

THE LORD'S CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

**Why Some Local Churches Succeed
and Why Others Fail**

(All Scriptures NASB 1995 unless otherwise noted)

1

The Lord's Church is 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 first day
of Pentecost following His resurrection.**

Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 41, 47

2

The Church 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;

1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Ephesians 5:19

Its Mission. Ephesians 4:12

Its Terms of Entrance. Acts 2:41, 47; 8:12;

Acts 10:48; 16:30-33; 18:8; 22:16

3

The Church In The Universal Sense:

**Includes all people who have an "in Christ"
relationship. Ephesians 1:3; 2:14-16; 5:23
Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27**

**Does not have an earthly organization.
Ephesians 2:19-22**

**Is not composed of congregations or
denominations. 2 Corinthians 5:10**

**Consists of both the living and the dead.
Hebrews 12:22-23**

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The Church In The Local Sense:

**Consists of saints in a given community who
have banded together to work and worship
as a local church. 1 Corinthians 1:1-2;
Romans 16:16; Revelation 1:10-11**

May be joined. Acts 9:26-27

Has an earthly organization. Philippians 1:1

Consists of living Christians.

1 Thessalonians 5:25-27

5

Fact: The Lord's church in the 21st century is patterned after the Lord's church in 1st 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; 1:1-2**

**It allows for no alteration, adding to, or
taking from. Galatians 1:8-9; 2 John 9;
Revelation 22:18-19**

6

Fact: We will be judged by His words on the last day.

*"I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; **the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.**"*

(John 12:46-48)

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Important Principle – "Success" must be measured by God's standard!

*"Only be strong and very courageous; **be careful to do according to all the law** which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may **be careful to do according to all that is written** in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."*

(Joshua 1:7-8)

8

Churches that Succeed Keep their Focus!

The Lord's church is "the pillar and support of the truth." 1 Timothy 3:14-15

The Lord's church is a "spiritual house" with a spiritual mission. 1 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; Matthew 28:18-20

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

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Churches that Succeed are "Knit Together in Love"

"... that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself ..." (Colossians 2:2)

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Churches that Succeed are "Knit Together in Love"

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"*

John 13:34-35

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Churches that Succeed are "Knit Together in Love"

"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

12

Churches that Succeed are United! Unity based on truth!

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

(1 Corinthians 1:10)

13

Churches that Succeed are United! Unity based on truth!

*“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **that they may all be one**; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, **that they also may be in Us**, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*

(John 17:17-21)

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Churches that Succeed are United! Unity based on truth!

*“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as also you were called in **one hope** of your calling; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.**” (Ephesians 4:1-6)*

15

Churches that Succeed are United! Unity based on truth!

*“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are **standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel ...**” (Philippians 1:27)*

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Churches that Succeed are Rooted and Grounded in the Truth!

We must walk “in Him.”

Colossians 2:6-7

We must know His will.

Ephesians 5:15-17

We must keep His word. 1 John 2:3-6

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

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Churches that Succeed are Rooted and Grounded in the Truth!

The apostle Paul appealed to the elders of the church at Ephesus to be on guard against false teachers. Acts 20:28-32

“Holding fast the faithful word” is one of the qualifications of elders. Titus 1:7-9

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Churches that Succeed Engage in Enthusiastic Worship ...

Singing that is uplifting and encouraging.

Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:16

Prayers that are fervent and sincere.

Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18;

James 5:16

Where members are enthusiastic in attending worship. Hebrews 10:23-25

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

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Churches that Succeed Endeavor to be Scripturally Organized.

The organization is simple and congregational – “saints ... including overseers and deacons” Philippians 1:1 cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2

Qualifications for elders (also called bishops, overseers, and pastors).

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

Qualifications for deacons.

1 Timothy 3:8-13

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Churches that Succeed Resolve Differences Among Brethren.

Obligation of the offending party.

Matthew 5:23-24

Obligation of the offended party.

Matthew 18:15-17; 21-22

Note: When issues remain unsettled, over time they will destroy a local church.

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Regardless of Size, local churches 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!

Psalm 119:160; Galatians 1:6-10

Expose False teaching. Matthew 15:3, 7-9; Titus 1:10-11

Condemn Worldliness. Titus 2:11-12

Seek the Lost. James 5:19-20

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However, local churches face many challenges in the 21st century.

The Challenge to maintain moral purity in an immoral world. 1 Corinthians 15:33

The Challenge to harmonize profession with performance. Matthew 7:21

The Challenge to make a difference. Philippians 2:14-16

The Challenge to convert the lost in a society that has no faith. Psalm 51:13

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Four Things That Will Kill a Local Church:

- 1. False teaching Galatians 2:1-5**
- 2. Division 1 Corinthians 1:10-15**
- 3. Worldliness Jude 17-23**
- 4. Indifference Revelation 3:14-19**

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Conclusion:

**Membership in the Lord's church
is essential for salvation.**

*“And He put all things in subjection under
His feet, and gave Him as head over all
things to the church, which is His body,
the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

Ephesians 1:22-23

*“For the husband is the head of the wife, as
Christ also is the head of the church, He
Himself being the Savior of the body.”*

Ephesians 5:23

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Conclusion:

**What it takes to be saved
from sin is what it takes
to become a member of
the Lord's church.**

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What Must I do to be Saved?

Hear the Word. Romans 10:17

Believe the Gospel. Mark 16:15-16

Repent. Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30

Confess faith in Christ. Acts 8:36-37

Be baptized for remission of sins.

Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 12:13

Remain faithful. Hebrews 6:4-6

Revelation 2:10

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