

The Church: Institutionalism vs. Kingdom of God

- “Churches” or congregations are not purely “institutional” or “kingdom,” but tend toward one or the other.
- Some things mentioned under “institutional” may be used effectively in the “kingdom” if they are subservient and in service to “kingdom of God” values and dynamics.

	<u>Institutionalism</u>	<u>Kingdom of God</u>
Definition of Church	Organization, Institution, Building, Place	“Called Out Ones” (literal Biblical Greek word for church) Ordinary People Called by Jesus Out to Transform the World Body of Christ Body of Disciples Family of God
Language	“I go to church.” Church is a “what”	“I am the church 24/7.” “We are the church 24/7.” Church is a “who”
Goal	Maintain & Grow Organization	People... disciples bringing Jesus’ rule, reign, redemption and resurrection power to people, problems and places Making & mobilizing disciples of Jesus through teaching & baptizing
Values	Organization’s Activities & Programs Meeting Members’ Needs Being Nice	Prayer (talking/listening), Holy Spirit, Call, God’s Word, Faith, Salvation, Renewal, Mission, Discipleship, Healing, Hope Law & Gospel, God’s Love, Mutual Kingdom Accountability
Primary Focus	“In” (focus on what happens “in” side of walls)	“In” for the sake of “Out”
Measure of Effectiveness	Attendance, Buildings, Cash “Butts, Buildings, Bucks” Growth of Organization Analyzing & Projecting Organization’s Numbers (on paper & in meetings)	Where is the rule and reign of Jesus increasing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit of Spirit & Character of Jesus • Salvation of Souls (not people switching churches) • Individuals: Is the rule and reign of Jesus greater in one’s life than last year? ONLY God (not humans) can “add numbers” (Acts 2:47).
Method & Definition of “Out” reach, Mission & Evangelism	Do something to “attract” more people “in:” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering the right services & activities • Employing people who can perform and produce more people • Right location & type of building • Right kind of worship Marketing, Websites, Social media Demographics Waiting for people to arrive “in” & Welcome Getting People Involved “in” Conclusion: Get more members	Mission (Latin: Sent “Out”) Witness & Sharing Gospel (repentance & forgiveness of sins) with those who don’t trust in Jesus Healing Our Broken World & Works of Compassion Expectation of Miraculous from God “I am a Missionary 24/7” What is my mission field? Sending & Supporting Foreign Missionaries Church Planting/Transplanting City & Culture Transformation Bringing “Good News” where there is “Bad News” Making what is “Wrong” ... “Right”
Jesus	Sometimes: allergy to “J” word (Jesus)	Jesus: “Only name by which we can be saved” Still ALIVE & ACTIVE because of resurrection
Source of Guidance & Power?	Books, Programs or Methodologies Especially the Latest Greatest or Trendy Copycat Church Human Excitement Enthusiasm & Energy	God’s Word: Written (Bible), Spoken, Revealed & in the Flesh Call & Power of Holy Spirit Spiritual Vision: God Revealing Creative Wisdom & the Future Earnest Prayer: Intercession & Listening Prayer
Discipleship	Offering Education & Spiritual Growth Options Sunday School At “church” Including Children & Youth Options	DISCIPLE: Apprentice of Jesus, being transformed & trained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Repentance & Conversion • In the Word (Scriptures) • Spiritually Formed through Prayer & Disciplines • Called by Jesus, 24/7 • Inviting the Holy Spirit ... Continually • Producing & Reproducing: More Disciples & Fruit • Living relationship with Jesus & His followers • Endlessly & to the End of Time: Know Follow Serve
Definition of Member	Name on a list to be tallied Consumer of the Church’s activities & services Pew-Sitters	Person with Important “Part” in Jesus’ Kingdom Purposes & Empowered by Holy Spirit to be that Part & Function, 24/7 (1 Corinthians 12 & Romans 12)
In Charge?	People	Living “Lord” God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

"Preacher"	Ordained Pastor or Priest	ALL Followers of Jesus: Preacher is a Proclaimer of the Gospel
Missionaries, Priests & Ministers	Those who receive wages or financial support for this role	ALL Followers of Jesus are Missionaries, Priests & Ministers Missionaries (Latin: "Sent"): Those "Sent" by Jesus, 24/7 Priests 24/7: (from Latin: "Bridge-builder"), 1 Peter 2:5 Ministers (from Latin: Servants): Servants of Jesus, 24/7
Congregation's Role: The Gathered Church	Weekly Worship Services Social Gatherings Philanthropy: Community Service Being Nice to Others Offering Activities and Services to Members	Word & Sacrament Worship: Bowing down to the Living God Relationships: Healing, Encouragement & Accountability Saving, Transforming, Training & Mobilizing Ordinary People for Kingdom Purposes (through Discipleship)
Operations	Operate like business or community organization Methodologies: trendy programs; gimmicks; business plan; meetings; committees; finding the "right" ideas, structure, programs, location & kind of building; employing the "right" people; assigning tasks; schedules; timelines;	Prayer, Call of Jesus & Recognizing His Voice, 24/7 Waiting upon the Lord Spiritual Vision Revealed by God: Seeing with God's Eyesight Calling & Mobilizing Ordinary People to be Body of Christ Inviting, Equipping & Empowering of Holy Spirit Wise Stewards ALL: Operating According to God's Word
Structure	"Like it was done in the past" Filling Slots & Getting people involved Committees (or equivalent) Whatever is trendy	Form follows Kingdom Function in Body of Christ Making Unique "Members" Effective for Kingdom, 24/7 Conclusion: Every Gathering of Believers is Unique Unique Structure that facilitates unique people, time & place
Leadership	Most Capable: Those with Worldly Success Oftentimes business people Top-Down Control	Servant Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating: Making Others Effective (Bottom-up) • Most Capable: Mature in Christ (any career) • Empowered by Holy Spirit • "According to Scriptures": God's Word ways & voice • Leadership Spiritual Gifts • Reproducing Oneself
Pastor's role	Lead & run a successful organization Preach & Lead weekly services Meet members' needs Omni-competency Employee of Congregation	Tending the Flock: Word & Sacrament Ministry Lead using one's unique spiritual gifts, ensuring the ongoing mission of Jesus happens within a gathering of believers One part of the Body, called & set apart for a designated role Mobilizing the Body of Christ to know follow serve Jesus Called by Congregation in Covenant Relationship
Stewardship	Using time, talent, treasure for the sake of a church organization Filling Slots for "Church" tasks Getting funds for the church's budget needs Tithing: A practice designed to get people to give more to church	Followers of Jesus Wisely Managing ALL that God has given to each of them, 24/7 & Spending it according to God's call Generosity works against greed (wanting more). Tithe: Giving one's first and best 10% in thanksgiving to the living God who is the only Provider; Practice initiated by God to keep people in the knowledge that He is their Provider
Other Congregations?	Competition	Partners in the Kingdom
Faith & Belief	Make-it-up Christianity Religion: Moral Therapeutic Deism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God wants people to be good. • The goal of life is to be happy. • God solves our problems. • Good people go to heaven. • God creates and watches over human life on earth. 	Active Relationship of Trust in the Living God, Father Son and Holy Spirit who is revealed in the Holy Scriptures & Summarized in the historic creeds.
Congregation Size	Bigger is better	"Where two or three are gathered..." Matthew 18:20 Size of a congregation/gathering is irrelevant.
Enemy	Those who stand up for the truth: God's Word Those who expose "institutionalism"	Sin, Evil, Death & the Devil Devil, Flesh & World Spiritual Warfare is REAL. Devil is the one who "steals, kills and destroys" through temptation, opposition & possession. ALL are capable of participating in the devil's work.