

THE CHURCH: LET'S START HERE

Matthew 16:13–18 and Acts 2:41–47

We who live in the United States in this twenty-first century find ourselves surrounded by churches. They are not only numerous, they are varied. Added to the many denominational and nondenominational distinctions among churches is the fact that each local church has its own unique culture. In addition to this, there are now “media churches” that can be seen on television screens and computer monitors, where some of the characteristics of a “church” are present (music is sung, sermons are preached, offerings are taken, and people’s lives are influenced), but with many of these there is no geographical location—no actual street address—where you can assemble with others and participate. Also, there are many religions and cults these days that hardly resemble what most of us would call a “church,” but all of them have loyal followers who believe in and support them. Is it any wonder, in the midst of all this, that so much confusion regarding the church exists? Hopefully, our attempt at “rebirthing the church” will result in some helpful and clarifying principles that will erase a lot of that confusion. In the process, we also hope to replace some long-standing American ideals with biblical guidelines that may surprise you who have been “in church” most of your lives. Stay open—fresh ideas await you!

I. Looking at Our Church and Remembering . . .

- When and How?
- Where and Why?
- What and Who?

II. Looking Back Into the Scriptures and Discovering . . .

- Jesus’ Prediction
- Peter’s Sermon
- People’s Response

III. Looking in on the Early Church and Learning . . .

- What Was Present?
- What Was Absent?
- Who Was Leading?
- Was It Working?

IV. Looking Around and Realizing . . .

- Clear, biblical thinking _____
- Studied, accurate decisions _____
- Wise, essential changes _____