

DISCIPLESHIP HANDBOOK

XO
RESOURCES



03

Lesson 3 | The Church

What is The Church?

Also known as: The Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, Children of God, Army of God...The church is not a building that people meet in, but rather, it is the term for people that follow Christ and have made him Lord over their life. This includes all the people around the world with like-minded faith, *even though they may be from very diverse backgrounds.*

Church is about fellowship (companionship) and community, but it is also about sharing God's love with the world.

The church can meet anywhere like in a building or a house. The first Christians were often persecuted and, as a result, often met in secret (usually in homes).

Acts 8:3 - As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

But, as the Scripture says when two or three are gathered...

Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

The First Church and Its Functions

Acts 2:42-47 - And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 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, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

(Definition of Apostle: a messenger – in this instance they were instructing and teaching others)

(Definition of Fear: awe and reverence – not terror)

Example of an Apostle - Paul told Timothy, you have been taught by me, so now find faithful men to teach and cycle continues. 2 Timothy 2:2 - And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Acts 2:41 - Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Even though it was a different culture, time and place, what they did is similar to what we do today i.e. they are all lived out in the modern church too:

- Shared the good news of Jesus
- Gathered regularly to hear teaching about Jesus
- Spent time together
- Prayed for each other
- Worshipped
- Helped each other and were generous
- Shared communion (breaking of bread)
- Were baptised

Following this lesson, we will then be discussing in more detail:

- Lesson 4 – Prayer
- Lesson 5 – Baptism & Communion
- Lesson 6 – Worship
- Lesson 7 – Evangelism & Missions

Why Are There So Many Types?

This is a good question! There are many denominations of churches.

Throughout history, different groups of Christians would focus on a specific part of Christianity and kind of “camp in it”. Also, people are different and choose churches that suit their style.

Even though there are many Christian denominations, the heart of the church you attend should still reflect the basic principles of the early church.

The Life of Jesus Christ	
4 BC	Jesus is born
27 AD	Jesus began his ministry at about 30 years of age
33 AD	Jesus was crucified
The Early Church	
33 AD	The Day of Pentecost - first Church born (Acts 2)
50 AD	The Apostle Paul began to spread the Gospel into the world - Acts 1:8 - But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
The Dark Ages	
500 - 1500	This period was called "The Dark Ages" as there was no spiritual light on earth. It was a time of religious struggle and Catholic corruption. Bibles were being translated into other languages which meant that the Catholic church would lose control over what people understood. Only Latin Bibles were allowed so that the educated priests were the only ones that could read it. All other translations were burned and the people who owned the bible, executed. They taught that people had to "buy" their way into heaven through indulgences (the payment of fixed sums of money depending on the offence for the forgiveness of sins). However, all throughout history, there is always a remnant of people who remained faithful to God. In the Great Schism of 1053, the church split into two parts - Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christianity.
Modern Christianity	
1517	Lutherans - Reformation by Martin Luther - we are saved through faith
1500's	Anglican Church (The Church of England)
1500's	Presbyterian
1600's	Baptist Church
1700's	Methodist church
1800's	Adventist Church
1800's	Salvation Army
1900's	Pentecostal

What to Look For?

If you are already connected in a church (or our church) that's great, but what if you have to move cities? What do we look for in a church? What are the core values of a Church? Here are three very important questions:

1. Who is Jesus? Fully God and fully man

(If they said only a prophet, a good man, or a different God from God the Father, then they have strayed from the Bible. Remembering Jesus was there in the beginning and is part of the godhead / trinity)

2. How do we get to God? By grace through faith

(If they say you have to work for your salvation, or do a list of tasks to be considered for salvation, they have strayed from scripture remembering in Lesson 1, it is a free gift of God)

3. What is the authority? The Bible or something else?

(Have they added a book or rewritten the Bible? Scripture is very clear that the Bible is the only authority. This doesn't mean we can't read good Christian books and devotionals, but they should not contradict the teaching of the Bible.)

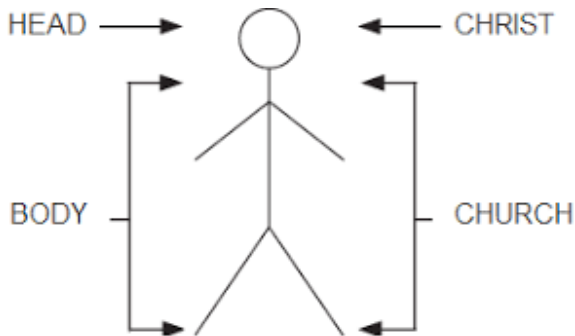
Deuteronomy 12:32 - "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

Proverbs 30:5-6 - Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Examples:

1. The Mormons (also known as the Church of the Latter-Day Saints). They say they believe in the Bible; however, they have added a book of further inspiration from God (The Book of Mormon) and they have their own prophet (Joseph Smith) who is not supported in the original canon of Scripture. They would not be considered a Christian denomination but a cult.
2. Jehovah's Witnesses. They consider themselves to be Christians, even though they reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus was not divine and that the Holy Spirit is an "active force" and not a person. They also published their own formal equivalence translation of the Bible: The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT) by Watch Tower Bible Society. Again, they would not be considered a Christian denomination but a cult.

Who is in Charge?



Who is in charge of the corporate church, meaning all the Christians around the world?
Well, Jesus is!

(Definition of corporate church: all of the individual Christians/churches grouped together to make up The Church)

Ephesians 5:23 - For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body.

He is the head and we are the body, all with different purposes and giftings, serving our Lord and Saviour.

At each local Church there are pastors/leaders/elders tasked with the care of the church. There are different titles, but the general principles apply.

Acts 14:21-23 - And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." So, when they had **appointed elders in every church**, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

(Definition of exhorting: strongly encourage or urge (someone) to do something)

(Definition of fasting: abstaining from all or some kinds of food or drink, while seeking guidance from God)

The role of a leader/shepherd/pastor:

- **Protect the flock** - Acts 20:28 - Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- **Preach the Word** - 2 Timothy 4:2 - Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.
- **To equip us for the work of the church** - Ephesians 4:11-12 - 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.

The leaders haven't been appointed to do all the work of the body, but rather equip and lead the body in the work of the church.

Every person has their individual role as part of the body.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 - 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 baptised 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.

Can We Do It Alone?

God created us for fellowship with each other, so we can encourage each other on our Christian journey - 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.

Dig a Little Deeper

The spread of the early church (video)

<https://thebibleproject.com/videos/acts-ch-13-20/>

*Do you want to know more about the history of the church
and the sacrifices made by Christians because they wouldn't
deny the truth about Jesus?*

http://kotisatama.net/files/kotisatama/Tekstit_ja_kirjat/foxe.pdf

After you have finished reading the Gospel of John, you could follow on to the book of Acts, which is about the first church.

Questions & Notes

Lesson 3

1. What is the Church?

2. What are some of the reasons we should be a part of our local Church instead of doing our own thing?

3. What are some of the ways you can start to be a part of the Church?

