

Life in the Father's House

A Member's Guide to the Local Church

by

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Exercises for the Saints

***All page numbers and quotes are taken from:** Wayne A. Mack and Dave Swaveley, *Life in the Father's House*, P&R Publishing, 1996, 2006. Softcover, ISBN: 978-1-59638-034-9

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1: The Importance of the Local Church.....	4
Chapter 2: Committing Ourselves to Church Membership	5
Chapter 3: Choosing a Good Church.....	6
Chapter 4: Relating to Church Leadership	7
Chapter 5: Fulfilling Our Roles as Men and Women.....	8
Chapter 6: Participating in Worship Services	9
Chapter 7: Using Our Spiritual Gifts.....	10
Chapter 8: Confronting One Another in Love	11
Chapter 9: Preserving Unity in the Body.....	12
Chapter 10: Praying for One Another	13
Conclusion: The Heart of the Matter	14

Introduction

The word “church” is used two different ways in the Scripture.

First use: *universal group of people who believe in Jesus Christ*

Second use: *the group of believers who meet together in a particular location for worship*

See which of the following verses match which of the two different uses.

Matthew 16:18

Matthew 18:17

Acts 8:1

Acts 9:31

1 Corinthians 1:2

1 Corinthians 4:17

1 Corinthians 12:28

Ephesians 5:25-27

Colossians 1:18

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Revelation 2:1, etc.

What are some other Biblical descriptions of the local church?

Ephesians 4:15-16

1 Corinthians 3:16

1 Peter 5:2-3

Ephesians 2:22

1 Corinthians 3:9

Chapter 1: The Importance of the Local Church

According to Matthew 16:18, who is most invested in Church?

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*The church is the primary means through which God accomplishes His plan in the world.
Mack & Swaveley, Life in the Father's House, p. 21*

1 Timothy 3:15 is perhaps the most weighty verse regarding the church and how to behave as part of Christ's church. What four terms are used to describe the church? What practical implications do you glean from each of these terms?

*He cannot have God for his father who does not have the church for his mother.
Augustine quoted in Life in the Father's House, p. 19*

If those four terms are indeed true, and they are, how are we to think of the many who have left churches (John 13:35; 1 John 2:9-11, 19)?

*The Lord esteems the communion of His church so highly that He counts as a traitor and apostate from Christianity anyone who arrogantly leaves any Christian society.
John Calvin quoted in Life in the Father's House, p. 20*

Chapter 2: Committing Ourselves to Church Membership

According to Hebrews 10:24-25, what level of commitment must each Christian have to the local church?

What connection between being saved and being part of a local church is made in Acts 2:47?

What insights do the following verses offer regarding church membership (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17)?

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Ephesians 4:11-16 mentions many spiritual blessings and responsibilities for each Christian in the church. List all the responsibilities and blessings that apply to each believer.

Christians who refuse church membership is like a man and woman who merely declare themselves married and move in together without ever getting married.

Adapted from *Life in the Father's House*, p. 51

Chapter 3: Choosing a Good Church

What things were important to the very first good church in the Bible (Acts 2:42-47)?

A good local church exhibits a devotion to the apostles' teaching (Exposition of OT and content of NT), a God-centred worship, and a loving concern for the needs of each other

Adapted from *Life in the Father's House*, p. 55

What do we mean with "apostolic teaching" (Cf. Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Peter 1:3)?

According to the following verses, who is to be the primary audience of church: unbelievers, believers, God?

Revelation 4:11

Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14

Besides the worship of God, what other key responsibility do believers have at church?

1 Corinthians 13:2

Galatians 6:10

John 13:35

We are biblically obligated to choose a church that demonstrates a devotion to the apostles' teaching, a God-centred focus, and a loving concern for people.

Adapted from *Life in the Father's House*, p. 70

Chapter 4: Relating to Church Leadership

Throughout the Scriptures, God provided leaders for His people. ... each member must be aware of his or her responsibilities to the leadership of the church.

Adapted from *Life in the Father's House*, p. 73 & 75

Just as God calls Christians to obey civil government (Romans 13:1) inasmuch as they do not call us to disobedience to God (Acts 5:29), so also God calls Christians to obey church leaders. How does Hebrews 13:7 help believers understand the wisdom of following their church leaders?

Hebrews 13:17 gives the clearest instruction for believers to know what God requires of them in areas that Scripture does not give clear commands or prohibitions. Identify the strong commands in the verse as well as the helpful motivations.

What responses must believers have to their church leaders as taught in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13?

Even in those rare instances in which a member may find himself at odds with the leadership of the Church, he must be careful about the manner in which he differs,

Jay Adams in *Life in the Father's House*, p. 83

Consider the "How to Bring Them Joy" list below and pray for more of this in your church and in all other churches

1. Believe in Christ (1 Thess 2:19-20)
2. Obey Christ (3 John 3-4)
3. Cultivate unity in the church (Phil 2:1-2)
4. Pray for them (2 Cor 1:10-11)
5. Show them love and loyalty (2 Cor 7:5-7)
6. Receive their correction (Gal 6:1)
7. Don't accept gossip (1 Tim 5:19)
8. Work with them (Eph 4:12)

Chapter 5: Fulfilling Our Roles as Men and Women

NOTE: Although many church roles are application to both Christian men and Christian women, this lesson is going to emphasise the roles that are different.

What church role do the following verses ascribe to men only? 1 Timothy 2:11-2; 1 Timothy 3:1; Acts 6:3

How do the following verses allocate the teaching role at church? Titus 2:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Since there are more women and children in the world than men,
what a mission field women have!
Life in the Father's House, p. 115

Setting a godly example is required of all believers, but men in particular are called to this task. Identify which of the qualities in the following verses are particularly lacking in Christian churches today and make it a matter of prayer on behalf of the church: 1 Timothy 3:2-13; Titus 1:6-9? Men, which of these are you to exemplify better?

May God grant His church more and more men who will pursue the role of loving leader,
effective teacher, and godly example.
Life in the Father's House, p. 105

According to the following verse, what qualities are women in particular gifted to demonstrate to other believers (1 Timothy 5:10)?

Chapter 6: Participating in Worship Services

Modern man worships his work, works at his play, and plays at his worship.
Life in the Father's House, p. 119

What do the following verses teach us about preparing for worship?

Psalm 15

Hebrews 10:19-23

Matthew 5:23-24

Worship is a way of gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of his worth. It can be done only when affections arise in the heart. —John Piper
Life in the Father's House, p. 124

The reading and teaching of God's Word is an important part of the worship service. Spurgeon believed that the hearers ought to be better prepared than even the preacher (Luke 8:18). According to Psalm 119:18, 40, 125, and 162, what should your expectations be for the Bible reading and preaching at church?

Men are called to public prayer at church services (1 Tim 2:8). What do the following passages teach about prayer as a more general worship activity? Acts 1:14; 4:23-24; 12:5, 12; 20:36; 21:5

What are the two purposes of singing according to Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16?

What are the two symbolic expressions of worship required by the following verses? Acts 2:41 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

How does 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 9:7 govern our worship activity of "Giving"?

Chapter 7: Using Our Spiritual Gifts

What common danger regarding spiritual gifts must we be immune to (1 Corinthians 12:1)?

What is the purpose of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7; C.f. Ephesians 4:16)?

Who decides and equips individual believers with their particular gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11)?

What are the results of using our spiritual gifts?

Ephesians 4:13

1 Corinthians 14:40

Use the guidelines below to know your spiritual gift so that you will use your time at church better (Ephesians 5:15-17):

1. **Know what** is meant by the individual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; Romans 12:6-8) *(The Apostolic gifts of Apostleship, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, and Tongues have been removed from this list to help you focus on application to your own life)*
 - a. **Wisdom:** Spiritual insight into life (Apologists)
 - b. **Teach:** Ability to teach God's Word in a way that all understand the meaning
 - c. **Knowledge:** Intellectual understanding into the facts of Scripture (Theologians)
 - d. **Faith:** Consistent faith in God (Prayer and Spiritual perspective)
 - e. **Discernment:** Ability to tell the difference between what is true and false
 - f. **Service/Helping:** Perception to see a need and fill it
 - g. **Leading/Administration:** Ability to take care of the finer details of things and lead
 - h. **Exhortation:** Encouragement and confrontation in a way that people respond favourably
 - i. **Giving:** Having much earthly resources and a zeal to use it for God's kingdom.
 - j. **Mercy:** Deep compassion for the needy and the ability to act on it
2. **Pray** for insight to know and practise what the Spirit requires of you (1 John 5:14-15)
3. **Know how** to practise the gift God's way (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)
4. **Take opportunities to serve**, and see what the Spirit blesses spiritually (look at all the "one another" commands, practise them, and when God is glorified through it, it might well be your individual spiritual gift 1 Peter 4:10-11)

Chapter 8: Confronting One Another in Love

What do the following verses all have in common for believers? Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 15:14; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; Hebrews 3:13; James 5:19-20

According to 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 whom should we confront?

What sins should we confront, and what sins should we not confront?

- a. Romans 14:1-4
- b. 1 Corinthians 4:5
- c. 1 Corinthians 4:6
- d. 1 Peter 4:8
- e. Matthew 5:23-24
- f. James 5:19-20
- g. 1 Corinthians 5:6, 8
- h. Hebrews 3:13, 15

How should we confront?

- a. Matthew 7:5
- b. Matthew 5:23-24
- c. Matthew 18:15
- d. Galatians 6:1-2
- e. Proverbs 18:13
- f. Philippians 1:9-11

What should you do when "it doesn't work" (Matthew 18:16)?

Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.
Faithful are the wounds of a friend.
Proverbs 27:5-6

Chapter 9: Preserving Unity in the Body

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

Psalm 133:1

We often respond to offences and conflict in ways that make the situation even worse. How does Galatians 5:19-20 compared to verses 22-23 change our thinking about our responses to each other.

In Philippians 4:2 Paul appeals to two individuals in the church to reconcile and be of one mind again. How did he prepare them for this instruction earlier in the letter?

1:6

1:23-25

2:3-4

2:5

2:18

3:20-21

According to Colossians 3:12-15 what other Christian virtues must we model in order to preserve unity among one another?

How does Matthew 9:5, Romans 15:14 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 encourage us to work to unity in the Lord despite our personal differences?

According to Jesus' prayer in John 17:17-23, how important is unity?

When you praise God in prayer, you will find a gratefulness developing in your hearts that will make it harder for you to be frustrated with others. When you constantly confess your own sins to God, you will not be as quick to be offended by the sins of others. When you intercede for the needs of other believers, you will be focused on them rather than yourself and will have the right attitude even if problems arise between you.

Life in the Father's House, p. 207

Chapter 10: Praying for One Another

What lessons on praying for your church can you learn from the following prayers?

Ephesians 1:15-19

Romans 1:8-12

Ephesians 3:14-21

Philippians 1:9-11

Colossians 1:9-12

The spiritual battles for the souls of men, women, and children are not won when the preacher comes into the pulpit or the evangelist hits the streets. They are won ... by the people who come before the throne of God in prayer. It is *God* who does the work of convicting, regenerating, converting, sanctifying, empowering, and protecting—and He does more of that work when His people pray.

Life in the Father's House, p. 231

Conclusion: The Heart of the Matter

Dwell on the following motivation-corrective as you consider how your participation in church has grown over the course of this study.

- ONE: I strive to be a good member of my church, not to be saved, but because I have been saved (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- TWO: I live actively in the Father's house, not to be more loved by God, but because He already loves me (Romans 5:6-10)
- THREE: I am motivated for worship and ministry at church, not to be accepted or esteemed by others, but to be pleasing to God (Matthew 6:1-6)
- FOUR: I am involved in my church, not to be served, but to serve others in the name of Christ (Mark 10:45)

Combining these four resolutions with everything that was discussed in this study, what would you say was the biggest mind change regarding church for you? What church activity have you pursued with greater zeal because of this study?

*Love one another with brotherly affection.
Outdo one another in showing honour.
Do not be slothful in zeal,
be fervent in spirit,
serve the Lord
Romans 12:10-11*