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# C.O.R.E

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Commit - Obey - Relationship - Encourage



Lesson Nine:  
The Local Church

## What Is the Purpose of My Involvement in a 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 individual Christians the central role which the Church should play in their everyday lives and explain the special relationship they have with other believers.

### What Is the Local Church?

1. It is not a building.
  - A. We worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24)
  - B. Our bodies are the temple of God (I Corinthians 6:19)
2. It is not a denominational group of congregations.
3. A local church is a body of men and women 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.
  - A. Paul, writing to saved people, states clearly, "ye are the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27)
  - B. Paul compares the Church body to the human body in I Corinthians 12:14-27.
    1. Each member has a different function (vs. 14-20)
    2. No one member can function alone (v. 21)
    3. Each member's contribution is important (vs. 22-24)
    4. A properly functioning body operates as a single unit (vs. 25-27)

## **What Is the Function of the Local Church?**

1. The first local church in the Bible was organized in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41-47). The believers there organized their church for the following purposes:
  - A. The teaching of the Word of God (v. 42)
  - B. Fellowship with other believers (v. 42)
  - C. Prayer (v. 42)
  - D. The observance of the two ordinances of the Church: baptism (v. 41) and the Lord's Supper (v. 42)
  - E. To be a testimony of God's grace and power (v. 43)
  - F. For mutual assistance and ministry (vs. 44-45)
  - G. To reach out into the community (vs. 46-47)
  - H. To glorify and praise God (v. 47)
2. The single most important priority of the local church is to edify (build up, teach, strengthen) the saints (Ephesians 4:11-16).

## **How do I Function Properly in the Church Body?**

1. During your Christian life, you should mature in three broad, general stages:
  - A. 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 (2 Timothy 2:15).
  - B. 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 (James 1:22-25).
  - C. 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).

2. These three stages can be roughly compared to the stages of growth physically: child, youth, adult.
3. Be patient! This process takes time. Just be sure to remain faithful to God's Word and His established institution, the local church.

### **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)
2. Observe the qualities of a particular church and compare them with the biblical requirements of a proper church.
  - A. Do they believe and teach the Bible as the Word of God and the infallible guide for life (Titus 1:9)?
  - B. Is the membership encouraged to read and study the Bible as much as the leadership does (Acts 17:10-12)?
  - C. Is there evidence of soul winning (Matthew 7:20; Acts 2:47)?
  - D. Do they minister to the needs of people (Acts 6:1)?
  - E. Do they send out and support missionaries (Acts 13:1-3)?

### **How Am I Related to Other Christians?**

1. They are your brothers (and sisters) in Jesus Christ. Be sure to understand, only those in Jesus Christ (saved people) are your brothers, regardless of any other factors. Likewise, those not in Jesus Christ (unsaved people) are not your brothers regardless of any other factors (Romans 8:29; I John 3:1-3; Romans 9:8; Hebrews 2:9-12).
2. They are your fellow laborers in service for Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:5-10).

### **What Are My Responsibilities Toward Other Christians?**

1. We are to pray for each other. Almost every one of Paul's letters opens with a prayer for those he writing to (I Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2 Timothy 1:3).
2. We are to minister to each other.
  - A. Physically: For those in your local church family, as well as the entire body of Christ in other areas (Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:13; Acts 11:27-30).
  - B. Spiritually (Galatians 6:1-2; Romans 15:1-2; Hebrews 13:3)
3. We are to encourage and edify one another (I Thessalonians 5:11).
4. We are to serve one another (Philippians 2:3-4; Matthew 20:25-28).

### **What Should Be My Attitude Toward Other Christians?**

1. The primary attitude should be to love them (I John 3:14-16; I Peter 4:8).
2. Be patient with them (Romans 15:5-7).
3. Be sensitive to their needs (I John 3:17-18; James 2:15-16).
4. Be forgiving to each other (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

## What is “Fellowship”?

1. “Fellowship” is a term commonly used by Christians generally referring to getting together for activities or times of sharing common interests. However, this is only a small part of true fellowship. It is true that to fellowship is to share things, but true biblical fellowship goes far beyond just a meal or an activity. It is the sharing of life through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ with another believer.
2. The essential elements of true biblical fellowship are not physical matters such as social status, friendship, common interests, etc; they are spiritual requirements of personal character.
  - A. Humility (Philippians 2:3-8)
  - B. Honesty (Ephesians 4:25; 2 Corinthians 4:2)
  - C. Love (John 13:35; Galatians 5:13-15)
  - D. Hospitality (Titus 1:8; Acts 2:42, 46-47)
3. The areas of true fellowship include, among others:
  - A. Prayer (2 Corinthians 1:11)
  - B. Faith (Romans 1:12)
  - C. Ministry (2 Corinthians 8:4, Galatians 2:9)
  - D. Suffering (Philippians 3:10; I Peter 4:13; 5:1)
4. Although doctrinal beliefs are vitally important, true biblical fellowship is not based on exact doctrinal agreement, but in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must learn to have fellowship with Him personally before your fellowship with other believers will be proper (I John 1:3-7).

## **What If Another Christian Offends Me?**

Unfortunately, this will probably happen to you if you spend any time with your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. There will be times of offense, hurt and disagreement within the body of Christ, just as in your physical family. If and when this happens, the Bible gives a definite progression of principles to deal with the matter. How should you respond in such a case?

1. Take the offense directly to the other party first, privately, and try to settle it between yourselves (Matthew 18:15).
2. If the matter is not resolved privately, take it to a leader in your church to attempt to mediate the situation (Matthew 18:16; I Corinthians 6:1-5).
3. Do not go to the unsaved to settle a problem within the body of Christ (I Corinthians 6:6).
4. If this matter still cannot be resolved:
  - A. Personally accept the wrong (I Corinthians 6:7-8).
  - B. Commit the situation to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will handle it justly (I Peter 2:19-23).
  - C. Forgive your brother (Colossians 3:13).
  - D. Pray for your brother (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:14).

# Questions & Answers

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1. What are the three institutions God has established on Earth?
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
2. List some things that a church is not.
3. Define the following terms:
  - A. Local Church
  - B. "The Church"
4. The first local church in the Bible was at Jerusalem. In Acts 2:41-47, we see this local church functioning. List the functional purposes found in this passage of Scripture.
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
  - E.
  - F.
  - G.
  - H.



5. What is the most important priority of a local church?
6. The Christian should be \_\_\_\_\_ because growing spiritually is a process which can only be properly accomplished within the established \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. When a Christian is looking for a local church to serve in, what are some qualities he should be checking for?
- A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
  - E.
8. List the two primary aspects of your relationship with other Christians.
- A.
  - B.
9. List four responsibilities you have toward other Christians, and give a Scripture reference that best defines each point.
- A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.

10. List four attitudes you should have toward other Christians, and give a Scripture reference that best defines each point.

A.

B.

C.

D.

11. List four character qualities needed in the Christian's life in order to participate in true fellowship with other believers.

A.

B.

C.

D.

12. In the event another Christian offends you, list three principles which should govern your actions in attempting to resolve the matter.

A.

B.

C.

13. Briefly explain the primary purpose of this lesson.

# Key Memory Verses

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*“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).*

*“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiven gone another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).*

*“Now ye are the body of Christ , and members in particular” (I Corinthians 12:27).*

*“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanest us from all sin” (I John 1:7).*

# *Additional Thoughts*

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**Among many Christians today, the following attitudes prevail:**

1. In order to really learn the Bible, you need to go to Bible college.
2. The primary purpose of a local church is to be a social or political organization.
3. The local church is primarily for weddings, funerals, and religious holidays.
4. Only the “leadership” of the church is charged with any responsibility of meeting people’s spiritual needs.
5. We are not to associate with Christians who do not believe exactly as we do.
6. “Fellowship” must be centered around a meal or an activity.

From the Bible principles taught in this lesson, you should understand that these teachings are false, and why.

*Questions*

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Write any questions you may have concerning the subjects of this lesson.

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