

What is the Christian church supposed to be?

[by Matt Slick](#)

"I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth," ([1 Tim. 3:15](#)). The Christian church should be a reflection of Jesus' love, words, and deeds. Its goal should be to glorify God, make Jesus known, develop godly people, and make disciples of every nation. The church should be a group of believers, on the whole and in part, who live and teach the saving words of Christ. To the extent that Jesus lived truth, so also should the people in the church.

The church is not supposed to be the building or the structure of a ruling body who act in the place of God and dictate to the congregants what is and is not truth. The church is not headquartered at Salt Lake City, Utah, or Brooklyn, New York, or Rome, or Jerusalem, or any other city. The church is not headquartered in a central location -- except to say that the Head of the Church is Jesus who is in heaven. The church is not a convention, a building, a series of meetings, or commitments. The church is the living Body of Christ comprised of the redeemed in Christ. The external trappings of celebrations, rituals, buildings, robes, hymn books, organs, pianos, chairs, pews, windows, etc. are merely those things that give a tangible effect to the invisible reality of redemption. These externals should not be considered the substance of the church. The substance of the church is the redeemed in Christ.

The visible church¹ is supposed to be a collection of people who are saved by the blood of Jesus and indwelt by God Himself ([John 14:23](#)). The Christian church is comprised of believers, equipped by God with teachers, pastors, etc. ([1 Cor. 12:28](#)), who grow in their relationship with Jesus through prayer and the study of God's word and who actively seek to expand God's kingdom through preaching and living the Gospel.

The Christian church is supposed to be a light to the world. It is supposed to fight against wickedness, oppression, poverty, sin, rebellion, adultery, homosexuality, fornication, abortion, etc. It is not supposed to sit idly by and watch the unbelievers go to hell. The church is supposed to be active, living what is right before God and standing against sin. Yet, this resistance against ungodliness is to be done with gentleness, love, patience, kindness, and wisdom. It is this last item, wisdom, which is so often lacking in the church today.

Conduct yourselves with wisdom

The church should be wise. "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity," ([Col. 4:5](#)). Christians should not parade themselves on television as incessant beggars of money, or gaudy over dressed "guides of the blind" who sit in gold chairs and weep at the drop of a hat. They should not display a drastic misuse of charismatic gifts by praying in tongues in public, becoming lost in uncontrollable laughter, or barking like dogs. Christians should not speak of Jesus in one breath and then laugh at a dirty joke in the next. All Christians are in the public eye one way or another and need to be above reproach, not hungry for money, not desirous of possessions, and not addicted to pornography, prostitutes, alcohol,

drugs, off-color humor, or taking the Lord's name in vain. Such sin brings mockery to the name of Christ. The Christian church should be an example of propriety, decency, self-sacrifice, servitude, and love, not a money hungry, hypocritical, whining entity that is out of touch with reality as is so often portrayed on television.

The Christian church has great liberty and I am not condemning the right to let financial needs be known nor am I discouraging the expression of the Holy Spirit within the church. There are thousands of godly Christians who are very loving and giving and who honestly desire to honor and serve God. But, the church as a whole needs to act and move in wisdom because the world is watching -- closely. It is the begging, the charismatic chaos, and the chicanery that permeates the high-profile, public church today that needs to be eliminated. We Christians need to clean our own house first before we starting pointing fingers at sinners! Those Christians who are in high public positions should always be mindful of what they do and should ask themselves "How will this appear to the unbeliever? Will it stumble them?" Such was the concern of Paul in [1 Cor. 14](#). He did not want the church in its freedom to stumble the unbeliever.

Individual Christians should also be mindful of what they do and say in the workforce as well. Remember that for many unbelievers, the only time they encounter Jesus is when they seem Him represented in Christians. Therefore, the Christian should live his life lovingly, from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith ([1 Tim. 1:5](#)).

The world hears us call ourselves followers of Christ but too often observes us following whatever draws away our interests whether it be money, buildings, or experience. Is this what the church is supposed to be and do? There is nothing wrong with having buildings or asking for money for legitimate needs, but they must not be the reason for the church's existence and they should not be the things looked to for security.

The Christian church is supposed to be a light in the world, a light of love, peace, wisdom, truth, most importantly, it is supposed to bring Glory to God, equip the Christians for the work of the Great Commission, and demonstrate godliness and holiness. That is what the church is supposed to be and do.