

**LESSON 8: THE LOCAL CHURCH**

**“What is the purpose of my involvement in a local church?”**

**KEY = ACCOUNTABILITY**

God has established three major institutions on this earth: the family, civil government and the local church. It is the local church, which has been commissioned by God to carry out His purposes in reaching the lost and perfecting the saved. Therefore, God’s plan for a Christian is always fulfilled best when connected to, and actively participating in, the ministry of a local church.

This study will clearly show you the central role in which the church should play in your everyday life.

**I. What is the local church?**

A local church is a body of men and women who have been saved and called by God to serve in a specific geographic area. The world can then physically observe the “body of Christ” as it is *exemplified* on this “local” level.



In comparison, “The church” is the “body of Christ,” the saved multitudes from every nation, tribe and tongue. This “body” however cannot be physically observed by the world in its entirety (IE. a foot in the U.S., a hand in Asia, an ear in Europe, etc.).

**A. The body of Christ**

1. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 Paul, writing to saved people in a local church states, “ye are the body of Christ.”

2. Paul compares the church body to the human body in these passages:

1 Corinthians 12:14-27

- *Each member has a different function, verses 14-20*
- *No one member can function alone, verse 21*
- *Each member’s contribution is important, verses 22-24*
- *A properly functioning body operates as a single unit, verses 25-27*

**B. It is NOT a building**

1. We worship God in spirit and truth - John 4:24

2. Our physical body is the temple of God - 1 Corinthians 6:19

- C. It is NOT a denominational group of congregations. (Every church was independent, autonomous, and self-governing – Galatians 1:2; also see any NT church epistle)

**II. What is the function of the local church?**

- A. **The single most important priority of the local church is to glorify God.** He is glorified when His body (the church) is edified (built up, taught, strengthened, perfected and growing in numbers).



Ephesians 3:21 says, “*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.*”

See also: Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 10:31

**BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT**  
**Our Mission is to Glorify God by:**  
**Reconciling** each individual to Him through His Son,  
**Conforming** them into Christ’s image through His Word,  
**Perfecting** them to minister His Word to the world.

- B. The first local church was structured in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41-47). The believers there organized their church for the following purposes:

- *The teaching of the Word of God, verse 42*
- *Fellowship with other believers, verse 42*
- *Prayer, verse 42*
- *To be a testimony of God’s grace and power, verse 43*
- *For mutual assistance and ministry, verses 44-45*
- *To reach out into the community, verses 46-47*
- *To glorify and praise God, verse 47*

*Notes: It also appears that they observed the two ordinances of the church: Baptism – verse 41, and the Lord’s Supper – verse 42. Although the partaking of the Lord’s Supper is not directly stated in verse 42, Jesus did tell them to observe it till his return (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Therefore, whether this “breaking of bread” was an actual meal or ordinance observance, the Lord’s Supper would have been observed by them at some point in obedience to the Jesus’ command.*

*Every church is vulnerable to attack and division. If you have an issue that could cause a public problem, make sure you address it biblically, with prudence, much humility, and in a fashion that is pleasing to the Lord before risking any discord.*

**III. How do I function in the church body?**

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

- A. 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.

Matthew 11:28-30

- B. Participate—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. Ministry further defined = Word of God and people.

Matthew 4:19 says, “...*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*”

See also: James 1:22-25

At some point you must go to work. You cannot just sit around and do nothing. If everyone did nothing, nothing would get done!

- C. Lead—As your growth continues, you should reach the point where you can begin to minister to others in the same way you have been ministered to.

2 Timothy 2:2 says, “*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*”



These three stages can be roughly compared to the stages of growth physically: Child, Youth and Adult. Growth is a progression, don't ever stop growing!

*Note: BE PATIENT! This process takes time. Just be sure to remain faithful to God's established institution, THE LOCAL CHURCH. Remember, the church is not somewhere you go, the church is something you are!*

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

- A. Pray about it. Ask God to show you which church to associate yourself with.

James 1:5 says, “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*”



B. Observe the church and its qualities and compare them with the functions of a biblical church.

- First, is there evidence of soul winning? *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* Matthew 7:20.

See also: Acts 2:47

- Secondly, do they believe, preach and teach that the Bible is the preserved Word of God and is the infallible, inerrant guide for life?

Titus 1:9 says, *“Holding fast the **faithful word** as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”*

2 Timothy 3:14-17 says, *“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the **holy scriptures**, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”*

- Next, are members encouraged to read and study the Bible as much as those in leadership?

Acts 17:10-12

- Then, do they minister to the needs of the people?

Acts 6:1

- Finally, do they send out and support missionaries?

Acts 13:1-3



A local church is critical in your Christian growth and maturity. You must be connected as a member of a local body of believers in order to mature in your relation with God. No one is an island; no one can accomplish the mission alone. You must be partners and co-laborers with other believers in your geographic area. Find, join, and participate in the ministry of a local church.

**V. Memory Verses**

**1 Corinthians 12:27** Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

**Ephesians 4:11-12** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

**2 Timothy 2:2** And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.