

The Journey of Faith

Session 8



The Local Church

Teaching Chart

SESSION 8: THE LOCAL CHURCH

FUNCTIONING AS A FAMILY

"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, '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 tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'" (Matthew 16:15-18, ESV)

Entrance into Church Family

Repentance - Connection to Christ (Acts 2:36-40)

Baptism - Connection to the Church (Acts 2:41)

Indwelling Holy-Spirit - Connection to God (Acts 2:38)

Organization of the Church

Christ is the Head (Ephesians 5:23)

Pastor/Elder Teaches and Protects (1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Deacons Serve the Needs of Church Family (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Ordinances of the Church

Baptism – Public Declaration of Faith in Jesus (Acts 2:37-41)

The Lord's Supper – Remembrance of Jesus' Death (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:24-33)

Purpose of the Church

Devotion to Scripture (Acts 2:42)

Fellowship or Participation (Acts 2:42,46)

Celebration of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42)

Praying Together (Acts 2:42)

Signs and Wonders (Acts 2:43)

Meeting Needs of Others (Acts 2:44-45)

Praising God and Unity (Acts 2:47)

Lesson

- Overview: God has established three major institutions on earth: the family, civil government, and the local church. Family and local government has existed since the book of Genesis, but the local church was not instituted until the New Testament age. Why did God establish the local church? His purpose was to create an establishment that would reach the lost with the Gospel and train Christians for ministry. Therefore, it is important for every believer to be a part of a local church.
- Purpose: To evidence the important role that church plays in the life of Christians
- Verses: **Matthew 16:18 (ESV)** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

I. What is the local church?

A. What it is not:

1. It is not a building or facility.
(Acts 14:27)
2. It is not a denominational group such as Baptist or Presbyterian (a human organization).

B. What it is:

1. The church is a local, visible body of men and women baptized by immersion following a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
2. The church is a body of believers with Jesus Christ as the head.
(Ephesians 1:22)

II. What is the purpose of the local church?

(Acts 2:41-42)

A. The church teaches the Word of God.

1. The foundational truth was found in Scripture.
2. The apostles were responsible for teaching the other believers.
(Matthew 28:20)

B. The church provides fellowship among believers.

1. This fellowship is a result of having common faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Believers should encourage and challenge each other in obedience.

C. The church observes the two ordinances (outward ceremony appointed by Christ to be administered by the church) – baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**For more information on baptism, see Session 3. The following is a discussion on the Lord's Supper.*

1. What does it mean?
 - a. It is a time when we, as a church, remember Jesus Christ's death on the cross.
(1 Corinthians 11:24-25)
 - b. It is a visible reminder of Christ's death, but also a reminder of His return.
(1 Corinthians 11:26)
2. Why is it important?
 - a. God commands Christians to participate in it.
 - b. It is a public testimony of your faith (much like baptism).
 - c. The Lord's Supper provides you with a time of self-examination (confess unconfessed sin).
(1 Corinthians 11:27-33)
3. Who can participate?

All three of these things must be present in a person in order to participate:

 - a. Obviously, there must be union with Christ, so salvation is a must.
 - b. The person must be baptized because it logically follows salvation and is the first step in obedience to God.
 - c. A person must not have any unconfessed sin in their life.
4. What elements are used and what do they symbolize?
 - a. Unleavened bread is used and it symbolizes the crucifixion of Christ's body on the cross.
 - b. Unfermented wine, or juice, is used and symbolizes Christ's blood, which was shed for your sin on the cross.
5. Do the elements literally turn in to Christ's body and blood?

- a. No. Christ declared that the Lord's Supper was a time of remembrance of what had taken place on the cross.
 - b. Christ only died once for all sin.
- 6. *When does the church participate in the Lord's Supper?*
 - a. *The Bible gives no specific amount of times that the church should administer this ordinance.*
 - b. *Our church partakes in the Lord's Supper approximately 6 times a year.*
- D. The church provides a place for prayer.
- E. The church is a place to witness God's power.
(Acts 2:43)
- F. The church provides for other believers in need.
(Acts 2:44-45)
 - 1. Christians should focus on the needs of others.
 - 2. Christians should be willing to help others in need as God has blessed them.
- G. The church unites together to spread the Gospel throughout the community.
(Acts 2:46-47)
- H. The church praises God for all His works.
(Acts 2:47)

II. Who leads the local church?

(1 Peter 5:1-4)

- A. Ultimately, Christ is the head of the church.
- B. Christ has placed two human officers over the church.
 - 1. Christ has placed the pastor (elder, bishop) as the shepherd of the flock (people) of God.
 - a. Shepherding requires feeding the flock of God through the teaching of the Word of God.
(1 Peter 5:2)
 - b. Shepherding requires protecting the flock of God from false teachings.
(Acts 20:28-29)
 - 2. Christ has placed the deacons under the leadership of the pastor in order to serve him in any area.

V. What should be my function in the church?

- A. There are three basic functions for every believer in the church.
 - 1. You should become a member of the church.
(Acts 2:47)
 - 2. You should obey and submit to the leadership of the church.
(Hebrews 13:17)
 - a. God has entrusted the leadership of the church to your pastor and its' leaders.
 - b. Therefore, you must follow them as they lead you, even if you do not agree with all of the decisions they make.
 - c. Submission to leadership will result in unity and joy within the church.

3. You should support the church.
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
- B. There are three specific functions that every believer should strive to accomplish (in order).
 1. First, you should observe and learn through the teaching of the Word of God.
 2. Secondly, you should participate in an already established church ministry.
(James 1:22)
 3. Finally, you should seek to lead and minister to others as others have ministered to you.
(2 Timothy 2:2)

Review

1. Why did God establish the local church?
2. Define the local church.
3. Who is the head of the church (use scriptural support)?
4. List three purposes of the local church.
5. What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?
6. Name three things that must be present in order for a person to participate in the Lord's Supper.
7. Who is the human head of the church?
8. According to scripture, what are two responsibilities of the pastor?

9. What basic functions should every believer accomplish?
10. Submission to leadership will result in _____ and _____ within the church.
11. List three specific functions that every believer should strive to accomplish.
12. Should all of the specific functions be accomplished at the same time? Why or why not?
13. Briefly describe the purpose of this lesson.

False Teachings

Some churches, organizations, or groups are promoting the following false teachings:

- Church is not important in the life of a believer.
- The church is simply a social club.
- A believer does not have to be committed to support his local church.
- Church members do not have to submit to the leadership of the church.
- A new believer should immediately be involved in active ministry.