

Week 4 – The Local Church

“The life we receive does not allow us to be independent, for our life is dependent on the life of others. It is a dependent life: I depend on you and you depend on me. Isolation takes away life as well as fullness.” – Watchman Nee

And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church – Ephesians 1:22

1. What is Church?

The word “church” in the Bible means two things:

- a. An assembly
- b. “called together” or “called out”

We could say the church is an **assembly** of God’s people who are **called out** and **called together** for relationship with God and with each other to accomplish His mission. The church is **called together to reach out**.

Since you have been saved, you are the church. The church is not a building or a location – it is you! Church is people. Mark 12:29-31 tells us what the church should be and Matthew 28:18-20 tells us what the church is to do.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. – Matthew 16:18

Read Matthew 16:13-19.

- Who revealed the answer to Peter concerning Jesus question in verse 15?
- In verse 18, it was revealed to Peter that the church would be built on Jesus. What confidence does this give you concerning the church?
- According to verse 18, can anything overcome or destroy the church?

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. – Hebrews 10:24-25

- According to Hebrews 10:24-25, what do these verses tell the church to do?
- How important do you think it is for the church to meet together on a consistent basis?
- What benefits does meeting with the church bring to your individual life?

**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
– Acts 1:8**

- In this verse, Jesus is telling and giving His disciples (the church) specific things.
- What does Jesus say empowers the church(disciples)?
- What do we receive power to do?
- Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria were surrounding areas the disciples were told to go and be witnesses in. Where should we be witnesses?

2. Universal and Local Church

**“To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”
– 1 Thessalonians 1:1**

The word “church” has two meanings in scripture – one means the universal church (Ephesians 1:22) and the other means a local body of believers. Meeting in the local church is God’s plan for fellowship, discipleship, and community. All Christians are members of the universal church but should also be members of a local church. Local church is how universal church meets. You can’t meet with the universal body of Christ every week, but you can meet with the local church on a consistent basis.

Another point is that most of the New Testament books (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, etc.) were written to local churches, not individuals (i.e. the Church at Rome, the Church at Corinth, the Church at Ephesus). You need the local church!

3. Fellowship

The word “fellowship” means communion, partnership, and sharing in common. Fellowship means giving yourself to others. The local church is to be a loving community.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. – 1 John 1:3

- When we are part of a local church, we have fellowship with two groups. Underline these.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:26

- What two things does the church do together? Circle them.
- How does this make you feel?

**“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
- John 13:34-35**

- Is loving one another a suggestion or a command from God?
- According to these verses, who is our example in love?
- When you love one another, everyone will know you as what?

Members of the local church are to be disciples and to disciple others.

4. The Blessings of Local Church Membership

- We **support** one another in difficult times. (Read Galatians 6:1-2)
- We use our spiritual gifts to **serve** others. (Read 1 Peter 4:10)
- We **walk together** in unity. (Read Matthew 18:19)
- We are **witnesses** to non-Christians. (Read John 17:20-21)

Attending a church is different from joining or being a member of a church. Just like marriage is a commitment to one another, church membership is a commitment to one another. Commitment requires accountability. Joining a local church helps the Christian to experience all of the blessings of a local church. All Christians should be actively engaged in a local church, not just attendees or on the sideline.

5. Fellowship Opportunities in the Local Church

A. Large Group (Weekend services)

- a. i.e. worship, the Lord's Supper, tithes and offerings, preaching and teaching, prayer

In a large group setting in the local church you will find yourself part of God's movement as a whole church. It is a gathering – a collective whole of God's people. No longer will you be doing your own thing, but joining others to do God's mission and plan as a united body of believers

B. Small Group (Life Groups)

- a. i.e. personal ministry, prayer, use of spiritual gifts, support group, relationships, outreach, evangelism

In a small group, you will receive personalized ministry and have an opportunity to develop close relationships. No matter how large the church grows, you will always be connected through a small group. Small groups will keep church personal and intimate. You will never be lost in the crowd in a small group.

Our small groups are called Life Groups. Life Groups are where believers can share life and purpose together.

Small groups are not a new thing in the church. The early church met in homes all the time for fellowship, prayer and ministry (Acts 2:42-47). Every believer needs to be connected to a small group of believers for accountability, spiritual growth, prayer, support, and relationships.

C. One-on-One

A one-on-one relationship with another believer for the purpose of becoming a disciple of Jesus helps to sustain you in your walk with the Lord.

One-on-one also helps you to grow in prayer, learning God's will, overcoming temptation, understanding Kingdom priorities, and living out your Christian life.

Daily Application

Use the daily application section below to further your understanding of today's discipleship lesson.

Day 1

Read Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:22, and 1 Peter 4:3-4

According to these verses, how would you define church?
What is the purpose of the church? What are they to do?

Read Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 1:8.

List four things that described the early church in Acts.
Where does the church get its power?
Are you living out Acts 2:42-47 as a member of a local church?

Day 2

Read John 13:34-35, Philippians 2:1-11 and 1 John 1:3

Circle the words that best describe Christian fellowship?

Fun with friends committed relationships something needed by weak believers

In Philippians 2:1-11 we see Christ's model to us. We should have his attitude. What do you think about these statements according to these verses?

- a. Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven.
- b. Love means doing what's best for the other person.
- c. Just as we have been forgiven, we must forgive others.

Day 3

Read Matthew 18:19, Romans 12:3-8, Galatians 6:1-2, and 1 Peter 4:10

List three reasons why it is important to be a member of a church.

How can you *bear one another's burdens*?

Spiritual gifts are:

- Given to all Christians (True or False)
- Necessary for Christians to grow (True or False)
- To be used to help Christians gain fame and wealth (True or False)
- Important for everyday living (True or False)