

# Christianity 101

## Lesson 12

# The Church

This lesson belongs to: \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson 12

## The Church

**Key Verse:** “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*” Matthew 16:18 NKJV

**Purpose:** The purpose of this lesson is to help the student understand God’s purpose for the church and to see that membership and participation in the local church is not optional but necessary and vital in a believer’s commitment to Christ, to other believers, and to fulfilling Christ’s work in the earth.

1. Jesus said that He would build His \_\_\_\_\_.

### What is the “Church”?

Jesus said that He would build His Church. The Church is what Jesus Christ is building. Therefore, as believers, we must never ignore, neglect, or sidestep the church. It is unbiblical to say, “I love Jesus but I don’t have to love the Church!” or “I need Jesus but I don’t need the Church!” or “I want a relationship with Jesus but I don’t want a relationship with people!” To be in love with Jesus is to be in love with what He is building. He is building His Church with people. Although the Church is made up of people, it is the work of Christ. There is nothing more important for a Christian than to be vitally connected to a local church. What is the church? In order to understand, it is best to begin by stating what the church is NOT.

- It is not a social club although it has an exclusive membership.
- It is not a fellowship although it enjoys fellowship.
- It is not a worship service although it holds worship services.
- It is not a program although it often utilizes programs.
- It is not a parachurch ministry although it often initiates and supports parachurch ministries.
- It is not a charity although it helps people in need.
- It is not a teaching and preaching center although it has teaching and preaching.
- It is not a building although it usually meets in buildings.
- It is not an institution although it was instituted by Christ.
- It is not a human organization although it is organized.
- It is not a denomination although it includes many denominations.
- It is not a national entity although it exists in every nation.
- It is not an extension of Judaism although it includes Jewish people.
- It is not a replacement for national Israel but is a part of spiritual Israel.
- It is not the Kingdom of God although it represents and promotes God’s Kingdom.

### A Biblical Snapshot of the Church

- The church is God’s people:** (Ephesians 3:14-21) Believers do not *go* to church—they *are* the church. The church is an *organism* rather than an *organization*. The church is made up of people. It is the body of Christ. It is God’s “family”. Its success is not measured by the number of people, programs, or properties. Its success is measured by the interconnection and interworking of Christian people in its midst.
- The church is built on covenant relationships:** (Ephesians 1:10; 2:19; 3:14-15) No person or family is an island. Although each has their differences, every member is to be connected in covenant relationship with other believers. Believers are connected to Christ and to each other through a common covenant called the New Testament. The idea that a person could be a believer and NOT be connected to the church is simply not found in the New Testament. In fact, the Lord’s Supper, or *Communion*, is a visible demonstration of the covenant fellowship intended by Christ in His Church (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Evangelism involves bringing the lost into the fold of Christ’s Church. In the parable of the lost sheep, the good shepherd brings the straying sheep back into the fellowship of the ninety-nine (Matthew 18:10-14). As the Good Shepherd, Jesus gathers His sheep together as one flock (John 10:16). The New Testament does not teach believers to be their own pastor. There is no precedent in Scripture for believers to disciple themselves, train themselves, commission themselves, ordain themselves, anoint themselves, or send themselves. These are all responsibilities carried

out within the Church. Believers are to walk in a covenant relationship with one another as interdependent members of His body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

- c. **The church is trans-racial and trans-national:** (Revelation 5:9) The church is composed of saints from “every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”
- d. **The church is trans-generational:** (Acts 2:17-18; Ephesians 2:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The church is composed of saints old and young, and of ages past, present and future as long as the Lord tarries.
- e. **The church is God’s “ecclesia”:** (John 17:14-16) The Greek word for “church” is “ecclesia” which means, “called out ones.” Believers are called out of the “world.” The Greek word translated as “world” (“*kosmos*” meaning “order” or “arrangement”) represents the fallen order of this life twisted by sin and controlled by Satan. The church, therefore, is comprised of people who answer the Savior’s call to live for Him. Those who follow Christ rather than this world are called, “saints” (“separated ones” or “holy ones”).
- f. **The church is an “assembling” together:** (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 10:25) The one “universal Church” of Jesus Christ consists of many local churches. As believers assemble together in local churches they give visible expression to Christ’s universal Church. The local church is not simply a *gathering* but more importantly an *assembling*. Like a multitude of unique stones in a building, or various parts of the body, each member has a special purpose, design and function. When each is properly “assembled”, together they become the full measure of the body of Christ. God has ordained Pastors, Elders, and Overseers to ensure that each member is properly connected, nurtured, equipped, utilized, and protected.
- g. **The church is the Lord’s property:** (Matthew 16:18) The church does not belong to human beings whether individual or corporate. Men do not own a local church, nor do they have the right to usurp control over it. Individual believers share in its privileges and should function responsibly in their God-ordained role, but Jesus alone is the Head, Founder, and Builder of the Church. Believers are not responsible to build the church. Jesus said *He* would build His church. The believer’s responsibility is to cooperate with Him.
- h. **The church is the flock of God:** (Luke 12:32; John 10:1-30; Acts 20:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 5:1-4) The saints are referred to as “sheep” and the church is referred to as “the flock of God.” Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. Sheep by nature wander away from the safety, protection, and provision of the fold (Isaiah 53:6). When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, He gave anointed gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) to equip the saints and appointed shepherds (overseers, pastors, elders) over His flock. These shepherds are delegated by the Holy Spirit as overseers to watch over the souls of believers as those who must give account (Hebrews 13:17). Believers, as sheep in the fold, are not to be independent or rebellious toward God’s appointed leaders in His Church. Instead, they are to be gathered and united together as a flock under God-ordained under-shepherds.
- i. **The church is the family of God:** (Ephesians 3:14-15) The church is a family of God’s children. The relationship between those in the church is that of spiritual brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers.
- j. **The church is God’s field:** (1 Corinthians 3:9) The church is like one spiritual field with many spiritual plants.
- k. **The church is God’s building:** (1 Corinthians 3:9; Ephesians 2:21; 1 Peter 2:5) The church is a spiritual building comprised of many “living stones” built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ as laid by the apostles and prophets.
- l. **The church is the Lord’s vineyard:** (John 15) Jesus is the Vine. Individual believers are the branches. The Father is the husbandman. Believers are called to abide in Christ and He in them so that they might bear much fruit together unto Him.
- m. **The church is God’s army:** (1 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 2:3-4) The church is a spiritual army engaged in a spiritual struggle against the wicked forces of Satan with the authority and power of Jesus. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 10:19)
- n. **The church is a lampstand:** (Revelation 1:20) The church is not the light but holds up the light of Jesus in the community in which the Lord places it.
- o. **The church is the bride of Christ:** (Matthew 25:1-13; Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19:6-9; 21:2) The church is the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a holy bride, the Church is comprised of saints who separate themselves from this world and then remain watchful and ready for their Bridegroom’s return.
- p. **The church is the body of Christ:** (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4, 15-16; 5:23; Colossians 1:18) The Church is Christ’s spiritual and physical body on earth. Like a human body, the Church is one body with many members who are different in design and function. Every member is important and needed. Every member is designed by God to be interconnected with and interdependent upon the other. Each member is encouraged to use their gift so that the body will not be handicapped by a missing or non-functioning member. No member is to say, “Because I am not like someone else, I am not important.” Neither is any member to say to another member, “I have no need of you.” Jesus is the Head and every member is to be “*joined and knit together* and then built up by what *every joint supplies*.”
- q. **The church is the house of the Lord:** (Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 3:16) Individual believers are together being built up as a spiritual house, a dwelling place on earth for the Presence of Christ.

- r. **The church is the household of God:** (Ephesians 2:19) A household is a domestic establishment that includes individual responsibilities. As Master over His house, Christ has put His church into the hands of stewards who are responsible to carry out His wishes.
- s. **The church is a chosen generation:** (1 Peter 2:9) The church is God's chosen generation in the midst of each successive generation. Therefore, God deals with each generation of the church on its own merits.
- t. **The church is a holy nation:** (1 Peter 2:9) The church is God's holy nation on earth under His kingdom rule.
- u. **The church is a peculiar people:** (1 Peter 2:9) Christians are to be holy as God is holy. Holiness makes the church and its members different and distinct from the world around them.
- v. **The church is the temple of God:** (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5). The temple is a sanctified dwelling place for God. The Scriptures reveal a progressive revelation and transition of the house of God on earth. That progression can be seen in the following transitions:
- 1) The rock and altar at *Bethel*, meaning "house of God" (Genesis 28:10-22; 35:1)
  - 2) The tabernacle of Moses (Exodus 25:8-9)
  - 3) The tabernacle of David (2 Samuel 6:17)
  - 4) The temple of Solomon (2 Chronicles 5:1)
  - 5) The earthly body of Jesus (John 2:21)
  - 6) The church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23)
- w. **The church is God's royal and holy priesthood:** (1 Peter 2:5, 9) In the beginning God intended Israel to be a nation of priests (see Exodus 19:5-6). Because of Israel's disobedience in worshiping the golden calf, only the tribe of Levi could enter the priesthood. However, now in Christ EVERY believer is a part of God's royal priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. The church is not only a royal priesthood but also a holy priesthood, a priesthood set apart as different from the world.
- x. **The church is the citizenship of heaven:** (Philippians 3:20) The Church is a holy *nation* (1 Peter 2:9). Believers are sojourners on this earth (Hebrews 11:13-16). Their kingdom is not of this world. Their home is in heaven. Their songs are the songs of Zion. Their laws are the commandments of God. Their morals and ethics are determined by the righteous standards of God. Their culture reflects that of their Homeland. Their dress is the white linen robes of righteousness granted by our Lord Jesus. Their language is the heavenly language of the Holy Spirit. Their diet is the word of God. They are in this world but not of it.
- y. **The church is God's Embassy on earth:** (2 Corinthians 5:20) The Church is composed of "ambassadors" of Jesus Christ. Although their kingdom is not of this world, the Church is to represent Christ's kingdom on earth. The Church does not represent White, Black, Hispanic, Indian, or Asian. They do not represent any political party. They do not represent their earthly nation. They do not represent a denomination or a local church congregation. They are representatives of King Jesus and of His heavenly kingdom. As His ambassadors they have been issued the power and authority of heaven to go into all the world and to make disciples in His name.
- z. **The church is the pillar and ground of Truth:** (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 3:10) The purpose, order, structure, community, teaching and mission of the church is to reflect the Truth of God's Word. God's revealed Truth is not optional or to be altered by personal or corporate preferences. The church is God's agent in the earth to preserve, proclaim, portray, promote, and defend God's Truth
- aa. **The New Jerusalem Bride City:** (Revelation 21-22; Matthew 5:4; Hebrews 11:10-16) The heavenly New Jerusalem is the sum of Christ's Church throughout all the ages assembled into one bride city. In this bride city there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

1 Corinthians 3:9-17 (NKJV) *"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."*

2. Jesus Christ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the church.
3. The church is God's building. Therefore, Christians are \_\_\_\_\_ against trying to build something other than what God has approved.
- Matthew 21:13 *"And He said to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*
  - Men are not at liberty to make God's house into something other than what God intended.

4. Every builder will have his works tested by \_\_\_\_\_ on judgment day.

### **Jesus is the Rock and Foundation of the Church**

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus asked His disciples who others said He is. After giving several answers, Jesus asked them who *they* considered Him to be. Peter answered, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Jesus said to him in response, “*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter (“petros” meaning “a small stone or rock”), and on this rock (“petra” meaning, “a large rock”) I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*” Jesus was saying that upon the “rock” of revelation of who He is—the Christ, the Son of the Living God—He would build His church. Individuals who have had a life changing revelation of Jesus from God the Father become the “lively stones” that Jesus will use to build His church.<sup>247</sup> Jesus is the Rock and Foundation of the Church. Those who build upon any foundation other than the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, are not building on the secure Rock Foundation but on the shifting sand of man.<sup>248</sup>

5. The foundation of the church is laid by the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with

Jesus Himself being the chief \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV) “*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*”

6. Jesus is also the \_\_\_\_\_ of the church.

- Ephesians 4:15-16 “*but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*”
- 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 may have the preeminence.*”
- Colossians 2:19 “*and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.*”

7. \_\_\_\_\_ chooses who will lead His church and confirms it through other appointed leadership.

- Acts 6:3-6 “*Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business...whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.*”
- Acts 13:1-3 “*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*”
- Acts 14:23 “*So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*”
- Acts 20:28 “*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*”
- 1 Corinthians 12:28 “*And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.*”
- Ephesians 4:11 “*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,*”

8. It is the \_\_\_\_\_ who adds to the church those who are being \_\_\_\_\_.

- Acts 2:47 “*praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*”

### **Is the church an exclusive group?**

By its very purpose, design, and call to be “holy” and “separated” unto God, the church is by nature exclusive. As noted earlier, the Greek word for “church” (“*ecclesia*”) means, “called out ones.” Members of Christ’s church include only those who are called out of the world unto faith in Jesus Christ. Those who believe have their

<sup>247</sup> 1 Peter 2:5

<sup>248</sup> Matthew 7:24-27

citizenship in heaven.<sup>249</sup> Local churches should do their best to ensure that their “membership role” accurately reflects the membership role in heaven.<sup>250</sup> Although church membership is exclusive to the saved, it is also clear that attendance at church meetings where the word of God is preached is open to all.<sup>251</sup>

### **Is it Scriptural to have a church role or records?**

In the Old Testament Israel had their names recorded in the Books of Genealogy of the Nation as they were numbered before the Lord.<sup>252</sup> In Numbers 3 the Levites had to be numbered before the Lord before they could minister in the priestly offices. Every male numbered in Israel had to be redeemed with silver.<sup>253</sup> The remnant of Babylon had to be registered in the book before they could minister in the priesthood.<sup>254</sup> The New Testament church was very conscious about counting and recording the number of people saved and added to their ranks. Jesus chose and numbered twelve disciples and later seventy.<sup>255</sup> Over five hundred are recorded as seeing Jesus at one time after His resurrection.<sup>256</sup> Before Pentecost, Scripture records that one hundred and twenty disciples gathered in the upper room.<sup>257</sup> On the day of Pentecost about three thousand souls were added to the church.<sup>258</sup> Five thousand men later heard the gospel and believed.<sup>259</sup> In Acts 6:7 it is recorded that the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. The good shepherd in the Parable of the Lost Sheep had one hundred sheep. He counted ninety-nine and discovered that one was missing.<sup>260</sup> Members of the Church of the Firstborn have the record of their names written down in heaven.<sup>261</sup> The redeemed of all ages have their names written in the Book of Life.<sup>262</sup> It is without argument that God keeps good records! God keeps the names and numbers of His saints in His role. Since God requires an account of His sheep, it should be expected that local churches—which are accountable to Him for His sheep—follow His example and do likewise.

### **Spiritual vs. Practical Church Membership**

- a. **Spiritual membership:** Spiritual membership in Christ’s Church is foundational to any other experience in the Lord. Upon conversion, believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the universal and spiritual body of Christ.<sup>263</sup> Spiritual membership in Christ’s universal Church is not based upon membership in a local church. Believers are *added to the Lord* through repentance and faith.<sup>264</sup> Those who are *added to the Lord*, the Lord in turn *adds to the church*.<sup>265</sup>
  - b. **Practical membership:** The universal Church finds visible and practical expression through the local church. Believers added to the Lord and to His universal Church are known through being vitally connected and involved in the local church.<sup>266</sup>
9. Members of the local church should continue \_\_\_\_\_ in the apostle’s doctrine, and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- Acts 2:42 *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*
10. Members of the local church are a \_\_\_\_\_ community of believers.
- Acts 2:44-45 *“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”*
11. Members of the local church should live out their faith together in \_\_\_\_\_.

---

<sup>249</sup> Philippians 3:20

<sup>250</sup> Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23

<sup>251</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:23; James 2:2-4

<sup>252</sup> Numbers 1, 2

<sup>253</sup> Exodus 30:11-16

<sup>254</sup> Ezra 2:62, 63; Nehemiah 7

<sup>255</sup> Luke 9:1,12; 10:1

<sup>256</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:6

<sup>257</sup> Acts 1:15

<sup>258</sup> Acts 2:41

<sup>259</sup> Acts 4:4

<sup>260</sup> Matthew 18:12-14

<sup>261</sup> Hebrews 12:22-24

<sup>262</sup> Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27

<sup>263</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>264</sup> Acts 5:14; 11:24

<sup>265</sup> Acts 2:41, 47

<sup>266</sup> Acts 2:41-42

- Acts 2:46-47 (NKJV) *“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*

### **The Church and Government**

Because the believer is a citizen of “two worlds”, that of a heavenly country and earthly country, he or she is therefore required by the authority of the Scriptures to be submitted to the government of the nation in which they live. In the same way, local churches should submit to civil law so long as doing so does not violate its Scriptural identity and mandate under Christ. In order to better understand the church’s responsibility to obey God versus obeying civil government, it is helpful to make the following distinction:

- Scriptural Constitution:** Among Christians, THE SCRIPTURES ALONE are the one and only Constitution by which he lives and submits as a believer. God’s laws and form of government for His Church are laid out therein. God’s government of the Church is that of duly qualified and ordained Elders and Deacons (Philippians 1:1), and together, these govern and serve the Church. The Bible, therefore, is the final court of appeals in all matters of Christian Faith and Conduct.
- Legal Constitution:** The Scriptures also teach Christian citizens to obey civil ordinances and leaders who themselves are ordained of God as His ministers.<sup>267</sup> Therefore, Christians and churches should submit to the ordinances of civil government as long as they do not violate the government and law of the Kingdom of God.<sup>268</sup> Jesus told believers to *“render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”*.<sup>269</sup> Paul also confirmed this and told us to *“render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor”*.<sup>270</sup> Civil government usually requires certain things before they will recognize a group who claims to be a local church. One such requirement is that churches have a properly prepared organizing and governing document usually referred to as the “Constitution and By-Laws”. This document normally includes the church’s name, purpose of existence, articles of faith, governing principles, officers of the church, requirements for membership, the handling of monies and properties, and what occurs in the event of the dissolution of the church. Whereas the Bible is not admitted as a legal document into a court, the Constitution and By-Laws is regarded as a legal document.

### **Common struggles regarding church membership**

- Some do not think they “fit the mold”:** Some imagine that they could never fit in with other church members because of their own background, appearance, social class, race, or imperfections. Thus they avoid being around Christians in church. This stems from a misunderstanding of what a Christian is and how believers are to relate to one another in the Lord.
- Some do not want to be hurt:** Some are hurt and disillusioned by past negative church experiences and thus are cautious about making such commitments.
- Some do not want to be obligated:** Some regard church membership as a threat to their independence and personal freedom. They do not want to be obligated to attend, serve, or give.
- Some do not want to be accountable:** Some do not want to be accountable for their lifestyle, decisions, actions, and behavior.
- Some do not want to change:** Some understand that church membership will require a new commitment to live a holy life in community with other Christians. Some are not ready to give up habits, friendships, activities, or personal freedoms and thus they reject or postpone church membership.
- Some do not agree with church membership:** Since they see no direct “command” in Scripture, some do not agree with the idea of church membership.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

12. Believers are not to live \_\_\_\_\_ and selfish lives but to \_\_\_\_\_ one another.

13. Believers are not to neglect the \_\_\_\_\_ of themselves together as the church.

<sup>267</sup> Romans 13:1-7

<sup>268</sup> 1 Peter 2:13-17

<sup>269</sup> Matthew 22:17-21

<sup>270</sup> Romans 13:7, 8

14. Believers are to \_\_\_\_\_ one another more and more as the Lord's coming draws near.

### **Some of the benefits to church membership**

- a. **Fellowship:** (Colossians 2:2) The church is God's place where deeper levels of fellowship in Christ are developed.
- b. **Fulfillment:** (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) We are all designed individually by God with a purpose and function that finds its fulfillment in relationship with others. As we faithfully join together with other members of the body, we find a greater sense of belonging, fulfillment, and self-worth.
- c. **Fruitfulness:** (Ephesians 4:16) As we are joined with other members, we will realize a greater productivity in our lives and in the church.
- d. **Accountability:** (Galatians 6:1-2) Membership provides a greater sense of accountability and responsibility among members.
- e. **Protection:** (Hebrews 13:17) Membership establishes a person under a greater spiritual protection or "covering."
- f. **Growth:** (1 Thessalonians 5:12) Membership provides a greater opportunity to receive consistent pastoral care, teaching, mentoring and counsel.
- g. **Service:** (Amos 3:3) Membership provides the common agreement and submission necessary to walk together in the trust and unity issues surrounding service.
- h. **Strength:** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) Membership is a covenant bond that strengthens people like the interwoven strands in a rope.
- i. **Support:** (Galatians 6:2) Membership provides a greater sense of commitment to support one another in difficult times.
- j. **Power:** (Deuteronomy 32:30) Membership provides a source of unity through which our power over the enemy and our ability to accomplish greater things for God increases greatly.
- k. **Proving of ministry:** (1 Timothy 3:10) Membership provides the commitment and environment through which people can be proven and released into ministry.
- l. **Presence of God:** (Psalm 133; Matthew 18:19-20) God promises His presence and a release of His blessing in our midst as we join together in unity in His name.

### **Important questions to ask before joining a local church**

- a. **Am I a Christian?** (Acts 2:41) Have I been born again and water baptized? Only those who have made their life decision to follow Christ by accepting Him as their Savior and Lord can be added to the church. Children of believing parents are usually joined in membership with their parents until the age of accountability.
- b. **Is the church "alive"?** Is Jesus being exalted? Are lives being changed? Are new people being reached? Is the Spirit, presence, and love of Jesus evident in the church and in its people?
- c. **Is the church doctrinally sound?** Have you read and do you agree with the church's statement of faith? Do the leaders faithfully teach and preach the Bible or do they promote manmade traditions, mystical experiences, and extra-biblical teaching?
- d. **Do I understand how the church government is organized and operates?** Every church has a government whether written or unwritten. If the church has a written Constitution and By-laws, ask to read it to make sure you understand how the church government is organized and how it operates.
- e. **Do I trust the leadership of the church?** (Hebrews 13:17) Do I trust the pastor and elders of this church? Who do I believe that God chosen to be my pastor? Am I willing to receive instruction, counsel, and loving correction from these leaders when necessary to aid in my spiritual growth?
- f. **Am I willing to support the church through my attendance, service, and giving?** (Ephesians 4:16; Malachi 3:10) Am I willing to do my share to support this church through my prayers, faithful attendance, service, tithes, and offerings?
- g. **Do I need to share anything with leadership before joining?** Do I have anything in my life that the leadership should know about?
- h. **Do I believe God is leading me to join this church?** (Acts 2:41, 47) Is there a peace in the will of God? Do I have additional questions that I need to discuss with leadership before proceeding?