

# Theology Matters

## FALL SEMESTER 2025

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Theology Institute

### 8. Ecclesiology – Part 1

**“The church is the gospel made visible.” — Mark Dever**

**Big idea:** The church exists to glorify God through worship, community, discipleship, and the faithful Preaching of God’s Word.

**Aim:** Be able to explain why we gather as the church, what we do when we gather, and to offer characteristics and practices when we gather.

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#### The Nature of the Church

##### 1. The Church is the community of believers

- Galatians 6:10 “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”
- Ephesians 2:19 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,”

The universal church is the community of all true believers for all time. It is made up of all those who are truly saved.

##### 2. The Church is the “body” of Christ

- 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”

The church, through multiple congregations, is a collection of believers where each member uses their gifts to serve and support one another in unity and purpose.

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### 3. The Church is the Temple of God

- 1 Peter 2:4–5 “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
- Ephesians 2:21–22 “In whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

In the OT, God's presence resided in the temple; now God's presence dwells within His people, who together gather for worship and the proclamation of His Word

### 4. The Church is Called to be Separated from the World

- 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”
- John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

God has chosen believers out of darkness into His light, setting them apart to live as a holy people distinct in values, mission, and hope.

### 5. The Church is Christ's Bride

- Ephesians 5:25–27 “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”
- Revelation 19:7–8 “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

Christ deeply loves the church, having given Himself for her redemption and purification, preparing her for eternal union with Him.

### 6. The Church has a Mission to Proclaim God's Glory

- Matthew 28:18–20 “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

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the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

The church is commissioned to make disciples, declare the gospel, and reflect God’s character to all nations for His renown.

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## Unity in the Church

### 1. Unity in Christ

- John 17:22–23 “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”
- Ephesians 4:3 “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

All believers are spiritually united in Christ, sharing His life and embodying the unity of the Trinity through love and faith.

### 2. One Body, Many Members

- 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”
- Romans 12:4–5 “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Though diverse in backgrounds and gifts, every believer is a vital part of one church body, serving for mutual growth and mission.

### 3. Unity Reflects God’s Character

- 1 Corinthians 1:10 “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”
  - Philippians 2:2 “complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”
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God desires the church to show harmony, agreement, and love, displaying to the world a glimpse of His own perfect unity.

#### 4. **Maintaining Unity is an Active Effort**

- Ephesians 4:3 “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- Colossians 3:13–14 “bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Church unity grows through humility, patience, forgiveness, and love, requiring ongoing commitment and pursuit of peace among believers.

#### 5. **Unity in Diversity**

- Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- 1 Peter 3:8 “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.”
- Rev 7:9 “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

The church transcends ethnic, social, and gender divisions, proving the power of new creation in Christ. The church in heaven will be as diverse as the world today, having representation from every tribe, tongue and nation.

#### 6. **Unity Testifies to the Gospel**

- John 13:34–35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- Acts 2:44–47 “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

When believers sacrificially love and live together, the world sees the truth of Christ's message and the transforming power of the gospel.

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# Church Government

## 1. Christ as Head of the Church

- Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."
- Ephesians 1:22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

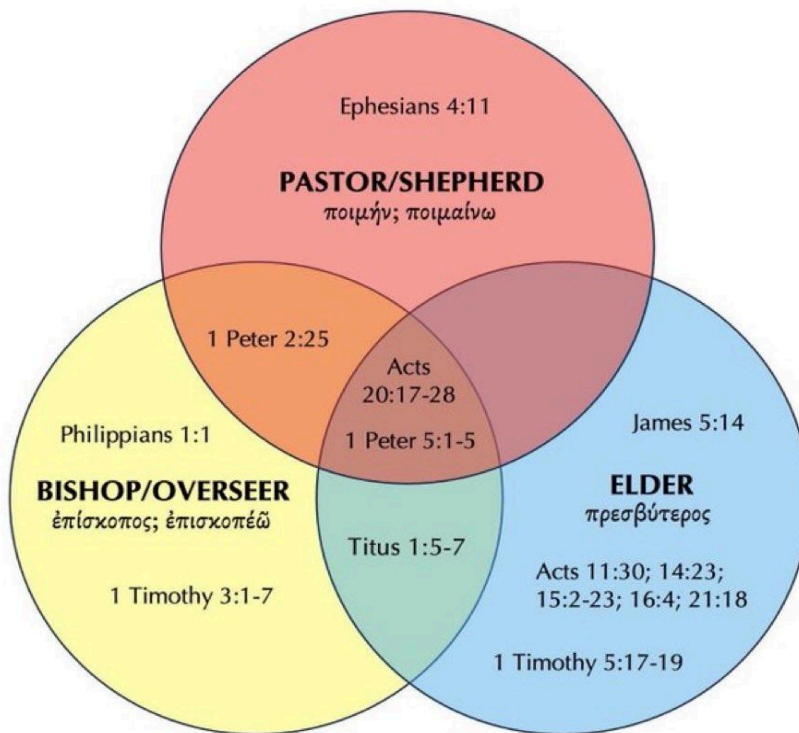
Jesus Christ alone governs and oversees His church, exercising supreme authority and leading His people through His Word and Spirit.

## 2. Pastors lead the church

- Titus 1:5 : "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—"
- Acts 14:23 : "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."
- 1 Peter 5:1-3: "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

Local churches are to be led by qualified pastors/elders who shepherd, teach, and oversee the flock as a team, under Christ's leadership. The NT model for the church is a plurality of pastors, where multiple leaders handle the care of the church.

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### 3. Qualifications for Leaders

- 1 Timothy 3:1-13
- Titus 1:6-9 "if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Biblical Pastors and deacons are chosen based on godly character, faithful living, and spiritual maturity, not just skills or popularity.

### 4. Roles of Deacons

- 1 Timothy 3:8-13: "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain... let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless."

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- Philippians 1:1 "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:"

Deacons serve the church by meeting practical needs, supporting the elders' ministry, and fostering unity and care among members.

## 5. **Congregational Participation**

- Acts 6:3–6 : "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty... These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them."
- 2 Corinthians 8:19: "And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will."

The whole church shares responsibility in decision-making processes, prayerfully affirming leaders and stewarding resources for ministry together. When addressing sin in the local church, the position is always to look at the local congregation by the NT writers, not the leadership.

## 6. **Obedience and Accountability**

- Hebrews 13:17 : "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 : "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves."

Faithful members support biblical leadership with respect and cooperation, while leaders lovingly guide, protect, and give account to God.

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# Baptism

## 1. **Baptism is a Commandment by God**

- Matthew 28:19 : "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"
  - Mark 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."
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Jesus gave authority from Himself for all His disciples to baptize as a response to salvation by obedience and public identification with His death and resurrection.

## 2. **Baptism as Public Declaration of Faith**

- Acts 2:38 “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
- Romans 6:3–4 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Baptism visibly proclaims a believer’s repentance and new life in Christ, marking a break with the old way of life. It can be summed up as an “outward expression of an inward change”.

## 3. **Symbol of Identification with Christ**

- Colossians 2:12 “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”
- Galatians 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

The act of being immersed in water symbolizes union with Christ—being buried with Him in death and raised to walk in newness of life.

## 4. **Baptism and Repentance**

- Acts 22:16 “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”
- Acts 10:47–48 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.”

Baptism is an outward sign of regeneration and faith, representing God’s cleansing work in response to the gospel.

## 5. **Baptism by Immersion**

- John 3:23 “John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized.”
  - Acts 8:38–39 “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when
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they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing."

Baptism by immersion is the only example of the believer's death to sin and resurrection in Christ.

## 6. Baptism as Entry into the Church

- 1 Corinthians 12:13 "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."
- Acts 2:41 "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

Those who are baptized are received into the visible fellowship of the church, joined with all believers as part of Christ's Church.

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# Lord's Supper

## 1. Instituted by Christ

- Matthew 26:26–28 "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"
- Luke 22:19–20 "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"

Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to His followers as a continuing remembrance and celebration of His sacrificial death for sin.

## 2. Symbolic Remembrance of Christ's Sacrifice

- 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
  - 1 Corinthians 10:16 "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"
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Through bread and cup, believers recall and proclaim Christ's atoning work, finding spiritual nourishment by faith.

### 3. Expression of Unity and Fellowship

- 1 Corinthians 10:17 "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."
- Acts 2:42 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Partaking together expresses the church's oneness in Christ and deep fellowship with Him and one another.

### 4. Call to Self-Examination

- 1 Corinthians 11:27–29 "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."
- 2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"

Before sharing in the Lord's Supper, believers are called to humbly examine their hearts and relationships, seeking repentance and restoration.

### 5. Anticipation of Christ's Return

- 1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- Matthew 26:29 "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The Communion looks forward with hope, reminding believers that Christ will one day return and redeem his people

### 6. Communion for Believers

- Acts 2:41–42
- 1 Corinthians 11:33–34 "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come."

The Lord's Supper is reserved for baptized believers and is part of a local church.

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