

THE LOCAL CHURCH

week 6



NOTES

The Gospel is the greatest news the world has ever seen or heard. The power of the Gospel can truly change a life from the inside out. The Gospel was never intended to be kept to one person or a group of people. God, in His infinite wisdom, developed a plan to ensure the Gospel would be spread as effectively as possible. This plan includes and revolves around the local church.

There are many strange misconceptions about the church in today's culture which makes it even more important for us to properly understand what the Bible says about the church and how it was intended to operate. In this lesson, we will study the importance of the church, what the church actually is, and why it is so important in our lives as committed followers of Jesus Christ.

THE CHURCH IS PRECIOUS

There is a sect of Christians who believe and say that they love Jesus and hate the church. While no church is perfect, we must understand that Jesus Christ placed a great deal of emphasis on the church while on earth and through His disciples.

CHRIST DIED FOR THE CHURCH.

Ephesians 5:25

If Christ loved the church this much, we should place an emphasis on the local church in our personal life and spiritual development

CHRIST CALLED OUT THE CHURCH.

To fully comprehend the first church, we must understand the definition of the word church according to the Bible. The Greek word for church in the New Testament is *ekklesia* which means "a called out assembly." To find the first called out assembly, we must simply go to the early years of Christ's ministry.

Matthew 4:18-22, Ephesians 2:20

CHRIST PURCHASED THE CHURCH.

While we may refer to this as "our church," none of us have paid the price that had to be paid to purchase it as Christ did.

Acts 20:28

CHRIST COMMISSIONED THE CHURCH.

Before ascending to Heaven, Christ gave the church its final instructions to reach the world. This has become known as the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20

CHRIST PROMISED THE SUCCESS OF THE CHURCH.

Before the first church ever got off the ground, Christ promised that it would never lose to the power of Satan and the world. When you are a part of the church, you are a part of God's winning team.

Matthew 16:13-18

The success of the church is not based on man as some assume. It is based on the rock of the statement that Peter made in the previous verses.

CHRIST IS TO BE PREEMINENT IN THE CHURCH.

Many Christians have mistaken the church as something created for them. While the church can and will fulfill many needs in the life of the Christian, it was not created for our benefit. The church was created to glorify Christ and to spread His Gospel.

Colossians 1:18

The church is not man's idea or scheme meaning that it is not an optional part of the Christian life. If Jesus Christ placed such a high emphasis on the local church during his time on earth, we are mistaken when we do not place a high emphasis on the local church in our lives.

While no church throughout history has been perfect, we cannot allow mistakes to keep us from the blessings of God that are associated with the local church. When we develop a love and commitment to the local church, we are showing that to the church that Christ saw as precious.

THE CHURCH IS UNIQUE.

Some people see the church as a club or society to gain entrance. The church is more unique than any other entity established in history. It is more than a building or a place to build relationships.

The church as a whole is comprised of local assemblies of saved and baptized believers. This is the model we see demonstrated throughout the New Testament.

THE PEOPLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The book of Acts in the New Testament gives us a little bit of insight into the church at Jerusalem and the model of a saved and baptized membership.



Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:47

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

While the churches were unique in their membership, the establishment of churches found in Acts was also very unique. As the Gospel spread to new areas, church were established in those areas.

Acts 9:31

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts 15:41

And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Acts 16:5

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

The next nine New Testament books following Acts (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians) are letters, known as the Epistles, written to local churches in different areas. The three epistles following these (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) are written to pastors or leaders of local churches. Twelve of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament deal specifically with the organization, operation, and work of the local church.

THE PATTERN OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Throughout the New Testament, we see a pattern for how Biblical churches should be organized, believe, and operate in the culture. To help us remember some of these important principles, we will be using the acrostic BAPTIST.

Biblical authority in all matters of faith and practice:

Because the Bible was inspired by God as we learned in lesson one, we believe that it holds the principles and guidance needed for a successful local church. As a church, our desire is to always base our beliefs on the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Autonomy or self-governing power of the local church:

Because Christ has been deemed the head of the church, we believe that every local church should operate independently of a hierarchical framework or outside



governmental structure.

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Ephesians 1:22-23

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Not only does this principle apply to a religious government, but also to a secular government. The church is separate from the state.

Acts 5:29-31

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Priesthood of the believers:

The Bible guarantees access to the Father for every believer because of the work of Christ.

I Timothy 2:5-6

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Two offices within the church:

The Bible only gives two offices of the church - pastor (also referred to as elder or bishop) and deacon. The Scripture says that these two offices are to be filled by Godly men of integrity. The specific qualifications are laid out in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9.

Philippians 1:1

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.

Individual soul liberty:

We believe that each person must make a personal decision about their faith. a person's decision about Christ and the Gospel should not be made for them. Also, we believe that every Christian will answer before God for their personal holiness and conscience according to Romans 14.

Romans 10:13

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.



Saved and sanctified membership:

We believe that the love Christ showed on the cross demands our consecration and desire for holiness. We believe that the saved membership of the church should lead a life that is distinct and separated from the sin of the world.

2 Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness.

Two ordinances - baptism and the Lord's table:

Throughout Scripture, the Bible gives multiple principles for the church to follow, but only two of those would qualify as ordinances. The church is the only entity that God has ordained to baptize and serve the Lord's supper.

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

We already spent some time studying baptism in one of our previous lessons, so let's take some time to fully understand the Lord's table or sometimes what is referred to as communion.

Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Lord's table the night before He was crucified. The Lord does tell us how often to observe the Lord's table, rather, He gives the purpose of the Lord's table as remembrance and repentance of sin to bring us back into fellowship with Him.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

These seven principles are an overview of the Biblical pattern of the local church and the major beliefs of this Baptist church. These are not inspired thoughts and will differ in some churches, but the principles and doctrines from which they are adapted should hold true in every church.

THE CHURCH IS VITAL.

The church is not simply an add-on of the Christian life. It is essential for Christian growth and spreading the Gospel to every part of the world.

THE CHURCH IS THE GUARDIAN OF TRUTH.

1 Timothy 3:15



If the church will not stand for truth, who will? The church has been entrusted with the truth because it is the only entity who dependent upon that truth. Churches fail when they forsake the truth found within the word of God.

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN TO REACH THE WORLD.

God has commanded the church to be the means by which the Gospel is spread around the world. A church that is not seeking to share the Gospel has missed its intended purpose. Jesus' last command before leaving earth was the command to share the Gospl everywhere.

Matthew 28:19-20

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLACE TO GROW THE CHRISTIAN.

Notice the following purpose of the local church that are intended to help you grow as a Christian:

To preach the Word of God:

Acts 13:5, Romans 10:17

To provide fellowship:

Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:25

To provide oversight:

Hebrews 13:17

To disciple new believers:

Ephesians 4:11-12

To bring glory to God:

Ephesians 3:21

THE APPLICATION.

As we have seen the local church is integral part of our spiritual growth and our discipleship journey. Would you take a moment to review what we have talked about and make a few decisions about your relationship to the church:

Because the church is so precious to Jesus Christ, would you determin to make your faithfulness to it a priority? Would you decide that the church will be a regular part of your weekly and daily schedule?

Because the church is unique in its people and pattern, would you commit to always finding yourself in a Biblical church model and under Biblical leadership? Staying faithful to a church and pastor who understands God's pattern for the church is vital for your continued spiritual growth.

Because the church is so vital and important, would you commit to being active and involved in the mission of the church? Would you determine now that your involvement in the church will be a representation of the work God has accomplished in you? One of the most rewarding parts of the Christian life is being able to see God work in others how He has worked in you.

