

Lesson Seven: Life in the Church

LESSON FIVE New Life



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DOODLES

In this lesson we will look at the new believer's new home and family: the church.



"What is the Church?"

Family

The church is not like other organizations. The picture the Bible gives is of a large family, or, we could say, a family of families.

This means that

- The church is the people, not the building or a business.
- Those without families in the church get a family to share.
- Those with families in the church share with other families.
- We have a responsibility to each other.

| & | How could you receive from and give to the church family? |
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The Bible describes the church in other ways as well. You may hear people use some of these terms.

- Body of Christ (Romans 12:5). This means that while Jesus is no longer on earth, we are His hands and feet to do the things He did.
- Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:7). This means that Jesus loves the church and is coming back to be with us forever.
- Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). The temple was always the place where God met with people. Jesus said that He was where God and people met, and now God's presence is in the whole church. The Holy Spirit lives in us.

Global and Local

We also talk about the global church and the local church. The global church is made up of all true believers around the world and throughout time. We are all part of a shared heritage, identity, and mission. We do not always know who within a church community is a true believer (and therefore truly the church) but we do share with all who are. When we live honorably or dishonorably, we raise or lower the reputation of the whole church. Also, the church is not tied to any one culture—rather, any culture brings something to the world's understanding of the Gospel and shapes the church. Likewise, each culture has things about it that the Gospel needs to change.

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The Invisible Church

How are we to make sense of the idea that the global Church is one church and yet we sometimes discuss other churches almost as though they are of a different faith? How do we make sense of people we meet in our own local church that may not show any fruit of a relationship with Christ?

Remember that our definition of the Church is all true believers for all time. As we learned in a previous lesson that we are saved through faith in Christ, anyone in any church who has faith in Christ is part of the global Church.

We use the term "invisible church" which means the true believers in Christ inside any given church organization or version of Christianity.

- Not all in a church truly have faith in Christ and not all in a given church do not.
- Which church one belongs to is not the definition of salvation, faith in Christ is.
- We cannot judge individual souls.



How do these descriptions and definitions of the church change the way you see it and your part in it?



"What Does the Church Do?"

Principles over Practices

The Bible gives surprisingly little detail on how church should look. Rather, we learn more general principles. Some practices discussed in the Bible meant something different at the time it was written and merely copying those practices would miss the point beneath them.

Sometimes the Bible tells us only the principle and we are forced to figure out what that looks like in our culture. When you look at different church practices, think about the principles or values they are trying to carry out.

Sacraments

There are two things in the Bible that we make sure to include as church practices, although even these are done differently in different churches. These are baptism and communion (also called "The Lord's Supper").

Baptism

- Baptism is a symbol of the death of our old self and our rebirth as a new creation in Jesus. The water is a picture of a grave and coming out of the water a symbol of resurrection.
- Baptism also carries the symbolism of being washed of our sins.
- Baptism is done once as we originally declare our faith in Jesus publicly.

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Communion

- Communion commemorates Jesus' sacrifice for us (the cup of wine or grape juice represents His blood) and making a promise to us. The bread represents His body that was also broken for us and how Jesus provides us all our needs in Him.
- Communion looks back to the cross and forward to Christ's return when we will eat and drink together with Him.
- Taking communion identifies us with Christ and the church.
- This is done over and over. Some churches take communion weekly and some less often.



It is common to have questions about baptism and communion. Be prepared to ask yours in class if you have them.

What makes a healthy church?

- Proper doctrinal teaching
- Proper use of sacraments
- Proper use of discipline
- Genuine worship
- Effective prayer
- Effective witness
- Effective fellowship
- Holy lives of members

Spiritual power

Biblical church government

- Care for the poor
 Love for Christ
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From Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology

The "One-Anothers"

These are some simple things the Bible tells us to do to or for one another in the church.

- •Love (John 13:34-35)
- •Serve (Galatians 5:13)
- •Bear burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- •Forgive (Ephesians 4:31-32)
- •Confess to (James 5:16)

Variety in the Church

The church has a variety of styles, people and cultures, strengths and weaknesses, passions and priorities, ministries, and spiritual giftings (to be described below). Different churches, and different individuals within churches, do different things well.

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| What are | ome implications of the variety in the church? |
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Gifts

DISCUSS

When we talk about variety in the church, one aspect is the variety of abilities in the believers. Christ's people are driven by the Holy Spirit. While all people have talents, abilities, and skills, and you had these before you came to Christ, God gives spiritual abilities to His church. These may change in a person, be short or long-term, and different people will have different ones. They are mysterious even to those who have them. We should ask God to give us whatever gift He will. Remember that they are always for the purpose of serving the Church. This may be a new—and very odd—idea for you but that's how God works: His ways are bigger than we are often ready for. You should understand that there are different opinions on spiritual gifts but ask God to give you what He has in store for you!

Spiritual Gifts

Holy Spirit-given abilities for communing with God and serving the Church. E.G. Speaking in tongues

Natural Gifts or Strengths

Broad ways you tend to function best in your world; capabilities you will apply in any given situation in which you find yourself.

E.G. Learning

Abilities

General talents you are born with. E.G. Learning languages

Skills

Specific capabilities that must be learned and practiced. E.G. Speaking French

Gifts described in the Bible:

- Apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11): Originally meaning "sent ones". Refers to the special ministry of founding the church given to the 12 apostles from Jesus. Some also include those who go as missionaries.
- **Prophecy** (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1–40; Eph. 4:11): the ability to speak from God on the future or present, in accordance with the Bible.
- Miracles (1 Cor. 12:28) and Healings (vv. 9, 28, 30): abilities to do things otherwise impossible to help people.

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- Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor. 12:10): The ability to speak in or interpret a language one has not learned in order to either communicate with God in a special manner or to speak things to the church, showing God's power.
- **Evangelism** (Eph. 4:11): Ability to connect the message of God with those who do not have the Spirit of God in them.
- Lead/Shepherd/Pastor (Eph. 4:11): The ability to disciple others to follow Christ in their lives.
- Serving (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12): The ability to help others in a broad sense.
- **Teaching** (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11): The ability to connect the things of God to those who lack understanding of Him.
- **Faith** (1 Cor. 12:9): The ability over and above the measure of faith held by all believers to trust God.
- Exhortation (Rom. 12:8): The ability to encourage, stir, comfort, or admonish the church.
- **Distinguishing Spirits** (1 Cor. 12:10): The ability to discern between true and false spiritual messages.
- Mercy (Rom. 12:8): The ability to comfort and care for those in need.
- **Giving** (Rom. 12:8): The ability to give selflessly and generously.
- Administration (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28): The ability to bring order to God's work.
- **Wisdom and Knowledge** (1 Cor. 12:8): The ability to understand spiritual or biblical truth apart from learning.



Do you think God has given any of these abilities to you? What would others say?

Ministry

Ministry is another word for service and it is core to life in the church. We are all called to serve each other in some way. We have a responsibility to receive what we need, and give what we have.

Serving others is one of the greatest ways we grow as a Christian. It is also one of the most difficult.

"Basic to Christian life, whether of leaders or other Christians, is service. To be a Christian is to minister, and that means "to serve."

-James Boyce

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| Wł | hat makes serving hard? What about it makes us grow? |
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What do you need to receive from the church? What do you have to give?

Worship

Sometimes in church we talk about singing as "worship" and it is. However, worship is all the activities of the Church community, anything we organize ourselves to do in order to glorify God. Ultimately, the life we live following and serving Christ is a life of worship. We can and should live in such a way that we are worshiping God every day.

- Worship is an encounter with the living and holy God (Ex. 3:1-6)
- Worship is reserved for God alone (Ex. 34:14)
- In worship, we ascribe to the Lord the glory due him (Ps. 29:1–2)
- We can worship because of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf (Heb. 10:1-10)
- We should worship with reverence for God (Heb. 12:28)
- When we draw near to God, he draws near to us (James 4:8)
- Worship honors God for who He is and what He does (Dt. 10:21)
- Worship brings us to God's presence (Ps. 100:2,4)
- Worship takes us outside ourselves (I Pt. 4:10)
- Worship brings us together (Ps. 122:1)

If we were to use a short definition of worship, we could say that worship is enjoying God and letting Him know.

There is not just one way to worship God. We glorify God in all these ways.

- Enjoyment (Neh. 8)
- **Obedience** (I Sam. 15:22-23)
- **Singing** (Ps. 100:2)
- **Service** (Heb. 13:16)
- Giving (II Cor. 9:7)
- **Learning** (Ps. 19:7-11)
- **Prayer** (Ps. 16:2)

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How the church grows together

- **Reflection:** we get to know ourselves most fully when we know how we reflect God and affect others.
- **Accountability:** we find healing as the church speaks the truth in love.
- Learning: We can experience and obey God's word only in relation-
- **Opportunity:** We are molded by the community when we use our gifts to serve the church.
- **Identity:** We identify with Christ when we identify with His church body.

The Mission of the Church

In the next lesson, we will look further at what we call "The Great Commission", Jesus' final instructions to His followers before He ascended to heaven. This is what we are to be doing until He comes back again. Jesus told us to take the Gospel to every nation, baptize people into His teachings and to live in obedience to Him. The mission of the church is to expand so that more and more people will have a saving relationship with Jesus. This is done locally and globally and, as part of the church, you have a part in accomplishing it.



A. Use an index card from class to write down the name of an individual or category of people who needs service. Strategize how you could help and pray for them. Instructions will be given in class.

B. Look at the list of modes of worship on page 7. Choose one and worship God that way this week.

Memory Verse: I Corinthians 12:26-27

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If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

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