

What Do We Believe?

Lesson 43

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Lesson 43: The Church: The Body of Christ

Scriptures:

Genesis 15:18; Matthew 16:15-19; Acts 2:41, 42, 47, 6:1-6; Romans 8:12-17, 19-21; I Corinthians 3:16, 12:12-30; Ephesians 5:21-32; Hebrews 9:11-22, 12:22-24; I Peter 2:1-12; Revelation 7:9-17

Lesson Goals:

To show the learner that the church is made up of believers
To show the learner what the Bible says about the work of the church
To show the learner how important the church is to God's Kingdom

Scripture Memory:

So you will be my people, and I will be your God. Jeremiah 30:22

The Lesson:

The people are the church. Often when we think of church we think of buildings. We may say, "My church is at the southeast corner of Pioneer Parkway and Fielder Road." Or maybe, "My church is at Cory Place Apartments." The meeting place of the church may be at a physical address, but the church, made up of God's people, is only at that address when the people are there. **We** are the ones led by the Spirit of God. **We** are the ones who are the children of God. The church is a living thing...an organism.

God made covenants with His people. His covenant with Abraham became His covenant with the descendants of Abraham: the people of Israel...the Jews. There are many scriptures that tell about God's faithfulness to the covenant, even though the people of Israel were very unfaithful. God continued to love His people, even when they were disloyal. As Israel was the object of God's old covenant, the church is the recipient of the new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ Himself. And, as with Abraham, God's covenant comes with God's intent for the church to be the means of sharing His blessings with others. If the church doesn't fulfill its mission (the church is the mission of God on earth) then the world is hopelessly lost.

The Bible tells us that the church is a body...like a human body. It is a one-for-all and all-for-one kind of fellowship. The Greek word for church is *eklesia* (ek-lay-SEE-uh). That is how it was written and spoken when the Apostle Paul was a missionary. It means *the called out*. The church is made up of all those who have accepted God's call to be His children. The New Testament uses the word *eklesia* 115 times. Ninety-two of those times it refers to a local group of believers, like a local church. The other times it refers to all believers of all the ages. Jesus used the Greek word for church (*eklesia*) twice. Once He said that He was going to build His church (*eklesia*) on faith like that of Peter who had just said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) The other time He mentions the church, He said that if we can't settle the disputes that we have with other church members, we should bring them to the church for judgment. (Matthew 18:17)

Other word pictures that describe the church are: household, (I Timothy 3:15); brothers and sisters (Romans 8:9 – Greek word *adelphoi*, translated "brothers," actually includes both genders); a people, like the citizens of a nation (I Peter 2:9); bride (Ephesians 5:25-27); priesthood, a gathering of priests (I Peter 2:9); temple, the place where God is present (I Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:19-22), and flock (I Peter 5:1-3).

The first church was made up of the people who believed Jesus while He was on Earth. A few days after Jesus ascended into Heaven, on the day of Pentecost, they were praying together, and the Holy Spirit revealed Himself. The story is in the second chapter of Acts. It says that God added thousands of believers

to the church in just a few days.

That church, faced with its first crisis, voted as a whole congregation to elect the first deacons. (Acts 6:1-6) The New Testament goes on to indicate that the churches operated in democratic fashion with the people making the decisions and being accountable as a congregation, for the outcomes of those decisions. A true church is fully self-supporting. That means it doesn't depend on any other organization or institution to maintain its life and work. Jesus founded only one institution. Churches have, over the centuries, founded many institutions: health care, education, and crisis intervention among others.

The church (all the people of God from all of time) will be presented to God at the end of time. We will be recipients of His unimaginable blessing and be given the privilege of living in His presence and serving Him forever. (Revelation 7:9).

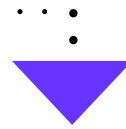
Life Application:

The church is made up of all those who have accepted God's call to be His children. Is that you? Will you be with those of us who will be presented to God at the end of time to receive unimaginable blessing, to live with Him and serve Him forever? Have you trusted in Jesus Christ, putting your confidence in Him and placing Him in control of your life? If you haven't, why not right now. God loves you so much that He made a way for you to be with Him forever. Won't you accept that gift? He's waiting . . .

And if you are one of those who is waiting for His return, have you realized that if the church doesn't fulfill its mission of telling others about God, then the world is hopelessly lost? If **you** don't fulfill **your** mission of telling others about God, then the people around you who don't know God are hopelessly lost. Do you know why God hasn't come back yet? He hasn't forgotten His promise of returning. He's being patient. He doesn't want anyone to die apart from Him. Won't you tell others today . . . and tomorrow . . . and the next day?



Planning for Lesson 44
The Church: Membership
and Ministers



- ◆ **Memory Verse Activity** - Review the memory verse. Form two teams. Play balloon volleyball with one side saying the first half of the verse as they return the balloon. The other team completes the verse as they return the balloon. Practice this several times and then switch teams.
- ◆ Make a puzzle. Take a photograph of your Bible Study group. Mount the photograph onto poster board or a foam core board. Cut the photograph into shapes resembling puzzle pieces. Encourage your students to put the puzzle together. Talk about how each believer is a part of the body of Christ.
- ◆ Play a game where your group forms a circle. Choose an item to be passed; a small ball, an apple, an orange, etc. Inform students that they will be passing the ball (or other chosen item) from one to the other without the use of their hands! Students will pass the ball by grasping it under their chins. Play several rounds of the game. Afterwards, discuss the difficulty of passing a ball without using your hands. Talk about the importance of each part of the body — and each member of the church.
- ◆ Sing “The Church’s One Foundation,” “Come, Now is the Time to Worship,” “Better is One Day,” “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship,” “Family of God,” “For God So Loved the World,” “Take My Life, Lead Me Lord,” “I’m Yours Lord,” “The Mission,” “People of God,” and “Lord, I Want to Be More Like You.” (You might even want to listen to Casting Crown’s “If We Are the Body.”)
- ◆ **Dig Deeper:** Read Acts 2. Discuss the dynamics present in the formation of the church as believers came together. What was the result?
- ◆ **Dig Deeper Still:** Read Romans 8:12-21. How are believers described in these verses? What are the benefits of believing? What are the responsibilities?



So you will be
my people,
and I will be
your God.

Jeremiah 30:22

The Bible tells us that the church is a body...
like a human body.

It is a one-for-all and all-for-one kind of fellowship.

The Greek word for church is

E _ / e _ _ a

That is how it was written and spoken when the Apostle Paul was a missionary. It means *the called out*.

The church is made up of all those who have accepted God's call to be His children.

Word Search



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brothers and sisters

bride

church

household

temple

flock

priesthood

eklesia

body

people

not a building

adelphoi

Word Search



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