LESSON 8

THE LOCAL CHURCH

“What is the Purpose of My Involvement in a Local Church?”

God has established three major institutions on this earth: the family, civil government, and the local Church. It is the local church that 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 will always be fulfilled best when connected with the local church.

The purpose of this lesson is to impress upon the individual the central role that the church should play in their everyday life.

1. What is the local church?

 A. It is NOT a building.

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

 2. Our bodies are the temple of God. 1 Corinthians 6:19

 B. It is NOT a denominational group of congregations.

C. A “local church” is a body of men, women and children who have been saved and called by God to serve in a specific area or toward a certain demographic. “The church” is the body of Christ, the saved multitudes from every nation.

1. In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul, writing to saved people, states clearly, “you are the Body of Christ.”
2. Paul compares the church body to the human body in this passage - 1 Corinthians 12:14-27.

 a. Each member has a different function, verses 14-20

 b. No one member can function alone, verse 21.

 c. Every member’s contribution is important, verses 22-24.

 d. A properly functioning body operates as a single unit, verses 25-27.

2. What is the function of the local church?

 A. The first local church in the Bible was organised in Jerusalem.

 (Acts 2:41-47) The believers there organised their church for the following purposes:

 1. The teaching of the Word of God, verse 42.

 2. Fellowship with other believers, verse 42.

 3. Prayer, verse 42.

 4. Observance of the two ordinances of the church: Baptism, verse 41 & The Lord’s Supper, verse 42.

 5. To be a testimony of God’s grace and power, verse 43.

 6. For mutual assistance and ministry, verse 44-45.

 7. To reach out in the community, verses 46-47.

 8. To glorify and praise God, verse 47.

B. The single most important priority of the local church is to edify (*build up, teach and strengthen*) the saints. - Ephesians 4:11-16

3. How do I function in the Church body?

Note: A new believer should be in the habit of sharing their ‘testimony’ (faith story) with others outside the body right from the start! Yet, what is my function *within* the body?

A. During your Christian life, you should develop your skills in three broad, general areas.

1. 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
2. Participate – Soon 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.

 - Matthew 4:19; James 1:22-25

1. Lead - As your growth continues, you should begin to minister to others in the same way you have been ministered to. - 2 Timothy 2:2

B. BE PATIENT! This process of where to participate and where to lead can take time. Don’t be afraid to experiment. You may not think you are suited for a particular role, yet God may surprise you. Just be sure to remain faithful to God’s established institution, by using your talents for local church ministry.

4. Basic questions.

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

 1. Pray about it! Ask God to show you which church to associate yourself with.

 - James 1:5

1. Observe the qualities of a particular church and compare them with the biblical requirements of a proper church.

 a. Is there evidence of soul winning and baptism? - Matthew 7:20; Acts 2:47

 b. Do they believe and teach the Bible as the Word of God and the infallible guide for life?

- Titus 1:9

 c. Is the congregation encouraged to read and study the Bible as much as the leadership?

- Acts 17:10-12

 d. Do they minister to the needs of the people? – Matthew 25:35-36

 e. Do they send out missionaries and church planters and support them? - Acts 13:1-3

THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. What are the three institutions God has established on earth?

 A.

 B.

 C.

2. List some things that a church is NOT:

3. Define the following terms:

 A. local church

 B. “the church”

4. In 1 Corinthians 12:14-27, Paul teaches that in many ways the church body is similar to the

 ............... ............... List five parts of the body that are mentioned in this passage of scripture.

 A.

 B.

 C.

 D.

 E.

5. List four basic similarities between the church body and the human body.

 A.

 B.

 C.

 D.

6. The first local church in the Bible was at Jerusalem. In Acts 2:41-47, we see this local church

 functioning. List the functional purposes found in this passage of scripture.

 A.

 B.

 C.

 D.

 E.

 F.

 G.

 H.

7. What is the most important priority of the local church?

8. There is a proper order for you to follow in participating in the church body. List the three

 general stages connected with spiritual growth.

 A.

 B.

 C.

9. How do these three stages of spiritual growth match up with the three stages of physical

 growth found in 1 John 2:12-14 ?

 A. ........................... to ...........................

 B. ........................... to ...........................

 C. ........................... to ...........................

10. The Christian should be .............. because growing spiritually is a process which can only be

 properly accomplished within the established .............. of the .............. ...............

11. When a Christian is looking for a local church to serve in what are some qualities they should

 look for ?

 A.

 B.

 C.

 D.

 E.

12. Briefly explain the primary purpose of this lesson.

Key memory verses:

Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:27; 2 Timothy 2:2

NOTE: Many churches today are *not* fulfilling God’s plan because their primary attitudes are:

1. In order to really learn the Bible, you need to go to Bible College or Seminary.

2. The primary purpose of the local church is to be a social or a political organisation.

3. The local church is primarily for weddings, funeral and religious holidays.

4. Only the leadership of the church is charged with any responsibility of meeting people’s

 spiritual needs.

From the Bible principles taught in this lesson, you should understand that these attitude are wrong, and why.

Write any questions you may have concerning the subjects of this lesson.