

# The Purposes Of The Church

The Lord's church is the most profound assembly to ever exist on the face of the earth. Ephesians 3:10 states the church is the manifold wisdom of God. A stable, growing congregation of God's people is one which knows and practices the purposes which the Lord established. We can know these purposes because we can see the pattern in the first century church. Soon after the first sermon was preached in Acts 2, the Lord's church began to immediately display these purposes. When churches today follow these purposes, spiritual and numeric growth with result. In this article, we will examine four purposes of the Lord's church as seen in Acts 2.

In Nehemiah's story of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, we learn that halfway through the project the people got discouraged and wanted to give up. Like many churches, they lost their sense of purpose and, as a result, became overwhelmed with fatigue, frustration, and fear. Nehemiah rallied the people back to work by reorganizing the project. He reminded them of the importance of their work and reassured them that God would help them fulfill His purpose (Nehemiah 4:6-15). Nehemiah 6:15 records that the wall was completed in 52 days.

Although the wall took only 52 days to complete, the people became discouraged at the halfway point; just 26 days into the project! Nehemiah had to renew their vision. From this story we get what is called the "Nehemiah Principle." A church's purpose must be periodically examined to keep the church functioning as it should. The members of a congregation must take time to consider and examine the reason the church exists. It is amazing how quickly humans beings and local congregations lose their sense of purpose.

The first purpose of the church is to worship our Father in Heaven. Acts 2:42 says, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Matthew 4:10 adds, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." We do not worship out of duty; we worship because we want to pay reverence to the God in Heaven who has abundantly blessed us. Psalm 34:3 says, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Throughout scripture we are commanded to celebrate God's presence by magnifying the Lord and exalting His name. It is lamentable to witness Christians who do not receive any benefit from worship services (Revelation 14:7). Our exaltation of God is one of the greatest of all privileges, not a task to be anticipated with drudgery. Although we need to be enthusiastic in our worship to God, we must also worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). While we give glory to God, we must remember that He wants this worship to be according to divine truth. Worship allows the church to grow stronger.

The second purpose of the church is to provide benevolence. Acts 2:45 says, "And they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need." The church is not to undertake the task of meeting the needs of all humanity. It could not do so if it tried. The resources of the church would be exhausted before it was ever able to care for all the indigent, maimed, blind, destitute,

disabled, etc. In 1 Timothy 5:16, Paul said that the church should not be charged with the burden of benevolence that belonged to individuals so it can care for those commanded by divine will. In several passages of scripture (Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12), the contributions made out of church treasuries were to help those who were “poor saints.” So the objective of the church in benevolence is to help those among its own number. Benevolence allows the church to grow broader.

The third purpose of the church is evangelism. This is the church’s opportunity to reach out into their community. Acts 2:47 says, “... praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” All Christians serve as ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). The task of evangelism is so important, the Holy Spirit repeated it five times in scripture (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Evangelism is more than our responsibility; it is our great privilege. We are invited to be a part of bringing people into God’s family. Growth is not optional; it is commanded by our Lord. The church’s primary concentration is in spiritual matters and evangelism is the greatest of these. Evangelism allows the church to grow larger.

The fourth purpose of the church is edification. Acts 2:46 says, “And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” Christians are called to belong, not just to believe. Edification is the process of instruction whereby children of God become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. The church is edified by the strengthening, growth, and development of its members. The proper objective of a congregation is not numerical growth alone but the development of spiritual strength (Ephesians 6:10-18). Christians must be strengthened in the faith so they will grow in godliness and ability to overcome temptation. Edification allows the church to grow deeper.

We should pray at all times that God will help us fulfill the purposes of the church. The Lord calls the sinner to membership in the greatest kingdom ever established. In this kingdom, we have the opportunity to worship, practice benevolence, evangelize and edify all to the glory of God. Fulfill these purposes with the greatest endeavor and dedication.

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