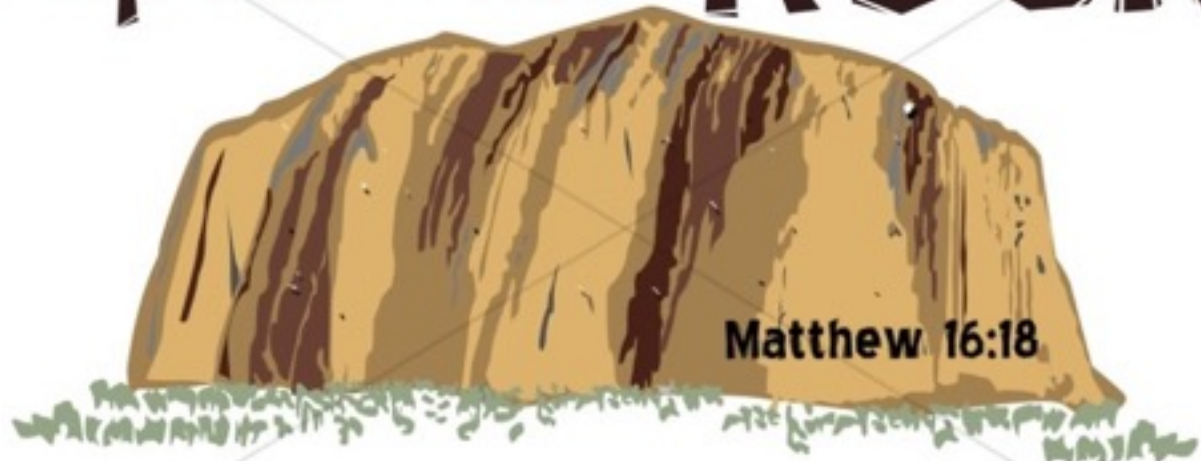


The Church

Upon This **ROCK**



I Will Build My Church

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.”

1Corinthians 12:12-14

NAME _____

Bobby Shaw and Jim Echols

The Church

The Church

Matthew 16:18

Lesson # 1 What is a Church?

Introduction: Christ makes a simple statement in Matthew 16:18 “I will build My church” based on this statement our lessons will be centered around this statement. As we study about the church many topics will be covered such as (1) Authority (2) Identity of the Church (3) Organization of the Church (4) Work of the Church (5) Worship of the Church (6) Unity of the Church (7) Inward and outward purpose of the church(8). As questions come up in the study we may defer some questions to further studies or address the question during the class.

The overall class goals are:

1. Submit our lives more fully to the kingship of Christ
2. Have a more accurate view of what Christ’s church is and what it is not
3. Be more determined to please God in all that we do personally and in our part as a member of the body of Christ
4. Be a more active and faithful member of the church in our efforts to stir up one another to love and good works, telling others of Christ and honoring God in worship.

The Church

Many of the questions raised in the small group sessions will be centered around goal #4 “How can I be a more active and faithful member of the church in our efforts to stir up one another to love and good works, telling other of Christ and honoring God in worship. **Hebrews 10: 23-25** *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

1. What is a Church? (ekklesia) Read Acts 5:11 and Acts 19:32 What are the key points made in these verses?
2. In Matthew 16:18 and Hebrews 12:23; what are the implications in these verses?
3. Read Acts 2:41-47 Who was God adding to the number in Jerusalem?

The Church

4. Read Ephesians 1:1 and 1:22-23 (read the whole chapter if you have time). Based on this chapter, who is in Christ's church? Would Christ build a church and not tell us how to get into it?

5. What are some of the views of the Church?

Some may say:

(a) simply means a building

(b) church is an institution

(c) a group of churches, i.e. all denominations — Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc. — all of the churches make up God's church.

(d) We speak today of different churches, meaning different denominations. What is a denomination?

A denomination would be a group of churches that are tied together in some manner.

(c) Why is the church of Christ not a denomination or could it be?

The Church

6. What is the biblical view— membership in the Universal Church and membership in a Local Church? Why is this important to understand? (Acts 2:47)

(Lesson #1 Continuation)

Any questions from the previous class?

1. Why is it important to be a part of a local church? How does Ephesians 4:11-16 play in the idea of local vs universal church?
2. Do you think there are some individuals who turn to Christ in faith and repentance, are baptized by the washing away of their sins, but who don't know why they should participate with other Christians in a local church? How can we help them?
3. We know who adds someone to the church in a universal sense, who should decide whether someone can join a local church? On what basis should the decision be made?

The Church

Lesson #2 Authority

Introduction: In **Matthew 16:17-19**, Christ said: “Jesus answered and said to 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 also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*”

Why is authority so important in the church?

Christ clearly states that He was going to build His church, and in Eph. 1:22-23 He is the head of the church. As the head, Christ has authority over the church (Eph. 5:22-33 and Matthew 28:18-19) Although we know this, how are we to establish the authority we use in the church.

Questions

1. What is Authority?
2. Where do we get our authority today? (Hint 2 sources)

The Church

3. What is the out come of following man's authority?

4. How do we know we are not under the Old Law?
(Heb. 1:1-2; 5:9; Matt. 17:5)

5. How do we know we are under a New Law (covenant)
(Heb. 8:8-9;13, Heb. 9:11-17)

6. Who has all authority?

Lesson #2 Continuation on Authority

How is authority established in the Bible? Three types of commands are given in the Bible: Specific, General, and a combination of Specific and General. Many commands include some specific aspects and some general aspects. In other words, God is specific about some parts of His

The Church

command and general about other parts of the command. When a command is specific from God, we must obey God by accomplishing the command as specified by God. We also have general commands from God that we must employ lawful expediencies to carry out the command.

1. Give some examples of Specific commands from God.
2. Give some examples of General commands from God.
3. What does it mean to employ lawful expediencies to obey God's general commands? Define Expedient. Give scriptures that use expedient. All translations don't use the word expedient.(see KJV)
4. What would be a lawful and an unlawful expediency? (Gen. 6:13-23 Noah and the ark, 1 Sam. 13:1-15, 1 Sam. 15:1-26, Matt. 15:8-9, Mk 7:6-9))

The Church

5. We hear the word inference used in understanding the scripture, what does that mean? Give examples/ Scriptures.

6. God commands us to follow the apostles examples. (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1 Phil. 4:9) What are examples of the apostles we would follow. What about cultural traditions during the apostles time. (1 Cor. 9:19-23) Keep in mind what is lawful to do.

7. What would be examples of the apostles we would not follow? (1 Tim. 1:15, Gal. 2:11-14, Acts 10:9-16,28-29; 11:1-18)

8. We have a very diverse group of Christians, are there cultural and traditions we should be sensitive to?

The Church

Lesson #3 Identity of the Church What's in a name?

Introduction: It is important to understand the unique identity of the church as revealed in Scripture.

- (a) Proper identification of the Lord's church from Scripture is necessary so that we may: (1) identify a congregation of the Lord's church with which to assemble. (2) avoid sharing in the man-made religious institutions of men.
- (b) Studying the identity of the Lord's church increases our faith resulting in a deeper appreciation of the church which Jesus purchased with His own blood.

We talked earlier about the "church" is a translation of the Greek word ekklesia meaning a called out body, (i.e. assembly) of people responding to God's call through Jesus Christ. (Matt. 16:18) As a Christian for many years there are questions raised in one's mind about the name of the church, or are all "Churches of Christ" practicing what we see in the Scriptures? Have you ever wonder about churches of Christ verses any other denomination? For the church in the New Testament what ties us all together is ownership. We belong to God and to his son, Jesus Christ.

The Church

1. In each of the following passages note what the local church (or churches) were called: What do many of these designations have in common?

(a) Acts 11:22

(b) Acts 13:1

(c) Acts 20:28

(d) Romans 16:16

(e) 1Corinthians 1:2

(f) 1Corinthians 16:1, Galatians 1:2

(g) 11 Corinthians 1:1

(h) 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 11 Thessalonians 1:1

(i) 1 Timothy 3:15

(j) Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14

2. In the passages below, what are groups of Christians called without using the word church? How do these designations indicate a relationship with God or Christ?

(a) Acts 11: 26

(b) Ephesians 1:1

(c) Philippians 4:21-22

(d) Colossians 1:2

(e) Colossians 4:15

(f) 1 Peter 5:2

There are other Biblical names for the churches (other than church of Christ) that would similarly describe common ownership and purpose, but some of those

The Church

names are used by groups whose practices are not based on Biblical teachings.

3. Some names identifying the church:

- (a)** My (Christ) church (Matt. 16:18)
- (b)** church of the Lord, church of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2)
- (c)** church of Christ (Romans 16:16)
- (d)** the body, the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; 1 Th. 1:1).
- (e)** household (house) of God, church of the living God (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- (f)** church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23)
- (g)** God's field, God's building (Cor. 3:9)
- (h)** the flock (1 Pet. 5:3; Acts 20:28)

The name church of Christ has come to be associated with a group of Christians, which is good, but we need to be careful. Too much emphasis could be placed on this name, as if it alone would satisfy God. To some extent, we use it as an accommodation to others to help set their expectations.

The Church

(e) Who are the members of the church?

(f) What does membership imply?

8. Some people may say “You people (Christians) believe you are the only ones going to heaven” What should your answer be?

The church is the kingdom of God and of Christ

This was not something that wasn't talked about before Christ. John the baptist talked about a kingdom, in **Matthew 3:2** *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”*, **Matthew 4:17** *“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* We see scriptures referring to “kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven”. **Matthew 6:33** *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* In Mark 9:1-9 we see the kingdom coming in the life time of some standing there with Christ. The big question is where does the church fit in all this? The terms “kingdom” and “church” are often interchangeable in the scripture.

The Church

1. Is the kingdom present, or future? or is both? Find scriptures to justify your answers?

2. (Present: 1 Thess. 2:12, Heb. 12:28, Col1:13, Rev. 1:4, 9) (Future: Matt. 13:40-43, Matt. 25:34, Acts 14:22, Gal. 5:19-21, 2 Tim 4:15)

3. Is the kingdom of God spiritual or physical? (John 18:36, Matthew 12:28, Matthew 28:18)

4. When it comes to Authority, who makes the rules and who is the head? (Eph. 1:22-23, Eph. 5: 22-33)

5. As Christians, who are we to obey? (Heb 5:9, Heb. 1:2)

6. The church is not:
 - (a) Not a physical building (Acts 17:24)

 - (b) Not a social club (Romans 14:17; 1 Cor. 11:22)

 - (c) Not a denomination or man-made religion (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4; Col. 2:20-23; ‘

The Church

Lesson #4 Organization of the Church

Introduction:

It is important to understand the organization of the Lord's church so that we can conduct ourselves in an orderly manner according to the doctrine of Christ and not according to the doctrines of men. The organization of a church consists of Christ as the head, apostles, prophets, elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers, and saints.

1. Christ is in heaven and exercises headship (rule) over the church through Scripture (2 John 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
2. The gift of prophesy is not given today (1 Cor. 13:1-13); therefore, there are no prophets today.
3. Elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers, and saints all have present-day responsibilities on earth in respect to the church (Eph. 4:16)

The Church

Lesson #5 Roles of Leaders - What are Elders duties?

Objective of this lesson:

- (1) Examine the important responsibilities given to elders**
- (2) Note the value to a local church as a whole and to each member of having faithful and capable elders who are serious about discharging their duties.**

Introduction:

Usually when we are talking about elders we are talking about qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:1-9. However this study we want to spend most of our time examining the work of elders. And the next lesson we will look at Evangelists and Deacons.

1. Three Greek words are used to identify a man holding the office of an elder; what are the Greek and English words? (Give the scriptures.)

2. What do you see as the work of elders? (Give scriptures)

The Church

Lesson #5 Roles of Leaders -

What are Deacons and Evangelists duties?

(1) What does deacon mean?

(2) In what two senses are “deacon” used in scripture?

(3) What do you see as the work of deacons?

(4) What responsibilities do we have towards the deacons

The Church

Evangelist(s)

(1) Where do we find evangelist being used in the Bible?

(2) What does the word evangelist mean?

(3) How did Paul define evangelist to Timothy?

(4) What do you see as the work of the evangelist(s)?

The Church

(5) Where do we find in the scripture to support an evangelist?

We see in Ephesians 4:11 that teachers are a gift to the church.

(6) What are the roles of the teachers?

(7) How do you reconcile Hebrews 5:12 and not everyone should be teachers? Are we all teaching in some way? (See Matthew 5:13-16)

(8) What does the autonomy of the local church mean?

(9) What are some of the areas that Christ has not authorized when it comes to the autonomy of the church?

The Church

Lesson #6 Members of the Church - Citizens of the Kingdom

Objective of the class:

- (1) Examine the character expected of every member of the church
- (2) Look honestly at the damage our sin and neglect causes the church and its mission

Introduction:

This lesson will focus on individual members who make up a local church. If you are a member, ask yourself these questions:

- (1) Why am I here? Why this church?
- (2) What am I committed to do as a member of this church?
- (3) How do I expect this church to affect me?

The Goal for Every Member

The composition of Christ's Church is all the saved, everywhere, for all time. The Church is what Christ is coming back for. The Lord knows those who are his (II Timothy 2:19), and we will not always have an accurate view of who they are. Nevertheless, the churches of the New Testament were addressed as being composed of those who were saints and faithful. That should be the desire of every member. The message to those Christians

The Church

was always of the need to change, to mature, to put aside their sins and to become more and more like Christ.

There is a godly character expected of each of us as we work together in the church. As we study in this lessons and upcoming lessons, note the importance of the character mentioned in each of these passages: Please read as we prepare for this study:

- (1) Humility- 1Peter 5:5
- (2) Non-Judgmental Spirit - Romans 14:10-12
- (3) Forbearance and Forgiveness - Colossians 3:13
- (4) Self-sacrifice - 1 Corinthians 10:24
- (5) Generosity - 1 John 3:16-18
- (6) Compassion and Patience - Colossians 3:12
- (7) Submissive Spirit - Ephesians 5:21
- (8) Love - 1 John 4:7-8

In **1Peter 3:8-9** speaks to all members and repeats the necessary character of all - *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”* This is the spirit and attitude that will allow a church to accomplish the task God has given it.

The Church

Damage Caused by Members

Unfortunately, the New Testament is full of situations where members of a church were not what they were supposed to be. A partial list includes:

- (1) Sexual immorality - **1 Corinthians 5:1-2**
- (2) Disputes - **1 Corinthians 6:5-8**
- (3) Uncooperative/burdensome members- **2 Thess. 3:6-10**
- (4) Divisions/parties - **1 Corinthians 1:11-13**
- (5) Pride/Argumentative Spirit - **1 Timothy 6:3-5**
- (6) Love of the World - **2 Timothy 4:10**

We should recognize the danger and look honestly at our own spirit and conduct. When we fail to be what Christ asks of us it affects others.

Great Good Done by Members

On the other hand, great good that can be accomplished when every member is committed to presenting their bodies as a sacrifice to God, avoiding conformity with the world and being transformed (**Romans 12:1-2**) How much more we are capable of being the lights of the world (**Matthew 5:14-16**). It's not enough to be a church that maintains doctrinal purity, we must truly be citizens of Christ's kingdom who live out the precepts of Christ.

The Church

(5) What message does your attendance and participation in the activities of the church send to the other members?

(6) Is your conduct in the “world” consistent with your reputation within a local congregation? If not, what damage may you cause in the future?

(7) How can we help one another if questions 1 and 2 exist?

The Church

Lesson #7 Inward Purpose of the Church - Unity

Introduction:

Christ has always wanted unity among his people. Christ is not divided and Christians should not be divided (**1 Cor. 1: 10-13**) *“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*

- (1) Division is a result of carnality and is condemned as a work of the flesh

The Church

- (2) **(1Cor. 3:1-4)** *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”* **(Gal. 5:19-20)**
“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”.

The Church

- (3) We must be diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) being unified in the same mind (Phil. 2:1-4; Romans 15:6; Eph. 5:21).

In this lesson we want to study the unity of the church as ordained by God.

Jesus prayed for unity.

- (1) What do you see in John 17:13-23 that shows the unity of Christ and the Father, and unity among Christians?

- (2) How does unity of Christians effect/influence the world?

The Church

(3) Unity cannot be compromised (1 Cor. 1:10)

(4) What is the result of unity in a congregations?

(5) How can Christians keep unity in the church? (Eph. 4:1-3)

The Church

Lesson #8 Inward Purpose of the Church-Building Up One Another

Objective:

- (1) Examine God's purpose for the church
- (2) Identify and recognize the responsibility members have to one another
- (3) Recognize the role played by specific practices of the church in accomplishing God's purpose

Introduction:

We have spent some time looking at the nature of the church. The church is the people of God, those who belong to Christ. We talked about Christ rules His church, and have the authority because it is His church. Now we want to take a closer look at the purpose of the church. What did God have in mind in establishing the church; the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share. What is the value of each member of the body? We will use several lessons looking at the "Inward Purpose of the Church". By inward purpose we mean what the church as a community is intended to accomplish for its own members.

The Church

Primary Goal:

Perhaps the clearest picture of the purpose of the church is found in **Ephesians 4:11-16**, *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

This passage provides a great deal of insight to how God wants the church to function. Here we see:

- The role and importance of leaders - 11. They are a gift of God with a role - to equip the members, to prepare them for the work that they need to do.
- The purpose for the whole body - to be built up and to grow (vs. 12-16). But even with this purpose, it's not what happens to the body as a whole, as much as what happens to every single member.

The Church

- The for each member - to no longer be children (vs. 14), to grow up into Christ (vs. 15), to attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (vs.13). This passage stresses the intent is for us all to accomplish this goal (vs13).
- How it will be accomplish - through the effort of every single member (when each part is working properly) (vs 16). Church is not something you simply attend, it is an active, vibrant body of people in which you are expected to do your part as you benefit from the association with others.

*Similar is the exhortation of Hebrews 10:24-25. **The writer speaks of assembling together, but note what that time together should accomplish:***

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

- (1) How should we value each and every member of the body of Christ?
- (2) How does **1Corinthians 12:12-14** look at the body of Christ?

The Church

(3) How does Paul look at the skills of each member?
(1Corinthians 12:19-24)

We all have abilities and gifts, and we must identify and use them to the benefit of our fellow members in the body.

Activities to Achieve the Purpose

Consider how a church actually carries out this task of building up one another. In previous lessons we have talked about elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers and we all are saints. It should not be a surprise that much of the activities of the church centers around teaching in some form, and learning God's message. How does these examples help us in building up one another?

- Bible Classes
- Special Services, Devotions, Weekend Studies - that are focused on the spiritual needs.
- Gospel meetings

Besides the focus on teaching and the power of the word, there are other joint activities that draw us closer together and work to build us up:

The Church

- Worship - all activities in such assemblies are commanded to be done so as to edify or build up **(1 Corinthians 14:26)**
- Congregational Meetings - a devoted period of communication and information so that we can work together more effectively toward our common goals.

Questions

- (1) Can our assembly for worship be intended to both honor and praise God as well as to edify the members who are there? How would singing or prayer accomplish both?
- (2) What are reasons Christians give for not being an active part of a church?
- (3) In what ways might those answers reveal a misunderstanding of the purpose of the church.

The Church

Lesson #9 Inward Purpose of the Church-Relationships and Needs

Objective:

- (1) Examine the importance of building strong relationships among the members of the church
- (2) Recognize the responsibility the church has in providing for the physical needs of its members
- (3) Provide practical advice for strengthening the ties between members

Introduction

In the last lesson we looked at the church as being able to build itself up when “each part is working properly” (**Ephesians 4:16**), that is, when every member is fully participating - striving to grow personally and using their God-given abilities to encourage and stir up their fellow brothers and sisters (**1Cor. 12:21-30**), (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). A passage we did not look at was **Romans 12**, (vs 4) which emphasizes both our unity in one body (vs 5) “*so we, though many, are one body in Christ*”) and the diversity of our individual gifts (vs. 6 “*having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them*”). In this lesson, we will look at verses 9-18 of this chapter and what they say about the relationships we should have with

The Church

one another in the church. What will become clear is we need to know each other, and we must be active in helping one another.

Building Relationships

The closeness of the early church in Jerusalem was apparent from the beginning. Look at what was said of them in Acts 2:44-46 *“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,” A richer picture of this fellowship is found in Romans 12:9-18. Paul exhorted the Christians in Roman to have the true character of a follower of Christ, but does so in the context of their association with each other. So, he commands them

Romans 12:9-18 *“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not

The Church

Providing for the Needs of One Another

We see in Acts 2:44, the members in Jerusalem having a need and Paul commanded the Christians to contribute to the needs of the saints. John also pointed out the connection between sharing our goods and brotherly love, (1 John 3:16-17) *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”*

We see many examples of the extent to which Christians provided for the physical needs of one another. It should be noted that their gifts were made in every case for fellow Christians, sometimes for the members in the church that was providing the help, but there were two examples in Acts where several churches sent for the relief of Christians suffering elsewhere. Here is a list of the sacrifices and needs:

- Acts 4:34 *“Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.”*

The Church

- Acts 6:1 - a daily distribution to the widows
- Acts 11:29-30 *“Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”*
- Trip to Jerusalem (1Cor.16:3) to relieve needy saints - (1Corinthians 16:1-4, Romans 15:31, II Corinthians 8:1 - 9:15)

Decisions about using the funds of the church to address members' physical needs are not always easy. **1 Timothy 5:3-11** offers some principles that may be helpful, suggesting there is a difference between temporary or one-time help and permanent support(vs 9), that families should help first (vs 8), and the importance of the character and actions of the brother or sister in need. Nevertheless, as with many decisions, these principles serve only as a guidepost. An advantage of having elders should be the wisdom they bring to decisions of when and how to address the physical needs of a fellow member.

Thought Questions

1. Are you doing all that you can to know your brothers and sisters and to help them as you can?
2. What wrongful attitude(s) might cause Christians to pull away from participating in this work?

The Church

Lesson #10 Inward Purpose of the Church-When Things Go Wrong

Objective

- (1) See the purpose God has in his discipline
- (2) Acknowledge our personal responsibility in restoring unfaithful members
- (3) Recognize there are many different forms of discipline or correction that a church may use

Introduction

We have been examining what the New Testament says about the inward purpose of the church - to spiritually build up one another - and how the fulfillment of that purpose implies strong and personal relationships among Christians. Also, how those relationships obligate us to be aware of and active in addressing the physical needs of members, sometimes as an entire church. We can see how blessed we are personally by God's plan for the church; how it provides us with a source of spiritual nourishment and encouragement.

But we should also see the responsibility it places on each of us to be accountable for our fellow members (**Galatians**

The Church

6:2 “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*”). What are we to do when a brother or sister begins to drift away from God or perhaps begins to live a life in open rebellion to the will of God? In this lesson we will look at how we should respond as a church and as individuals to the sins of our brothers and sisters. We should not be surprised by their sins - listed below are examples of Christians in sin:

- Sexual Immorality - 1Corinthians 5:1-2
- Disputes - 1 Corinthians 6:5-8
- Uncooperative/burdensome members - II Thessalonians 3:6-10
- Bias/Prejudice - Galatians 2:11-14, James 2:1-4
- Divisions/parties - 1Corinthians 1:11-13, Jude 19
- Pride/Argumentative Spirit - I Timothy 6:3-5
- Love of the World - II Timothy 4:10, Jude 18

Unfaithful and Divisive Members

(1) Why does God discipline us? What is His goal?
(Hebrews 12:7-11)

(2) Who is to take action when a Christian drift away from God? (Galatians 6:1-2 and James 5:19-20)

The Church

- (3) What kinds of sinners are described in II Thessalonians 3:6-15, and what actions does Paul propose?

- (4) Describe the steps to be taken in Matthew 18:15-17:

Activities to Achieve the Purpose

While the goal is the same (the sharing of God's holiness), the means to achieve that goal will vary depending on the situation of the drifting soul. Discipline is not a one size plan fits all, but rather Jude 22-23 says have mercy on those who doubt *"And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh"*

The Church

Lesson #11 The work of the Church

Introduction:

The work of the church is limited in scope as ordained by God in His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3) In this lesson, we will study the work of the church as ordained by God.

Some people have asserted that “the church can do anything an individual can do” attempting to justify involving the church in a variety of unauthorized religious works. This doctrine is false (1 Tim. 5:16). As a church, we must go to God’s word and only do the things authorized in God’s word (1 Cor. 4:6; Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The work of the church falls into three basic areas:

- (a) Edification (preparing the saints for service)
- (b) Benevolence (providing for the needy saints)
- (c) Evangelism (proclaiming the gospel)

Questions:

- (1) Do you see assembly of the saints as a work?
(Give scriptures to justify your answers)

The Church

- (2) Do you see Evangelism and teaching as a work?

- (3) What is the purpose of evangelism?

- (4) List some churches that supported missionaries by local churches:

- (5) How is Benevolence a work of the church? How is benevolence limited in scope?

The Church

Things that are not a work of the church or is it? (provide scriptures)

- (6) Do we see any authority for a local church or individual Christians to send money to a missionary society, denomination, or other human institution that then forwards money to an evangelist. (What if it's your money)

- (7) Where in the church benevolence becomes wrong? Define Institutionalism?

- (8) What is the concept of "Sponsoring Churches"

- (9) Human institutions

The Church

(10) Recreation, social fellowship in the church

(11) Secular business

(12) Secular education, educational institutions

(13) Politics

The Church

Lesson #12 The upward Purpose of the Church

1. Submit our lives more fully to the kingship of Christ
2. Have a more accurate view of what Christ's church is and what it is not
3. Be more determined to please God in all that we do personally and in our part as a member of the body of Christ
4. Be a more active and faithful member of the church in our efforts to stir up one another to love and good works, telling others of Christ and honoring God in worship.

- (1) Introduce the upward purpose of the church.
- (2) Explain how the church is to glorify God.
- (3) Review the purpose and meaning of the Lord's supper.

Introduction:

In the previous lessons we have talked about the inward purpose of the church intended by God to strengthen those who already belong to him, and an outward purpose meant to have an effect on an unbelieving world. They are highly complementary aims.

The Church

God had yet another intention in forming His son's church. The church - the saved people who belong to Christ - are to glorify and worship God. The existence of such a body stands as a testimony to the power and wisdom of God; and in turn the members of that body gather in assemblies of the local churches to worship the God and the Savior to whom they owe everything.

The following lessons will examine this upward purpose of the church - its upward purpose. Some has said, this should have been the first lessons, because we are aiming for that upward calling to be heaven one day. These lessons will include a look at the most public and visible aspect of the church's purpose - to worship God as an assembly, and we will spend time on each element of that worship.

Glorifying God

The letter to the Ephesians begins with a reminder that God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). Those who are in Christ are, of course, those who are members of this Body the church. (Eph. 1:22-23). The church is a reflection of the glory of God. It benefits from God's glory and the glory he has shed on its members, and in turn, by its very existence, stands as proof of God's glory. What do you see in Ephesians chapter 1 that should cause us to see a higher purpose and calling! (Also look at Ephesians 3:10-11). Paul

The Church

enumerates many of the blessings shared by those who belong to Christ, but he also states what they are obligated to be:

Questions:

(1) What are the blessings in Christ?

(2) What are our obligation to God?

(3) What are our rewards?

(4) What do you see in Ephesians chapter 1 that should cause us to see a higher purpose and calling!!!'

What Should a Visitor Observe?

If the church is to demonstrate the glory of God, and if an assembly of a church in worship is its most public and visible action, then it would be worthwhile to consider what a visitor to such an assembly would see, assuming the church is truly following Christ. Paul had such an idea in

The Church

mind when he noted in **1 Corinthians 14** there might be a positive outcome to what an unbelieving visitor would see (**vs. 24-25**) *“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”*

We have a number of visitors visiting us each week at Inver Grove church of Christ. Ideally, if a church is devoted to Christ, the visitor would observe: Let us discuss the following points.

- The entire church coming together - 1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33 and 1 Corinthians 14:23 and 26. These two passages speak of the church coming together to worship, the whole church. How is a church fulfilling its upward purpose if most of its members are not gathering together?
- Acts centered on God - John 4:21-24, Hebrews 12:28. The passage in contains Jesus statement regarding true worship to the woman at the well in Samaria - *“when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* It should be clear the church has its attention focused on the father.

The Church

- Attention to God's word - Why attention to the scriptures when we are to worship God? Because it's His message; we are listening to Him. **Colossians 3:16-17** *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him".* **1 Peter 4:11** *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

If a visitor visit, you would hope that he or she would expect to hear the word of God read and expressed.

- Worshippers full of the Spirit - By this we mean the worshippers are *"worshipping in spirit and in truth"* (**John 4:23**); they are overflowing with the thoughts and things that matter to God. Their minds are already prepared to engage in the activities of God. Remember what is said of the followers of Christ - **Romans 8:5** *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."*
- Order - **1 Corinthians 14:40** Not the idea of a rigid, never to change formula, but rather the opposite of

The Church

disorder. This chapter even suggests that would be a variety of prayers and songs, but it should be decent and in order. Why? (**1 Corinthians 14:26**)

- A welcome to all - **James 2:1-9**. Visitors are to be welcomed without regards to their appearance. It should be apparent to the one who visits an assembly of worship that there is joy in their presence.
- Diversity in Believers - **Galatians 3:28, Acts 17:1-4**. The mutual fellowship and work of Jews and Gentiles in the early church was the plan of the mystery hidden by God for ages (**Ephesians 3:9**). *Paul simply says "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,"* (**Ephesians 3:6**) The members of a church should ideally be a cross section of the community where that church is located.
- Members being edified - **1 Corinthians 14:26**. Yes, God is the one to be glorified, and true worship centers on Him, but it should have the effect of building up spiritually those who attend and participate (see also **Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**)
- A spirit of oneness and peace - **Ephesians 4:2-3**. Such a spirit cannot be faked, but will be obvious to all.

The Church

Worship - Eating the Lord's Supper

The early Christians broke bread (ate the Lord's Supper) when the church came together (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33). They partook on Sunday, the first day of the week as seen at Troas in **Acts 20:7** *"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."*

Since the church gathered together every first day (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), it seems reasonable to assume they always ate the Lord's Supper, but it is easier to say with confidence that such a frequency would please God and be a valuable reminder of His love on every Sunday. The Lord's Supper is focused on Christ. Like all acts of worship, when we partake of the Lord's Supper our focus is on God, in this case God the Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. The purpose of the occasion is to remember Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:23-25**): *"that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

The Church

We also proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (vs.26). A proclamation (a statement of what we believe) that death matters and that He was raised!

It is possible to eat the bread and drink the cup in an unworthy manner. In a manner unsuitable for the purpose, inappropriate for the moment - without a sincere desire to commemorate the death of Jesus. Paul is not speaking of us being unworthy to participate (for who is really worthy?), but the manner of our partaking is unworthy. Instead, we must be able to concentrate our mind, our whole being on Christ and what He accomplished in His death.

Thought Questions

- (1) What impression would be made on a visitor who came to a worship assembly of Inver Grove church of Christ?

- (2) What can be done to make the Lord's Supper more meaningful?

The Church

Lesson #13 Upward Purpose of the Church

Reminder Class Goals: The last lesson, hopefully we have accomplished these goals in some small way.

1. Submit our lives more fully to the kingship of Christ
2. Have a more accurate view of what Christ's church is and what it is not
3. Be more determined to please God in all that we do personally and in our part as a member of the body of Christ
4. Be a more active and faithful member of the church in our efforts to stir up one another to love and good works, telling others of Christ and honoring God in worship.

Objective:

- (1) Review how the church is to glorify God.
- (2) Examine further the upward purpose of the church.
- (3) Explore the scriptural basis behind several acts of worship done in joint participation.

Introduction and review: In previous lessons, we have considered many facets of the church as to the organization, the authority, the inward purpose, the out

The Church

purpose including worshipping God, remembering the Lord's Supper. In this final lesson we will look at "Worship in Song, Worship in Giving and Worship in Exhortative Learning.

Worship in Song

When you think about singing what comes to your mind? From the start of the church singing together was a part. **(1 Corinthians 14:15).** *"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."* Paul commanded the Ephesians **(Ephesians 5:18-21)** *"be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God."*

Note how this singing both praises and glorifies God, while we are also teaching one another. More than one purpose is being accomplished. The command is to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord, yet they teach us. The singing of Psalms helps to illustrate how this is true. The Psalms are full of praise and thankfulness to God, but they are instructive to the reader. Thus, the words of our hymns and spiritual songs must be truthful in their honor of God and be in harmony with the message of His word.

The Church

A visitor to the worship assembly at Inver Grove might be surprised there are no instruments used with the singing, particularly given their prevalence in most “Christian” denominations. **Why are they not used here?** There are several important reasons - one related to the goal of praising and teaching. It’s our words that convey the praise and thankfulness we have for God (Hebrews 13:15), and clearly teaching comes from words not a melody. **In Colossians 3:16** where Paul discussed singing he said *“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”*.

Another reason comes from the passage in Ephesians above where it describes the music(melody) that accompanies our singing as being made with the heart. While it is true the passage does not specifically forbid instruments, there is a principle of restrictive silence taught in the New Testament (**Hebrews 7:11-14** makes this clear concerning the silence regarding a priest coming from any tribe other the Levi), that causes us to reject the use of instruments. Essentially, this principle teaches where God has specified something, for example that a melody would be made in the heart, then silence about other practices is restrictive (i.e. forbidden) rather than permissive (i.e. I can do anything God has not said is forbidden).

The Church

But the most important reason stems from our simple desire to please God in all that we do as a church (John 6:38, 8:29; Ephesians 5:10). From the passages we have studied, singing with the melody in our hearts ***without question pleases*** God. Anything more is a guess or assumption on our part. Some may think another reason for no instruments would be “because that is a Church of Christ doctrine or a traditional practice of this church or we would lose members if we changed”. None of those reasons have any validity and would be no more defensible than deciding how we worship based solely on what is comfortable or pleasing to us rather than what God wants. Such a spirit is hardly one of glorifying God.

Worship in Giving

The churches of the New Testament were sacrificial in their giving. In **1 Corinthians 16:2** Paul made it clear the act of giving was to involve all members - *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper,”* He specified a time for the giving - the first day of the week which is the day when the church would assemble for the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7) - and he gave the same instruction to other churches (1Corinthians 16:1)

What is sometimes overlooked is that every example of the gathering of funds through the offering of members

The Church

was done to address a specific need or opportunity. They gave because they knew the good that would be accomplished as a result and/or understood the need that would be addressed. Given the many opportunities to evangelize, ongoing physical needs of fellow members, it's hard to imagine a time when there would not be the need for monetary contributions, but it remains important to understand why we give. Members should understand how the funds are being used.

What truly make our offering an act of worship, God command it, and our intent behind it. We should be like the Macedonians whom Paul commended for the manner of their giving in **2Corinthians 8:1-5**: *“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”*

The real sacrifice was not their funds, but themselves, and our personal giving, while made in the midst of an assembly of believers must follow this dictate of Paul in **2 Corinthians 9:7** *“So let each one give as he purposes in*

The Church

his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Worship in Exhortative Learning (serving to exhort)

A visitor to Inver Grove might also note the extensive reading and teaching that is done during periods of worship. There is often a sermon lasting half of our time together, plus reading of scriptures and teachings preceding of the Lord’s Supper, prayers and songs. Such instruction and reading in the assemblies of the churches in the New Testament was common:

- Acts 20:7 Example of Paul in Troas
 - Colossians 4:16 Letter to be read in more than one church
 - 1 Corinthians 14:19, 26 Lessons from some to edify when the church is together
 - 1 Timothy 4:13 Evangelist devoted to public reading of Scripture, teaching
- (1) How is preaching, and listening to a sermon, worship?
 - (2) Does it honor God?
 - (3) Remember, the message from the New Testament, which we are studying, is a message from God. This was Paul’s point in **1Thessalonians 2:13** *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because*

The Church

when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” We are listening to what God wants to tell us, the very thoughts of God (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

Again we see the upward purpose of the church combining with the accomplishment of the inward purpose.

Worship in Prayer

Of all the acts of worship involving the church, perhaps the most intensely focused on God is prayer. The churches of the New Testament were well known for their constant prayers:

- Acts 2:42 devoted themselves to prayer
- Acts 13:4 Antioch - prayer before sending off Paul and Barnabas

The Church

- Acts 21:5 Tyre - church prayed with Paul on the beach
- Romans 15:30 - strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf
- 1Cor. 14:13-14 Prayer in a worship period
- Philippians 1:19 Paul mentions their prayers for him
- Colossians 4:2-3 Request the church pray for him

They prayed together, but for each member to be true worshipper during a prayer led by others, our thoughts have to be combined with them; we have to affirm our agreement with the requests, petitions and thanksgiving the leader makes. There should be things said on occasion that are especially meaningful to us personally - where we add to the intensity of the prayer. Once again, this upward focus on God reminds us of the value of being a church that has deep relationships with one another, where we are being built-up, taught the word and growing spiritually.

Consider how it takes knowing what it means to be forgiven when we thank God for our salvation, an appreciation of what lies before us when we pray about the hope of heaven.

The Church

Thought Questions

(1) How does a period of worship in an assembly of the church strengthen us personally and assist in the spreading of the word to unbelievers?

(2) What are hindrances to your personal worship of God when the church has gathered

(3) What can you do to overcome these hindrances?