

10 THE LOCAL CHURCH



“WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOCAL CHURCH?”

God has established three major institutions on this earth: the family, civil government, and the local church. It is the local church which 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 which the church should play in his everyday life.

I. WHAT IS THE LOCAL CHURCH?

A. It is not a building.

1. We worship God in spirit and in 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. “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, “*ye are the body of Christ.*”
2. Paul compares the church body to the human body in *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. Each member’s contribution is important, *verses 22-24.*
 - d. A properly functioning body operates as a single unit, *verses 25-27.*

II. WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?

A. The first local church in the Bible was organized in Jerusalem *Acts 2:41-47*.

1. The teaching of the Word of God, *verse 42*.
2. Fellowship with other believers, *verse 42*.
3. Prayer, *verse 42*.
4. The observance of the two ordinances of the church: baptism, *verse 41*, and 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, *verses 44-45*.
7. To reach out into 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, strengthen) the saints.

Ephesians 4:11-16

III. HOW DO I FUNCTION PROPERLY IN THE CHURCH BODY?

A. During your Christian life, you should mature in three broad, general stages:

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 – In time, 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*
3. Lead – As your growth continues, you should reach the point where you can begin to minister to others in the same way you have been ministered to. *2 Timothy 2:2*

B. These three stages can be roughly compared to the stages of growth physically: child, youth, adult.

C. Be patient! - This process takes time. Just be sure to remain faithful to God's established institution, the local church.

IV. 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*