

Lesson 7: The Local Church

Our New Family

Why should we be involved in the Local Church?

Jesus Christ established the church as the vehicle for the development of our maximum spiritual potential. Therefore, for a mature believer, the local church is far more important than the simple act of attendance at religious services on Sunday for the purpose of “complying” with an obligation. As we grow spiritually, we will learn to perceive the church as far more than a place where we go to sing, hear a sermon, greet the brethren, and feel good. The church exists so that we may be edified and equipped to comply with the great commission of reaching the lost and helping them in their spiritual growth. In this manner we reproduce ourselves and perpetuate the ministry of Jesus Christ until He comes. When the church is drawn together it becomes the house of the Living God. In this lesson we will focus on the importance that the local church has in our spiritual growth, in our service and ministry to the Lord and in communion with the rest of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In the Body of Christ, God has given us a definite Mission and Service, and a series of goals and strategies for reaching His purpose in us. He has permitted you to be part of this congregation. As you study this lesson, consider how you can channel all of your resources and your efforts to minister within the congregation.

I. What is the church?

A. Let's look at what the Church is not.

- 1. The church is not a denominational group, a religious association or a structure designed to surround a person or a group of beliefs.**
- 2. Neither is it an organization with political, social or economic ends. Although the life style of the believers must transform society, the church of Christ has a much higher calling than that of any human organization.**
- 3. It is not a building in which God dwells.**
 - a) In the Old Testament God did dwell physically in buildings especially constructed for Him. **Exodus 25:8** “**And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.**”
 - b) But now God does not reside in a building. **Acts 17:24-25.**
 - c) The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let's be aware of the privilege and great responsibility that we have upon us by being His temple. **I Corinthians 6:19-20.** “**What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are**

not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”.

B. The Church is the Body of Christ:

1. As such, it is formed by saved men and women. 1 Corinthians 12:27

2. God has placed us as members of the same body, giving us diverse functions and positioning us according to how He believes it is more fitting. 1 Corinthians 12:17-19

a) We should note that it is impossible for the members to function isolated one from another, we all need each other. **1 Corinthians 12:20-21**

b) In spite of the fact that nobody is indispensable, our church needs all of us. Moreover, in God's eyes, the weak are the most necessary. **1 Corinthians 12:22**

3. By being the body of Christ, the Church is the only physical representation of Jesus on the earth.

a) This body is spread throughout the whole world and is made up of believers from every nation.

b) Its visible manifestation is congregations of believers commonly called “local churches”.

(1) Even though the phrase “local church” is not found in the Scriptures, the concept is. The churches in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, etc. were all local congregations.

(2) In them resides the biblical authority under which we minister.

(3) That's why, even though Para- church organizations (Christian groups outside the local church) are effective and well intended, they should be a substitute for the role of the local church in the life of a believer.

c) Paul individualized every congregation, calling them “*the churches of Christ*” in **Romans 16:16**. Other examples are:

(1) The church in Jerusalem. Acts 8:1 “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

(2) The churches in Asia, and the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. 1 Corinthians 16:19

d) All of these were congregations that mutually supported each other but exercised biblical authority through their own body of leaders. The church in Antioch is a good example. **Acts 13:1-3**

C. The Church is also the house of the living God. 1 Timothy 3:15

- 1. God lives inside of every believer, but when we meet, He is also “among us”. 2 Corinthians 6:16 “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”**
- 2. Therefore, attendance at church services should be a priority in your life. Hebrews 10:24-25**
- 3. Since God is present when we congregate together, each service should be a celebration of jubilee. That’s why we dedicate time to praise in our services. When you are in church, sing to Him with all of your heart, being conscious that you are in His presence.**
- 4. Never overlook the spiritual power that the church has when it meets. Because of God’s presence, there is a special spiritual dimension in praise, prayer and even in the very preaching of the Word. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 24-25**

D. The Church is the Bride of Christ.

- 1. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote his desire that we be a pure bride for our Lord. 2 Corinthians 11:2**
- 2. We should live holy lives because God wants us to present ourselves without spot or blemish before Him. Ephesians 5:25-27**

E. The Church is also the family of God. That’s why we call each other “brothers” and “sisters”. Ephesians 2:19

II. What does the church exist for?

A. To glorify God. Romans 15:5-6

B. To congregate with the goal of reaching the goals that we see in Acts 2:42-46

- 1. To continue in the study of the Word.**
- 2. To continue in fellowship.**
- 3. To pray together.**

4. **To be together and share our belongings.**
5. **To satisfy the physical needs of the needy.**
6. **To continue steadfastly together in the temple and the houses.**
7. **To praise God together.**
8. **To have favor with all people so that God adds to the church those that would be saved every day.**
 - a) The purpose of having favor with people is to be able to win them to Christ.
 - b) In our church, we should have a lifestyle that promotes the conversion to Christ of those around us, and He will prosper our ministry.
 - c) That's why, the Vision of The Body of Christ is: We exist to glorify God being channels to expand His kingdom and transform lives.

III. What does The Body of Christ expect of you?

A. That you live in intimate communion with God through prayer and the reading and practice of His Word.

B. That you be conscious of the need to live so that those that around you can know Christ and that you engage in all your activities with the intention of accomplishing that goal. 2 Timothy 1:8

C. That you be willing to form new bonds of friendship and fellowship with other believers in the church.

1. **Allow other brothers and sisters to become “very dear.” 1 Thessalonians 2:8**
2. **Become part of one of the small groups in the church.**

D. That you minister to others investing in them the knowledge of the Word that you have received and also investing your very life.

1. **Do it participating actively in at least one of the ministries of our church.**
2. **Don't fall in the trap of believing that the ministry is only for evangelists, pastors, and teachers. As a matter of fact, they are in the church to train you so that you can do the work of the ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12**
3. **Ministry is the reason that we still haven't gone to heaven! One very important aspect of ministry is simply your willingness.**

- a) You yourself are a “ministerial structure”: witness of Christ to your friends and invite them to the church services.
- b) Be a part of the Prayer ministry.
- c) Involve yourself in any of the evangelistic ministries.
- d) Depending on your age or interests, be a part of the ministerial structure that best meets your needs (ex. Junior High, High School, Young married couples, etc.) There you will find many opportunities for ministry and service.

4. As you grow in the study of the Word, as a member of The Body of Christ, you will have the opportunity to teach in ministries like: Sunday School, Discipleship, Small Groups, Leadership Training, Woman’s Ministries, New Members Classes, Seminary, etc.

Some Popular Beliefs

- 1. There is only one true church.
- 2. The church, its membership and its programs are man’s invention.
- 3. Only the pastors and the main leaders have the spiritual responsibility to minister.
- 4. We should seek the unity of all churches no matter what the doctrine is because God wants us to all unite.

From the Biblical principles taught in this lesson, you should understand why these teachings are completely false.

Write, in your own words, the spiritual principle from this lesson which has had the greatest impact on you:

Put into practice what you have learned:

- 1. Try to start involving yourself in one of the ministries of your church.
- 2. Ask your discipler to explain what each of the ministries is about and to introduce you to the leaders of the ones that might interest you.

What did we learn?

Circle either T (True) or F (False)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The Church is the building where believers congregate. | T | F |
| 2. In the Church, some members are more important than others. | T | F |
| 3. The believer has the privilege and responsibility of being the temple of the Holy Spirit. | T | F |
| 4. Para church organizations have been placed by God to substitute the Local Church. | T | F |
| 5. For a Christian, church attendance is optional. | T | F |
| 6. The Church is our new family. | T | F |

Before Starting Lesson #8, memorize Hebrews 10:24-25:

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
