

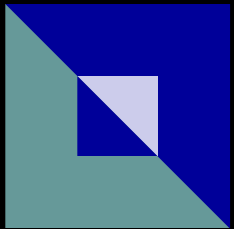


The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road to Antioch...

Church Participation

Lesson Six



The Road to Success in Christian Living

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COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

The Road to Antioch...Church Participation

Lesson Goal: To encourage believers to participate in congregational ministry.

Scriptures: Acts 11:19-30, 14:26-28; Hebrews 10:23-25; Matthew 16:13-19, 18:15-17

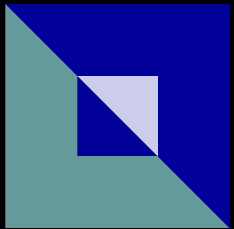
Memory Verse: “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...” Hebrews 10:25

When the followers of Jesus began to be persecuted some of them moved to other areas of the world. Also, there were many people from outside Israel, who became believers on the day of Pentecost. (Pentecost was that special day when God gave His earthly family His Holy Spirit.) Those people went back home treasuring their new faith. One of the places they went was to Antioch of Syria. It was more than 300 miles north of Israel, near Tarsus, the boyhood home of the Apostle Paul.

There was a growing community (church) of Christians in Antioch and the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas there to disciple these new Christians. Barnabas was obviously well respected in the Jerusalem church. When Barnabas arrived and assessed the situation, he found a growing congregation and must have realized that he needed help. So, he went over to Tarsus to find Paul. Barnabas believed in Paul before the church did. He had, earlier, encouraged the Jerusalem church to accept Paul, even though Paul had been their great enemy in the past.

Paul agreed to go with Barnabas and they followed the road to Antioch and began to minister there. For a year Barnabas and Paul served the church in Antioch as their leaders. Many people became believers and “joined” the church. They found there people who were like them and who needed the mutual support offered by other believers. Becoming a part of the church was not thought of as optional in those early days of Christianity.

Even earlier than this, right after Pentecost when 3,000 became believers, the Bible says that God added new believers to their number daily. There was fellowship and common belief among these thousands. They met together in the outer court of the Temple in Jerusalem. They took care of one another. They met in each other’s homes. They praised God together. Scripture says that God added to their number. That is a singular word, “number.” (Acts 2:41, 47) It was a singular fellowship. They all wanted to get together with believers just like themselves. The church had no church house in which to meet. They owned no land, they had no paid leaders. They had just enough organization to get their work done.



The Road to Success in Christian Living

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The word church in Greek, the way Jesus, Barnabas and Paul said it, is *eklesia*. (ek-lay-SEE-ah) It literally means the called out. In that day cities often had meetings of all their citizens for business purposes. Those meetings were held at a place when all the citizens could come. The meetings were called *eklesia*, meaning that the citizens had been “called out” for consideration of city business.

For Christians, the church is made up those who have been “called out,” saved, by God to become His witnesses and ministers on earth.

Paul, in writing to the church at Ephesus, which he started, called the church the “bride of Christ.” He also refers to the church, in I Corinthians 12:12-27, as the “body of Christ.” He says that believers are members of that body.

So, the Christian who desires to live a full Christian life, to take the road to success in Christian living, will become a part of, a participant in, a church. We will want to be among other believers for fellowship, training in Christian living, and service.

There is a blessing of fellowship for any believer who seeks to worship with, learn with and serve with other believers. The fellowship of believers is beyond earthly explanation. God’s Holy Spirit inhabits that fellowship. There is true spiritual life in the gathering of believers... the called out.

There is healthy growth for believers who seek to learn together. Christians gathered in churches can learn from God’s word, from great Christians of the ages whose words have been preserved for us, and from one another. The church should be the primary place for learning about God and His will for our lives.

There is great joy for any believer who serves the church and her mission. When Jesus left the earth, He told His disciples that they were to carry on. In John 17, He prays for their success. He told them, in John 20:21, that just as the Father had sent Him, He was sending them. So, every believer has, and the gathered believers...the church...have the same commission that Jesus had. That is: the redemption of the world, the healing of the sick, the feeding of the hungry, ministry to prisoners, and proclamation of the coming of Christ. (See Luke 4:18-21, based on Isaiah 61:1, 2) The church, then, is literally the mission of God on earth. We are to carry out His ministry together.

For these reasons, it is imperative that every Christian participate in a local church.

*Underlined sentences in the Teacher’s Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher’s Guide.

The Road to Success in Christian Living

COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

The Road to Antioch: Church Participation

Memory Verse:

“Let us not give up meeting, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...” Hebrews 10:25

Church Participation

- >There was a growing community of _____ in Antioch.
- >Barnabas and Paul served the church in _____ for a _____ as their leaders.
- >The “called out” are those who have been _____, saved, by God to become His _____ and _____ on earth.
- >Paul called the church the _____ of _____ and the _____ of _____.
- >The Christian who wants to take the road to success in Christian living will become a _____ in a church.
- >There is true _____ in the gathering of believers.
- >The church should be the primary place for _____ about God and _____ for our lives.
- >There is great _____ for any believer who serves the _____ and her _____.
- The church is the _____ of _____ on the earth.

Church Participation

Every Christian should want to participate in a local church. There are many churches from which to choose. **How do you decide which is best for you?** There are several factors on which to base that choice. Each of these factors has both human and spiritual considerations. Some things to keep in mind as you choose a church are:

First, it is obvious that the churches of the New Testament were geographical in nature. Transportation was difficult, and choosing a congregation was, for the most part, deciding which was closest to home. Today, with automobiles and other transportation options, distance has become less of a factor. However, we should consider that service to the church, and for the church, will probably require being there more than once each week. We should also consider that our testimony is most easily given in our local community with, and to, people we know, in business establishments we most often frequent. Therefore, considering churches in or near the community in which we live is a wise choice.

Second, there are identifiable differences in beliefs between denominations. Also, there are not so evident differences in beliefs within denominations. Not all Methodist churches practice the same beliefs just as not all Baptist churches are the same. Actually, there are differences in beliefs and practices in every denominational group. Differences in beliefs are more evident in churches that do not identify with a denomination. We should become very familiar with the beliefs practiced in a church before we commit ourselves to fellowship, or membership, with a congregation. A good way to do this is to visit regularly for a while. Ask questions of members of the congregation related to what they believe about

- Salvation
- The Bible
- God's Holy Spirit and the Trinity
- How the world will end
- Practicing the ordinances of the church
- Missions
- The church and its relationship to God and His creation

Incidentally, if the members of the congregation don't have the answers to these questions, this may indicate poor teaching/training on the part of the church...it could even mean that the church doesn't make its beliefs distinct to those who attend.

Third, people are most often comfortable worshiping, and being involved in Christian service with, people like themselves. This is not necessarily a cultural consideration. Different cultural groups should be represented in a church. That, in fact, should be a very positive factor in the assessment of the congregation. The reference here is to the fact that we know when we feel comfortable in a group of people. God gives us that feeling of kinship. It is based on many factors and cannot be described in a meaningful way in this kind of presentation.

Fourth, Christians should participate in a church that understands its role...that is, a congregation with a vision for being like Christ. A church should want to be busy telling the "Good News" of salvation to everyone, everywhere. (Matthew 28:18-20) There should be planned opportunities for members of the congregation to use their gifts/abilities for sharing the Good News in ways appropriate to their gifts. For example, a carpenter who has the gift of ministry, should be challenged, and sent out by the church, to do carpentry in Jesus name... maybe helping older members in the community to keep their houses in good repair. Someone who is a gifted seamstress could recondition used children's clothing for those who do not have adequate clothes for school. Every believer should be involved in missions according to his or her abilities. Christians should choose to participate in churches that have definite plans for assisting with that.