

The Ten Basic Steps: Step #1: The Christian Adventure

Lesson 6 - The Importance of the Church

Objective: To emphasize the importance of involvement in a local church.

Read: Acts 2:41-47

Memorize: Colossians 1:18

1. Composition of the Church
2. Ordinances of the Church
3. Purposes of the Church
4. Life Application

A mother once asked her child if he knew what a church was. With a big smile on his face, he said, "Yes mommy. That's where God lives."

Of course, the child's perception that God lives in a single, physical place is incorrect. Nevertheless his statement is profound: God does live in His church - the company of all who believe in Jesus Christ and have received Him as their Savior and Lord.

In a broad biblical sense, the church is the body of Christ - the collection of Christian believers from all over the world and from all times who are bound together by the shed blood of Christ and His resurrected presence.

In our local congregations, we play an important part of the body of Christ. God wants us to work together so that the church body can minister to others more effectively.

The church also is a unity of the Holy Spirit. Although doctrinal differences often separate Christian groups, they are united in the fact that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross, and He rose from the dead that through Him we can be reconciled to God.

The outreach of the church is worldwide. When our Lord's earthly ministry was completed, He commanded the church to carry His good news to the world. By sharing our faith in Christ, we are helping to fulfill His Great Commission.

I am convinced that a proper understanding of the church and how it is to function as a local body is important if we are to be fruitful disciples for Christ.

Some time ago I struck up a conversation with the passenger sitting next to me on a plane flight. As we talked, he was very cordial and pleasant. Then I asked, "Where are you on your spiritual journey?" Suddenly, he became defensive.

"I had my fill of the church when I was a young boy. Can you believe that I was forced to attend services at least three times a week? Every Sunday morning and evening and every Wednesday night. Years ago I determined that when I became an adult I would never attend church again as long as I live."

"How would you like to live in a community where there was no church?" I asked. He dropped his head and was silent for a moment. Then he replied, "I wouldn't like that."

Looking at him firmly in the eye, I said forcefully, "You are a parasite!" Immediately he became flustered and said impatiently, "What do you mean by that?"

"Simple. You want all the benefits of the church without any of the responsibility." He slowly smiled, returned my direct gaze, then announced, "For the first time in 20 years, I'll be in church on Sunday."

Before I became a Christian, I used to believe that the church was filled with hypocrites. Now I recognize that many people go to church - not because they are perfect - but because they need help. Then church then, in the vernacular of the business world, is a repair shop, not a retail store. The church is not perfect, but it is the institution that offers hope and healing in any community or culture. It is how God reaches out to others with His love and forgiveness.

I urge you to study this lesson prayerfully and carefully. As you continue in your study of the Bible, search out passages that describe the church and its ministry on earth. Keep a diary of your studies for future reference.

Composition of the Church

1. What did the early Christians do that we should do also? (Acts 2:41-42, 4:3, 5:41-42, 8:4) List several ways you can apply these to your Christian walk.
2. As God's children, how do we obey the instructions given in Hebrews 10:25?
3. Read I Thessalonians 1:1-10 then list here some qualities God desires in members of any church.
4. In what ways do you demonstrate these qualities?

Ordinances of the Church

- 1.) What do you believe baptism accomplishes? (Matthew 28:19) Who is eligible for baptism? What was the significance of your baptism?
- 2.) What is the meaning of the communion service? (I Corinthians 11:23-26)
- 3.) How do you prepare yourself to observe the Lord's supper?

Purposes of the Church

- 1.) What should be one of the basic purposes of a church? (II Timothy 4:2) How does the church you attend fulfill these purposes in this verse?
- 2.) List several of your own reasons for joining a church.

3.) What should the church believe about Christ's birth? (Mathew 1:23), Deity (John 1:14), Death (I Peter 2:24), Resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-4), Second Coming (I Thessalonians 4:16-17)?

Where does your church stand on these truths? It may be helpful to obtain a doctrinal statement from your church and research these areas.

4.) What abilities does God give (besides that of serving as a prophet or apostle) to strengthen the church members? (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Which of these roles do you fill? Which would you like to be involved in? Why? How are you preparing yourself for that ministry?

Life Application

1.) If you are not already active in a local church, prayerfully list two or three that you will visit in the next month, with the purpose of attending one regularly.

Before you attend the first service, list the qualities you feel are essential for spiritual growth and fellowship. Ask God to show you which church He is leading you to join.

2.) The following are suggestions for making your church worship more meaningful:

- Bow for silent prayer before the service begins. Pray for yourself, for the minister, for those taking part in the service and for those worshiping, that Christ will be very real to all, and that those who do not know Christ may come to know Him.
- Always take your Bible. Underline portions that are made especially meaningful by the sermons.
- Take notes on the sermon and apply them to your life.
- Can you list some other ways?

3.) If you are part of a local church, ask God to show you ways you can be more used by Him in the church. List the ways of service that He reveals to you.

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