

How to Set Up the New Testament Church in Your Home

*A simple guide to assist in setting up the church
in remote areas of the world.*

The Church of Christ! The church of the New Testament!

If the Church of Christ does not exist in your community—you should start one! And it is possible for it to begin meeting in your very own home!

There is no greater need in our time than for all men to leave behind forever the man-made religions which have plagued the cause of Christ for centuries and become a part of a world-wide effort to restore the one true church of Christ.

This can be done if one will carefully observe every basic rule which Christ and His disciples taught that His church should follow.

It is a fundamental fact that in order for us to be what men and women in New Testament times were we have only to do as they did. It is as simple as that.

In this book, we are merely setting some sort of guideline, or check-list, to be followed. This is not a creed nor is it the decision of some council or synod of men. It is only a presentation of procedures to be used by men of goodwill throughout the whole earth who look to the Bible as the sole source of religious authority and who seek to establish independent congregations of the Lord's people. These congregations, by faithfully following the commandments of the Lord, maintain their identity with Him. They preserve that identity by fellowshiping only those who are motivated by the same faith and practice.

What is the True Church of Christ?

The church is a body of people who have been called "***out of darkness into His marvelous light***" (1 Peter 2:9). It is a spiritual body housing all the saved.

The church of Christ can be positively identified. Its identifying marks and doctrinal features are so distinctly set forth in the New Testament that it can be readily distinguished from among the multitudes of sects and schisms which must depend upon the doctrines and commandments of men for their existence.

The Lord needed only one church. He knew that all men could be saved in one church, so He built only one. Why should He have made two churches?

But man, who has often shown his displeasure with God's arrangements, has attempted to change the church of Christ. Man has added some things to worship which God's Word does not specifically authorize. He has subtracted somethings which God has required. He has substituted methods of his own devising for those things which God originally placed in His church.

But from all these efforts man has only succeeded in developing a vast system of denominationalism to which he has forged the name of Christ in order to make it appear that all of these changes have God's approval. Man has not succeeded in changing the church of Christ. It remains the same.

The true church of Christ still consists, as it always has and as it always will, of all those:

1. Who are properly taught the Word of God.
2. Who have believed the Gospel of Christ, and have repented of their sins, and have confessed the name of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and who have been scripturally baptized for the remission of their sins.
3. Who then faithfully worship God in His prescribed manner without addition, subtraction, or substitution.
4. Who express their love for the Lord thereafter in faithful service and obedience.

How can we know what God's will is?

How does God reveal His will to man?

The Old Testament contained the will of God for men who lived before the time of Christ. Their laws, the irreligious ceremonies, and their sacrifices were authorized by the law of Moses. The law of Moses was done away when Jesus came (Colossians 2:14–15), and a new covenant was instituted (Hebrews 9:15 and Hebrews 10:9–10). We are not under the law of Moses. We have the New Testament as our rule book.

When one reads the New Testament it is as though God were speaking to him audibly. This is important to us, for we shall be using only the New Testament as the one source of authority in finding the church which Jesus established.

That the New Testament is the expression of His will is seen by the fact that He Himself strictly forbids us to go beyond the things that are written (1 Peter 4:11); we are forbidden to “**preach any other gospel**” than that which was preached (Galatians 1:8–9). He forbids us to add to these things or “**take away from the words of the book of this prophecy**” (Revelation 22:18–19). He warns us that many “**false prophets have gone out into the world**” (1 John 4:1), and He limits our fellowship to “**He who abides in the doctrine of Christ**” (2 John 9-11).

The New Testament contains instructions from God which are still binding upon us today. When Paul wrote the church in Thessalonica, he commended them for properly receiving the Word which he preached to them. He told them that they had “**welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

God's will is revealed to man through the Bible. No wonder Paul said, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God**” (Romans 10:17).

God does not speak directly to man today. He speaks to man only through the Bible. It contains His complete and final will. We must rightly divide the Word in order to understand what part of it applies to us today. “**...rightly dividing the word of truth**” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Actually, the Bible is a book of 66 books. It was written by 40 different writers who wrote over a period of 1,500 years. They wrote what God inspired them to write. Some of them wrote of the history of the people of God who lived under the law of Moses. Some of them wrote concerning the laws of that time. Some of them wrote of prophecies concerning Christ and His church. The Bible is divided into two distinct parts:

(1) The Old Testament which covers the period from the time of Adam until just before Christ was born, and

(2) the New Testament which is the one rule for faith and practice today.

The New Testament begins with four biographies of the life of Jesus Christ. These biographies are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They tell of the birth of Jesus, of His early years, of the beginning of His public ministry, of the selection of His apostles, of His miracles, of His teachings, of His promise to build His church, of His trial, of His crucifixion, of His death, of His burial, of His resurrection on the third day, of His promise to come again, of His commissioning of the apostles to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, and finally of His ascension into Heaven. These books were written to produce faith in Christ (Mark 16:15–19; John 20:30–31).

The next book, the book of Acts of the Apostles, records the activities of the twelve men whom Jesus selected to carry on His work after His ascension into Heaven. The book tells how the apostles preached the Gospel, saved souls, established churches, and helped build up the various congregations in cities all over the then known world. This book tells how men and women were converted, what they did to be saved, and how and when they worshiped after being added to the church. This book was written to serve as a pattern for the establishment of the church; a pattern for conversion and for evangelism.

The remainder of the New Testament consists of letters addressed to individuals or churches. These letters tell us by precept and example how to live the life of the Christian and how to work and glorify Christ through the church (Ephesians 3:21).

Studying the Bible is the Highest Form of Worship

By studying the Bible we show proper respect to His Word. It is in this way that God speaks to man. We learn from our study of His Word what His will is. We learn what His church is and we know how to set it up.

Men have been doing this for nearly two-thousand years.

The Bible tells us...

1. Who we are
2. Why we are here, and
3. Where we go when we leave this place.

Who Are We?

We are human beings who have been made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27). God formed the first man, Adam, out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, "**and man became a living being**" (Genesis 2:7). Our bodies are made of the earth and they go back to dust at death (Genesis 3:19), but we all have an immortal soul which comes from God and it "**will return to God who gave it**" (Ecclesiastes 12:7) when we die.

Why Are We Here?

We are here because God made us and gave us a work to do for Him. Paul said that all things, including man, were made, "**through him and for Him**" (Colossians 1:16). He gives to "each his work" (Mark 13:34) and we can glorify Him by finishing the work Jesus gives us to do (John 17:4).

Where Do We Go When We Leave This Place?

If we serve God faithfully, He takes us to live with Him in Heaven. If we have disobeyed Him in life, we will be sent to Hell to suffer eternal punishment.

There are only two possible places for us to go when life is ended. One is called Heaven. It is a good place. It is a place of joy and peace and happiness. It is in Heaven that God lives (John 14:1–3).

There is also a place called Hell. It is a bad place. All those whose characters have been forged in the fires of lust, greed, and passion must congregate to be punished forever (Revelation 20:8).

The Bible Reveals the Great Human Problem and its Solution

Man's life on earth begins in sin. Many teach that babies are born in sin, but the Bible doesn't teach it. In fact, the Bible teaches the very opposite. The Bible teaches that our bodies bear the consequences of Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17–19), but none of the guilt (Ezekiel 18:20). Our bodies came from Adam, but our spirits came from God (Hebrews 12:9). God does not give men a soul already stained with someone else's sin and ask them to return it to Him without sin.

When a child is born, he is connected with God. If the child were born in sin he would already be separated from the Lord. A baby is not born in sin, so if he dies in infancy he goes to Heaven.

Even though a baby is born without sin, it will not long remain sinless. Eventually it will grow up to know the difference between right and wrong. When he does wrong knowing that it is wrong, he commits sin. And sin separates him from God (Isaiah 59:1–2). Once separated from God, man cannot come back alone. He must have help. God loves man, and in His grace provides the help man needs to remove his sin. Once sin is removed, man can return to God as in the beginning.

Only the blood of Christ can take away sin; when man washes his sins away in the blood of Christ, he is tied to God again. Man is bound to the Lord at birth, is separated from Him when he sins, and must be "**born again**" to be rebound (John 3:3).

When one learns that he has violated God's law, and has become separated from Him because of sin, he needs to know that forgiveness is obtainable.

Forgiveness is Obtainable.

Forgiveness is obtainable, but this blessing, like all of the benefits of God, is conditional. One must comply with the will of the Lord in order to obtain His pardon (Matthew 7:21). Man can not devise his own methods for obtaining forgiveness. God is the one against whom we have sinned and He has the right to name the terms upon which forgiveness is to be granted. He has decreed:

1. That if one will **believe** in God and in His Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:6) *and*
2. If the one who believes will **repent** (Acts 17:30) of his sins and determine to change his manner of life in the future so as to harmonize his life with the will and Word of God, *and*
3. If he will **confess** (Romans 10:9–10) that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and thus the Lord and sovereign of his life, *and*
4. If he will then be **baptized** in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18–20) in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins, he will be saved (Acts 2:38).

The four acts of obedience listed above are essential to salvation. Each act helps prepare the sinner for forgiveness, but sins are not removed until they are washed away in the act of baptism (Acts 22:16). It is not water that washes away sin, but the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5).

When one believes the Gospel, confesses the name of Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins he is saved (Mark 16:15–16). The moment he is saved the Lord adds him to His church (Acts 2:47).

What is the Purpose of Baptism?

What is Accomplished in Baptism?

Baptism is a very simple act. It is easy to be baptized, but the significance of baptism is of tremendous importance.

One should want to be baptized because:

1. Baptism is a condition of salvation (Mark 16:15-16).
2. Baptism leads to the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
3. Baptism puts one into Christ (Romans 6:1-4).
4. In baptism one puts on Christ (Galatians 3:27).
5. Baptism saves (1 Peter 3:20–21).

All that Christ did for man in providing the means of salvation must be reproduced by man in being saved. For example, Christ died for our sins, was buried in a borrowed tomb, and was raised up from the dead to die no more (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). We obey "**that form of doctrine**" (Romans 6:17) when we are converted. Just as He died for sins, so man dies to sin when he repents. Just as Jesus was raised up from the grave, so is the one being baptized raised up from the baptismal grave. Just as Jesus was raised to die no more, so the one being baptized "**also should walk in newness of life**" (Romans 6:1–4). So the whole process of redemption is reproduced in the redeemed.

Baptism for the remission of sins is what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus that "**unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**" (John 3:5).

Since baptism puts one into Christ, "**every spiritual blessing** in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) becomes his to use. What a blessing to be in Christ!

***If you are sure you know what baptism is for
you should get someone to baptize you.***

Today.

Anyone can baptize. Ask a friend or, perhaps, a relative to baptize you. It doesn't matter if the one baptizing you is a believer or not. The benefit of baptism comes from the Lord, not from the one assisting you in being baptized.

Ask your brother or, maybe, your father, or anyone who will accompany you to a body of water sufficiently deep to permit your body to be "**buried with Him in baptism**" (Colossians 2:12).

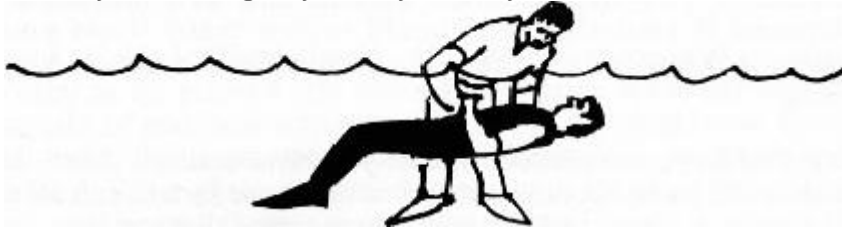
You will want to explain to the one baptizing you what you want him to do. You will want to explain to him why you are being baptized, too. When he learns that in this simple act of obedience you obtain forgiveness of sins, he will probably want to study the Word of God so as to be baptized himself.

How to be Baptized

First, go to a body of water sufficiently deep to permit your body to be completely submerged beneath the surface. Baptism is symbolic of a burial (Romans 6:4).



Wade out into the water about waist deep. Then with the one doing the baptizing standing a little behind you he can gently lower your body under the water.



The baptizer is in a good position to immediately raise your body to a standing position again. You may leave the water and change into dry clothing.



Note: One is baptized only one time scripturally (Ephesians 4:5). The sins one commits after baptism are removed by repenting and praying (Acts 8:22) not by being baptized again.

After You Have Been Baptized, You Should Teach and Baptize Others!

If you have been baptized for the remission of sins, and have been added to the church, you have found a treasure which others can also have. You should share it with others. Sharing it with them only increases your own enjoyment of it.

Of course, before you teach others about New Testament Christianity you should make certain that you thoroughly understand it yourself. You should review many times your lessons, making certain that you do not teach error to your friends.

After you have rehearsed all that you have learned about the church and how to become a member of it, you should call all of your friends together and tell them about your salvation.

You will be able to show them from the Bible what sin is (1 John 3:4), and what sin does (Isaiah 59:1-2), and that one who dies in sin cannot go to Heaven (John 8:21). You will be able to tell them of God's love for them (John 3:16), and that because He loves them, He made it possible for them to be saved through Christ (Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:10). You can show them where Jesus said that, **"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"** (Mark 16:15-16). You can also tell them that

when they have been “**baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**” (Acts 2:38) the Lord will add them to His church (Acts 2:47), even as He has already done for you! What a thrill it will give you to be able to teach and baptize your friends and acquaintances “**both men and women**” (Acts 5:14).

While one is rejoicing in his salvation, he looks for ways to worship and praise God.

Man is by nature a worshiping being. He doesn't need to be told *to* worship. He does need to be told *how* to worship.

Who Is Qualified To Worship?

When one person becomes a Christian he can worship alone. It does not take a quorum to commune with God. When two or more people in a community become members of the church, they should meet together and worship as a congregation rather than alone.

Who Decides What To Do In Worship?

Since God is the object of our worship, and is alone worthy to be praised, He should determine what our worship consists of and how and when it should be conducted. God—not man—is to be worshipped. God—not man—is, therefore, to be pleased. What pleases man, or what man thinks pleases God may well be an “**abomination in the sight of God**” (Luke 16:15). Any act of worship offered to God should be in harmony with the will of God revealed in His Word (John 1:17; John 4:24).

To do what God has not authorized is to assume that God is not capable of knowing what He wants. To do something religiously which God has neither commanded nor forbidden is to assume that man is licensed to do anything which God is silent about.

We should remember that the Bible is the expressed will of God. His pronouncements, as well as His silence, must be considered a reflection of His will. He has plainly described the limits of our worship both by specific commands and by examples found in the worship of the New Testament church, and calls “**vain**” the worship that uses for “**doctrines the commandments of men**” (Matthew 15:9).

There are Five Channels of Worship

All the congregations of the Lord's church whose meetings are described on the pages of the New Testament had a common worship pattern (1 Corinthians 7:17). Immediately following the account of their conversion in Acts 2, we read that they “**continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers**” (Acts 2:42). Using these avenues or channels through which their worship flowed up to God, they met regularly at specific time intervals for these meaningful spiritual services.

We should worship in these same ways today. In fact, it becomes wrong for us to attempt to worship Him in any other way. There is no higher insult to God than for man to use for “**doctrines the commandments of men**” in worship to Him (Matthew 15:9).

There are five acts of worship authorized by the Lord.

The natural response of a happy heart is to sing (James 5:13). The early Christians sang songs of praise to God in their worship (Ephesians 5:19). They used psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to express the sentiments of their hearts (Colossians 3:16–17). They did not use an instrument of music to accompany their singing. The early Christians made up music and fashioned it to fit the words of one of the psalms of David or some other portion of scripture. In many places of the world, there are song books or hymnals which help one sing. In the absence of such an aid, one can do as the early church did—that is, make up tunes and sing the words of a psalm.

Prayer is the way by which man speaks to God. When we pray according to the will of God, He hears us (1 John 5:14) and He answers our prayers (1 Peter 3:12). Prayer is not the battering down of God's reluctance. It is acknowledging our trust in Him and our dependence on Him. We should always pray in faith, believing that we will receive what we ask for, but we should always say “**...not**

My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42). We should ask our prayers in the name of Christ, for He is our mediator before God (1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 5:20).

Studying the Word of God is the highest form of worship. The disposition to want to know the will of God so as to be able to do the will of God brings the highest blessing the Lord has to bestow (John 7:17). The Holy Spirit placed the mark of nobility upon disciples in the city of Berea because they ***“searched the Scriptures daily”*** (Acts 17:11–12).

It is worship to God to give financially to the Church of Christ. The church in the city of Philippi sent financial contributions to help the apostle Paul preach the Gospel. Paul said of that contribution that it was ***“a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”*** (Philippians 4:15–19). By our giving we preach the Gospel, we enable the church to have a fund from which to aid the poor (1 Corinthians 16:1–2), and finance physical facilities such as rent on a building in which the church can assemble or teaching aids the church may need such as Bibles, tracts, books, etc. The Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7) and looks upon our giving as ***“testing the sincerity of your love”*** (2 Corinthians 8:8). The Jews under the law of Moses were commanded to give a tenth of their income to the Lord. The Lord has not set an exact amount which the Christian is to give. He has placed man on his honor, and has only commanded that we give liberally and as we ***“may prosper”*** (1 Corinthians 16:2).

The Lord's Supper is a solemn occasion. Jesus instituted the communion service to commemorate His suffering and death for sin. Every Christian, without exception, partakes of the Lord's Supper every Sunday, without exception, in memory of the sacrifice of Christ which He made for our sins.

In partaking of the Lord's Supper one takes unleavened bread, expresses thanks for it, and then takes a small piece of it and eats it in memory of the body of Christ. Then, he takes the cup containing the ***“fruit of the vine”*** or juice of grapes and expresses thanks for it. He takes a sip of the fruit of the vine in memory of the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:26–29; 1 Corinthians 11:23–34).

One takes the Lord's Supper every ***“first day of the week”*** (Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42). This is the only time the Lord's Supper is taken. It should not be taken at any other time.

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is described best by the Lord Himself when He said, ***“This do...in remembrance of Me”*** (1 Corinthians 11:25). The bread is ***“the communion of the body of Christ”*** and the fruit of the vine is the ***“communion of the blood of Christ”*** (1 Corinthians 10:16).

The Lord's Supper does not take away sin, but it is done to show forth to the world the fact that the Christian believes in the sacrifice which Christ made for sin.

It is as if one willfully miss the assembling of one's self with other brothers and sisters in Christ and to forsake the service in which the Lord's Supper is observed (Hebrews 10:25).

How to Make Unleavened Bread for Use in the Lord's Supper

In the observance of the Lord's Supper one uses unleavened bread because it was at a Jewish feast of unleavened bread (Matthew 26:17) that Jesus instituted this memorial service. It was while Jesus and His disciples were at the table eating that Jesus took a piece of unleavened bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples to eat (Matthew 26:26–29). That is why we use unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper.

Unleavened bread can be easily made. Two of the most common of all ingredients are used in making the bread to be used in celebrating the Lord's Supper.

To make the bread to be used in the Lord's Supper one mixes a small amount of flour with a small amount of water, oil and salt. This is stirred until a thick texture is achieved. This may be rolled into a thin wafer and cooked briefly.

Of course, one does not use any leavening ingredient.

How to Provide the “Fruit of the Vine” for use in the Communion Service

In the same night in which Jesus was betrayed He took not only the unleavened bread, but also a cup containing the fruit of the vine and blessed its contents and passed it to His disciples asking them to drink of it in memory of His blood which was soon to be shed for their sins.

By "**fruit of the vine**" Jesus referred to the juice of grapes. Grapes are probably the most common fruit in the world. Jesus used a product to represent His blood in the communion service that can be found almost universally. When the Christian faithfully partakes of the Lord's Supper each Sunday, he shows his appreciation for what Jesus did in dying for his sin. A failure to assemble each "**first day of the week**" (Acts 20:7) indicates a lack of appreciation for what He did.

Grape juice can be purchased in many areas of the world. If it is not readily obtainable, it can be produced by simply squeezing the juice from the grapes into a container. A supply of grape juice can be produced during the grape season which may last all year.

The fruit of the vine can also be obtained by boiling raisins, dried grapes, in water and then using the juice in the communion service.

Now, with all of the various facets of the New Testament church in your mind, you should be ready to set up the Church in your own home!

NOTE: If the Church of Christ does not exist in your community you should begin one, either in your own home, or in some other building more spacious and commodious. If the church in its true form already exists there, then a new congregation might not be advisable.

Extreme cautions should be exercised in considering the religious movements in your community which claim to belong to Christ, but which do not hone His Word or follow His patterns (2 John 9–11).

After you yourself have been baptized for the remission of sins and have taught and baptized others, you set a regular time on Sunday for your worship service. The church can begin meeting in your home or in some other building of worship. You should sing some songs, and pray to God in the name of Christ, and take a passage of scripture and read it and teach the meaning of the scripture to others present. And then the Lord's Supper, having been carefully prepared, can be taken. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the bread and for what it represents, then pass it around to all those who have been baptized. Next, bless the fruit of the vine and pass it to those who belong to the church and let them drink of it. Several prayers should be prayed during the worship service. The collection should be taken and with business-like procedures an accounting should be made of the collection so it can be used exclusively for the growth and development of the church.

You should strive to teach all in your community. The early church "**went everywhere preaching the word**" (Acts 8:4).

How is the Church Organized?

Every congregation of the Lord's church is independent. There is never one congregation over another congregation. Each congregation is a separate unit. There is no organization of churches, nor is there any other organization larger than the local congregation. In the Bible, the church is called the body of Christ. In this figure of speech we see that Christ is the "**head of the body**" (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22). Individual Christians are called members of His body (1 Corinthians 12:20). As in our bodies where each member has a particular function, so also in the body of Christ. No member of the church is more important than another. All have their places and contribute to the well-being of the whole body, the church.

Let us remember that Christ is the head of the church and as such has all authority (Matthew 28:18). No one is permitted to change the structure of the church in anyway, for none has the authority to do so. That right belongs to Christ alone.

As the local congregation grows and increases in number and spiritual maturity, there will come the need to appoint some men from the congregation to serve as elders. These men are to be named by the congregation itself. They are not self-appointed. These men are also called shepherds, and serve as guardians of the flock (1 Peter 5:1–5).

When there are elders or bishops there is always a plurality (Philippians 1:1). Never is just one man an elder over a congregation (Acts 14:23). The qualifications for elders are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5–9.

Men are also appointed to the lesser office of deacons to serve the congregation. They serve under the elders (Philippians 1:1; Acts 20:28). Their qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:8–13.

The church may be established without elders or deacons being appointed. It must exist without them at first for those who serve in these capacities must be well qualified through years of experience.