

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH

LESSON 9

THE CHURCH: FELLOWSHIP AND WORSHIP

Supplemental Class Notes

Lesson Objectives

1. To understand the difference between the *universal church* and the *local church*.
2. To give us a set of guidelines of what to look for when selecting a church.
3. To exhort us to participate and minister within the church.
4. To understand worship within the church, including Communion.

INTRODUCTION

1. THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

What do you think is the difference between the universal church and the local church?

- The church of Jesus Christ is not an organization; it is an organism.
- The church is people: living and loving, learning and laboring, leading and following, together for the glory of Jesus Christ who is the head.

A. THE CHURCH IS SEEN AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

- ❖ Christ is the head - Ephesians 5:23
- ❖ The body is made up of those called by God - 1 Corinthians 3:15
- ❖ Christ baptizes the believer with the Holy Spirit and places them into the body of Christ - 1 Corinthians 12:13; also see Luke 3:16; John 1:33
- ❖ Each believer has a unique function within the body - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

B. THE CHURCH IS SEEN AS A FAMILY.

- ❖ We are all children of God - John 1:12

❖ We are all brothers and sisters - 1 Corinthians 7:15

❖ God is our Father; Christ is our brother - Hebrews 2:11

2. THE LOCAL CHURCH

The local church is a smaller group of believers that come together to worship, fellowship, receive teaching from the Bible, and evangelize in a local area. The model of the local church is formed by looking at the priorities and structure of the early church during the time of the apostles.

A. PRIORITIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Teaching

The early church was devoted to the apostles' teaching:

- The teaching of God's Word is vital to the growth of all believers - 1 Peter 2:2
- God gave the church gifted pastors/teachers for the equipping of the saints - Ephesians 4:11-12

2. Fellowship

The early church body was involved in each other's lives, ministering to one another in a bond of unity.

3. Communion (*also referred to as the breaking of bread*)

4. Prayer

When the early church met, its members were devoted to praying together and praying for one another (James 5:16). This is the heart of the church: recognizing God as the head and provider and aligning the direction of the church with the will of God.

B. STRUCTURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Gifted men given to the church

- **Apostles** - An apostle is literally "*one sent on a mission.*" In a strict sense this means the Twelve (Mark 3:16-19), plus Paul who was also called an apostle when he was uniquely set apart to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:15-17).
The qualifications of an apostle included being chosen directly by Christ (Mark 3:13) and having seen the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22-24). Therefore, there is no possibility for anyone to be an apostle in the church today.
However, in a wider sense, "*apostle*" can also refer to some who were not members of the Twelve and Paul, but nonetheless were "*sent on a mission.*"
They include Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Silas and Timothy (1 Timothy 2:6), and others (Romans 16:7; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25).
- **Prophets** - A prophet either foretells or "*forth tells*" the truths of God to God's people. The purpose of the prophets, like the apostles, was to lay the foundation of divine truth upon which the church would be built (Eph. 2:20). Upon the completion of the N. T. the office of prophet ceased.
- **Evangelists** - An evangelist is a person particularly gifted in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is something that all Christians should be doing, but some are more gifted at it than others.
- **Pastors/Teachers** - A pastor is one who shepherds, cares for, and protects God's people. Teaching is the primary function of pastors. The role of pastor/teacher is to faithfully preach the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

The purpose of why God gave these gifted men to the church is important to cover.

The gifted men are to equip the saints for the work of service.

Who are the saints?

Why are we being equipped?

Who is responsible to build up the body of Christ?

2. Office of elder/overseer

- Elders were appointed in every church - Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5
- Elders are to rule - 1 Timothy 5:17

- Elders are to oversee and shepherd - 1 Peter 5:1-2
- The members are to obey and submit to their leaders - Hebrews 13:17
- The qualifications of elders are stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9

3. Office of deacon

Deacons were those who served the needs of the church, under the direction of the elders.

- The office and qualification of deacons are stated in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- An example of men selected to serve - Acts 6:2-4

4. Members of the body

It is not enough to show up at church on Sundays, but as Christians, we are called to be faithfully part of a local church so that we can minister our spiritual giftedness for the growth of the body.

3. FELLOWSHIP

True fellowship is founded on the common ground of the gospel.

All Christians are sinners saved by the grace of God.

We have all been purified by Christ's blood.

In response, we all love Christ and have given our lives over to Him.

We share a common purpose: namely, to glorify God and to build up His church.

This common bond results in a true love for the brethren in Christ (1 Peter 1:22-23).

A. UNITY WITHIN THE CHURCH

The exhortation of Scripture is always to preserve the unity of the church.

- No divisions; be of the same mind - 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25
- Promote unity with humility and gentleness - Ephesians 4:2-3
- Be humble; see others as more important than yourself - Philippians 2:1-4

B. NO TRUE FELLOWSHIP WITH UNBELIEVERS

True fellowship cannot be enjoyed with unbelievers - 2 Corinthians 6:14-15.

Why is it that true fellowship cannot be enjoyed with those who do not believe in Christ?

C. MINISTERING TO OTHERS WITHIN THE CHURCH

You should always have a view of serving and ministering to others within the church.

- Love one another - Mark 9:50
- Give preference to one another - Romans 12:10
- Admonish one another - Romans 15:5
- Comfort one another - 1 Thessalonians 4:18
- Encourage and build up one another - 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Have fellowship with one another - 1 John 1:7

In summary, the church should not be just a group of people who meet together on Sundays. Rather, the church should be a closely-knit-together group of people who share their lives with one another freely.

4. WORSHIP

Close communion with God through prayer and a fuller understanding of God through the teaching of the Scriptures should drive the Christian to worship God.

Definition of Worship: To ascribe worth or value; the word translated "worship" is derived from the ancient practice of bowing oneself to the ground in reverence (Exodus 34:8).

A. WORSHIP BELONGS TO GOD ALONE.

- Our God is a jealous God and is not willing to share His worship with any other - Exodus 20:4-6; Isaiah 42:8
- God is worthy to receive worship because He is the creator of all things - Revelation 4:10-11

Christians should have nothing in their lives that rival God in adoration and worship.

B. TRUE WORSHIP

God wants our worship to be true. This means that we must be worshiping in truth and worshiping from the heart:

- Don't just worship with your lips; God wants worship from the heart - Matthew 15:8-9
- Worship God in truth - John 4:23-24

Note: To worship God in truth, one must seek to know Him by learning about His attributes and actions.

The worst deed committed in the universe is failure to give God honor, or glory.

Above everything else, God is to be glorified.

To glorify God is to exalt Him, to recognize Him as supremely worthy of honor, and to acknowledge His divine attributes. - John MacArthur

C. WORSHIPING GOD WITH OUR LIVES

Worship should be isolated to Sundays only. A Christian should strive to give God glory through his or her everyday life. When Christians act in a manner that is worthy of the God who called us, God's glory is reflected back to Him through our acts of devotion (1 Corinthians 10:31; John 14:13).

5. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

There are two ordinances that Christ established for His church: baptism and Communion. Communion is sometimes referred to as the Lord's Supper.

A. BAPTISM - The Ordinance of Baptism

Baptism was instituted by our Lord and practiced by early believers.

As explained in the Scriptures, baptism was a declaration of the believer's identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Clearly, baptism was practiced by the early church, and therefore, we believe this ordinance should be practiced by the church today.

Why baptize?

We baptize because:

- ◆ Baptism was commanded by our Lord - Matthew 28:19
- ◆ Baptism was practiced by the early church - Acts 2:41; 8:26- 39; 10:44- 48; 16:31- 33; 18:8

Who should be baptized?

In the Scriptures we find examples of disciples (or followers) of Christ, believers, and those who had received the Holy Spirit being baptized:

- ◆ Disciples (or followers of Christ) - Matthew 28:19
- ◆ Believers - Acts 2:41; 8:30- 38; 16:33- 34
- ◆ Those who have received the Holy Spirit - Acts 10:44- 48

Therefore, we conclude that those who have personally confessed Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord (i.e., Christians) should be baptized.

What does baptism mean?

Baptism is a declaration of the believer's identification with Christ:

- ◆ Identification with Christ in His death - Romans 6:3
- ◆ Identification with Christ in His burial - Romans 6:4a
- ◆ Identification with Christ in His resurrection - Romans 6:4b

Baptism is an acknowledgment *"that our old self was crucified with Him"* (Romans 6:6) and a profession that henceforth we *"might walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4b).

How should we baptize?

We believe that a person should be baptized by being fully immersed in water:

- ◆ The word *baptism* was transliterated from the word *baptizo* meaning to *"make fully whelmed; to dip or to sink."*
- ◆ Baptism took place where there was *much water* - John 3:23
- ◆ When they baptized they went *down into the water* (Acts 8:38) and *came up from the water* (Matthew 3:16).

Also, when baptizing by immersion, the picture of going down into the water and coming up out of the water symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Have you confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? _____

Have you been baptized as a believer? _____

B. COMMUNION - The Ordinance of Communion

1. Communion is an ordinance, not a sacrament.

- **An ordinance** pictures an event without imparting any grace or merit to the one participating in the ordinance. In the case of Communion, it is in remembrance of Christ's death. The taking of Communion does not in any way add merit to one's salvation before God. Salvation is so by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- **A sacrament** is something that a person does outwardly, but an inward spiritual grace is bestowed. Biblically this view violates salvation by grace alone, since a person is performing an action that adds merit to his position before God.

2. The ordinance of Communion

Communion was initiated at the last true Passover - Matthew 26:19, 26-29

What was the Passover?

Note: Jesus was to die on Passover as the true Passover Lamb.

When Jesus implemented Communion, He took bread. Was this bread Christ's flesh?

When Jesus implemented Communion, He took a cup of wine. Was this Christ's blood?

Note: The celebration of the Passover was transformed into the Lord's Supper, or Communion, to celebrate the sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb, namely, Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

3. The warning in taking Communion - 1 Corinthians 11:27-30.

Why is it important to do a self-examination every time one takes Communion?