament it designates primarily the congregation of God's people in Christ, who come together as citizens of God's kingdom (Ephesians 2:19) for the purpose of worshiping God. The word "church" can refer to a local church (Matthew 18:17; Acts 15:4) or the universal church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 2:21-22).

1. The church is presented as the people of God (I Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 1 Peter 2:4-10), The company of redeemed believers made possible by the death of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is a pilgrim people no longer belonging to this earth (Hebrew 13:12-14), whose first function is to stand as a community in a living, personal relationship with God (1 Peter 2:5; see Hebrews 11:6).
2. The church has been called out of the world and into the kingdom of God. Separation from the world is inherent to the nature of the church and is rewarded by having the Lord as one's God and Father (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).
3. The church is the temple of God and of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Ephesians 2:11-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10). This truth about the church demands separation from unrighteousness and from worldly, pagan immorality.
4. The church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-16; 10:16-17; 12:12-27). This indicates that no true church exists apart from vital union of the members with Christ. The head of the body is Christ (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23).
5. The church is the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:21-27; Revelation 19:7-9). This nuptial concept emphasizes both the loyalty, devotion, and faithfulness of the church to Christ, and Christ's love for and intimacy with His church.
6. The church is a spiritual fellowship (Gk. *koinonia*) (2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:1). This involves the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 7:37-39; 20:22), the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:4), and the baptism in the Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:4; 8:14-17; 10:44, 19:1-7). This fellowship is to demonstrate observable love and care one to another (John 13:34-35).
7. The church is a spiritual ministry (Gk. *diakonia*). It ministers by gifts (Gk. *charismata*) bestowed by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 1:7; 12:4-11, 20-31; Ephesians 4:11).
8. The church is an army involved in spiritual conflict, fighting by the sword and power of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) in a spiritual struggle against Satan and sin. The Spirit with which the church is filled is like a warrior wielding the living Word of God, delivering people from the dominion of Satan, and conquering every power of darkness (Acts 26:18; Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; 2:16; 19:15 & 21).
9. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), supporting the truth that God has revealed just as a foundation supports a building. The church must uphold the truth and keep it safe, defending it against distorters and false teachers (see Philippians 1:17, Jude 3).
10. The church is a people with a future hope. This hope centers in the return of Christ for His people (see John 14:3; 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28).
11. The church is both invisible and visible. (a) The church invisible is the body of true believers united by their living faith in Christ. (b) The visible church consists of local congregations containing faithful overcomers (Revelation 2:11, 17 and 26; see 2:7) as well as those professed Christians who are false (Rev. 2:2), "fallen" (2:5), spiritually "dead" (3:1), and "lukewarm" (3:16; see Matthew 13:24).