

# Lesson 8: The Local Church

## “How important is the Local Church for me?”

Jesus established His church on this earth. Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “**I will build my church...**” The primary purpose of the church is for the growth of the believers and the testimony of Christ in the World.

The purpose of this lesson is to impress upon the individual believer the central role the church should play in his spiritual growth.

### What is the Local Church?

**It is not all believers everywhere:** which is sometimes called the *universal church*. The Local church is the representative of the universal church or body of Christ.

#### **It is not a building.**

1. God does not dwell in man-made buildings. (Acts 17:24-25)
2. The place that God dwells is not in buildings but in the hearts of believers. (I Cor. 6:19)
3. Church buildings come about as a matter of convenience and practicality. It is hard for 100 people to meet in a house or to have a service outside in the pouring rain.

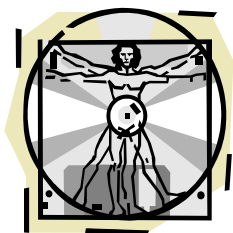


#### **It is not a denominational group of congregations.**

**It is not a human organization.** Man did not think up the church. Jesus said, “I will build **my** Church.” (Matthew 16:18)

**A local church IS** a body of men and women who have been saved and called by God to serve in a specific local area.

In I Corinthians 12:27, Paul, writing to saved people in a specific local area, states clearly, “ye are the body of Christ.”



- ✠ Paul compares the church body to the human body in this passage: I Corinthians 12:14-27
  - a. Each member has a different function, verses 14-20.
  - b. No one member can function alone, verse 21.
  - c. Each member's contribution is important, verses 22-24.

- d. A properly functioning body operates as a single unit, verses 25-27.

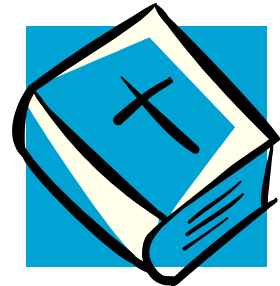
Summary: The larger Body of Christ (universal church) expresses itself in local bodies of believers.

## What is the function of the local church?

A study of the New Testament reveals the many facets of the purpose of the local church. A key passage is Acts 2:40-47 where we see how the early church functioned.

From a survey of the New Testament these are the primary functions of the local church.

1. The preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Titus 1:1-3; Romans 10:14-15
2. Fellowship with other believers. Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 1:7
3. Prayer. Luke 18:10-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18
4. To observe the ordinances of the Church: Baptism & the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 1:16 (People were being baptized in the Church at Corinth); 11:23-24.
5. Mutual care, ministry, and the serving of one another. 1 Thess. 5:14
6. To equip the believer to evangelize their community e.g. friends, relatives, associates and neighbors (Philemon 1:6) and the world (Acts 1:8).



7. To corporately worship God in song and praise. Colossians 3:16

## Who leads the Local Church?

God has established authority within the local church. Christ is the head of the Church He is the Chief Shepherd. God has chosen that there be under-shepherds or pastors who are given by God to lead and feed the flock. Acts 20:28

Remember all human leaders are fallible. It is our responsibility to evaluate all teaching against the Scripture. Acts 17:11

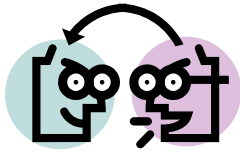
## How do I function in the church body?

During your Christian life, you should grow through three broad, general stages.

1. Observe and learn — Your first priority should be to submit to the teaching of

the Word of God to learn to be the man or woman God wants you to be.

2. Begin to serve — In time, you will naturally grow to the point where you can begin to serve and take on some basic functions through the already established ministries of your church.



3. Maturity — As you grow in maturity you should reach the point where you can contribute to the body in spirituality significant ways. Investing in the lives of others what has been invested in you. (II Timothy 2:2)

These three stages can be roughly compared to the stages of growth physically: childhood, youth, and adult.

BE PATIENT! This process takes time. Just be sure to remain faithful to Christ's plan to build the church.

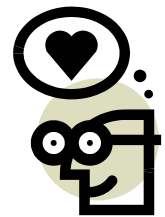
## Basic Questions

### 1. How do I find the particular local church that God wants me to serve through?

Pray about it! Ask God to show you which church to associate yourself with. (James 1:5)

Observe the qualities of a particular church and compare them with the biblical requirements of a proper church.

- a. Do they believe and teach the Bible as the Word of God and the infallible guide for life? (Titus 1:9)
- b. Is the worship service God centered or man centered? In other words, the goal of the worship service is not to make us feel better but to give glory and honor to God. (John 4:23-24)
- c. Is there evidence of evangelism? (Matthew 7:20)
- d. Is the membership encouraged to read and study the Bible as much as the leadership? (Acts 17:10-12)
- e. Is there love for the brethren displayed in attitude and action? (John 13:34-35)
- f. Do they practice Biblical church discipline? (Matthew 18:15-20)
- g. Do they send out and support missionaries? (Acts 13:1-3)



**Note:** Things like size of church, style of music, programs for the kids, and "my

*friends go there” should all take a back seat to the things on this list.*

## **2. What about Local Church Attendance?**

- a. Developing faithful church attendance is a fundamental part of your discipleship. You will personally benefit from the teaching of the Word as well as be an encouragement to fellow believers. Not everyone can attend every service of the church. However, challenge yourself to go the extra mile!
- b. Remember Sunday Worship really begins on Saturday evening. If you wait until Sunday morning there will be too many clothes to iron and too many shoes to find! Many growing Christians make a commitment early on that they are going to attend services every Sunday unless providentially hindered. (Hebrews 10:25)
- c. The best way to get the most out of corporate worship is to come spiritually prepared. Practically this may mean getting to bed early on Saturday evening and getting up on time Sunday morning in time for personal prayer and Bible reading.



## **3. What about Church Membership?**

- a. Although church membership is not commanded in the Bible it is clearly implied. Most churches have some form of membership as a practical matter. It answers the question of who can vote at business meetings, who can teach in Sunday School, etc... If you are not already a member we encourage you to talk to a Pastor for further information.
- b. When you join a church you not only commit yourself to that church but the church also commits itself to you. Finally by submitting to the authority of the local church we do in a visible way what has taken place in our submission to Christ who is the Head of the Body.



## **HOMEWORK**

1. Who established the Church on earth?

2. List some things that the church is NOT:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

3. A local church is...

4. What is the function of the local church?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

5. Why is attendance at worship services important?

6. How can you make your church worship experience more meaningful?

7. Why should I become a member of a local church?

Key memory verses:

I Corinthians 12:27

Our next meeting will be: \_\_\_\_\_

# Daily in the Word

**It is important to spend time reading and meditating on the Word of God. Read each day's passage and answer the two questions for each day. As you read these passages, remember that these are God's words to YOU and that He wants you to learn more about Him by reading His Word.**

<b>DAY 1</b>  <b>Acts</b> <b>2: 41-47</b>	<b>What is the Word saying?</b>	<b>How does this apply to me?</b>
<b>DAY 2</b>  <b>Colossians</b> <b>1: 10-20</b>	<b>What is the Word saying?</b>	<b>How does this apply to me?</b>
<b>DAY 3</b>  <b>Ephesians</b> <b>5: 15-21</b>	<b>What is the Word saying?</b>	<b>How does this apply to me?</b>

<p><b>DAY 4</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 10: 23-25</b></p>	<p><b>What is the Word saying?</b></p>	<p><b>How does this apply to me?</b></p>
<p><b>DAY 5</b></p> <p><b>Psalm 1</b></p>	<p><b>What is the Word saying?</b></p>	<p><b>How does this apply to me?</b></p>
<p><b>DAY 6</b></p> <p><b>Proverbs 3: 1-12</b></p>	<p><b>What is the Word saying?</b></p>	<p><b>How does this apply to me?</b></p>
<p><b>DAY 7</b></p> <p><b>Philippians 3:10-14</b></p>	<p><b>What is the Word saying?</b></p>	<p><b>How does this apply to me?</b></p>