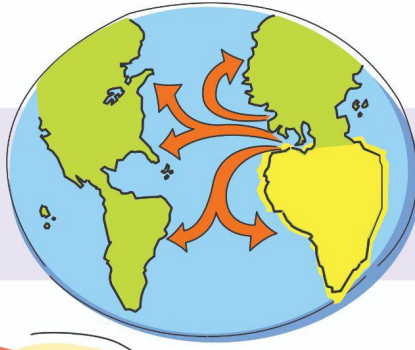
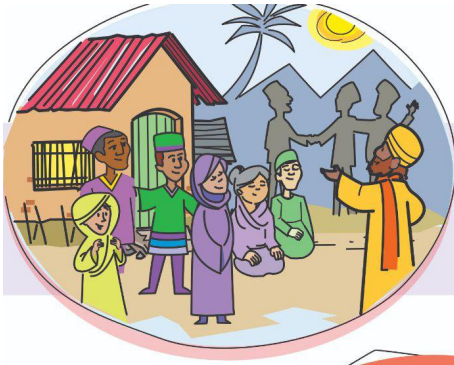


# 41. GATHER: What is Church?



Focus	Purpose	Key Message
Defining the Church biblically as a spiritual family of disciples, rather than a building or an institution.	To establish a simple, biblical, and transferable definition of the Church that fosters multiplication in a pioneer context.	The Church is a spiritual family of disciples attempting to love Jesus and obey His commands, characterized by practicing the 7 General Commands of Jesus.

## Ask: What are common words and images often associated with “Church”?

Although the Church is often associated with buildings, pastors, budgets or programs, the Bible describes the early Church as a spiritual family, with Christ in their midst as King, who love God, love others and make multiplying disciples.

The Greek word for “Church” is the word **ekklesia**. This Greek word means, “citizen assembly” and describes all followers of Jesus as the people of God who show allegiance to their risen Lord and share together, as God’s children, in the covenant privileges promised in the New Testament. That is what Church is! Ekklesia is not a

building, the clergy, a program or a Sunday morning service. These things can be used for the meeting or administration of the Church, but they are not the biblical definition of Church.

The word for “Church” (ekklesia) is used three different ways in the New Testament:

- The universal Church [Matthew 16:18]
- The city or regional Church [Revelation 3:1]
- The Church meeting in someone’s home [Acts 5:42; Colossians 4:15]

Jesus said the Old Testament commands could be summarized in loving God with your entire being and loving others as you love yourself [Mt. 22:36-40]. Jesus also said that He would build His Church [Mt. 16:18] and commissioned all of his disciples everywhere to make disciples that would obey all that He commanded. [Mt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8].

**Definition of church: A spiritual family of disciples attempting to love Jesus and obey His commands and help others to do the same.**

Because God's original intent was for the Church to be a multiplying movement, not an institution, we emphasise the simple, biblical essentials that can multiply more easily.

- A group becomes a church when a minimum of two or three people come together, self-identifying themselves as church, attempting to love and obey Jesus together. (Matthew 18:20)
- Church is simple. It is people who know, love and obey Jesus together.

[Mat 18:20 NKJV] 20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."