



Lesson Eleven: Church

Much of our growth is about things that we need to personally do. We need to read our Bibles personally. We need to pray personally. Fasting is to be something between us and God for the most part. But that doesn't mean that God has left us alone all by ourselves. He has given us the church to help our spiritual growth and so that we can help others around us grow spiritually. The church is a wonderful gift to us! What a blessing to be a part of a loving body of believers!

Do You Have The Right Logo?

Logos tell us a lot without saying a lot. Just by seeing a logo, we can immediately identify a team, restaurant, or even our favorite tech companies. The church also has a logo. No, I'm not talking about the GN logo for Good News. The GN tells the people who see it about our local church, but Jesus has a logo that each of us should reflect to the people that we come in contact with. He says in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Do you see the one word that should represent His church? What is it? _____ Jesus said that everyone would know that you belong to Jesus by your love.

Whose Church Is It Anyway?

In John 13, Jesus talked about His followers and in Matthew 6 Jesus gives His followers the name church. Follow along in Matthew 6 beginning in verse 13, "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

According to these verses whose church is it? _____ The church is built upon the fact that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God that paid the price for our salvation. Jesus takes sole responsibility to build His church. The weight of that promise doesn't fall on my shoulders or yours. We are told to go and tell others about Jesus, but He is the One who saves and He is the One who builds His church. Now when we talk about building a church, we often get confused with the building itself, but the church is not a physical building. It is a people!

Two Illustrations

Jesus uses a number of illustrations to describe this group of people. He uses a building as an illustration. Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:5-6, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." What

does Peter say that we are in the building? _____ Jesus is described as the chief corner stone. The church is built upon Him!

My favorite illustration that He uses to describe the group of people called the church is the body. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 Paul tells us, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."

He continues the illustration in Colossians 1:18 where he says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." What part of the body is Jesus in this illustration? _____ Jesus is the head, we are His body, and just as our physical head tells our bodies where to go and what to do Jesus tells us where to go and what to do!!!

Two Offices And Two Ordinances

Jesus is the head of His church, and He has organized it and instructed us how it is to operate. He established two offices in the church, Pastors and Deacons. Pastors oversee the Spiritual needs of the church, while Deacons oversee the physical needs of the church.

Jesus has also given His church two ordinances, Baptism and Communion. Baptism public identifies us with Jesus as our Savior and that we are a part of His body. We believe that in order to be a member of the church you must trust Jesus as your Savior and follow His command to be baptized. If you haven't been baptized, then you are living in disobedience to the head of the church. Communion is a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made so that we could be a part of His body, the church. As we take of the bread and the cup, we remember the price that He paid for our salvation.

Let's Get Together!

As members of the body of Christ, His church we are to gather together to build up and equip each other for what God has called us to do in this world. We read in Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

The church is not a place where you only come to get, although there are certainly times where I am struggling and hurting, and I need the hope and encouragement of my brothers and sisters in Jesus. Our attitudes as we gather together ought to be how can I give? How can I help and support the people who are around me today? Look for the hurting. Look for the broken. How can you pray for them today? How can you love them today? How can you help them today?

We should do that as a whole congregation, but it is impossible to know everyone and what is going on in their day to day lives. None of us can have a significant impact on everyone. That's why we have LIFE Groups! So, that you can have an impact on the body of Christ. It is a small group of believers that pray for and support and encourage one another. Just like the church in Acts that met in small groups in houses all over Jerusalem in Acts 2. It's a place where we can be provoked unto love and to good works for Jesus! If you aren't yet in a LIFE Group, join one today!

Conclusion

Are you a part of the body of Jesus? _____ Have you trusted Jesus as Savior and taken the step of baptism? _____ If you have trusted in Jesus and been baptized, have you taken the step of joining together with His body? _____ If not, what is holding you back from joining Good News as a member? _____