Level 2 Lesson 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

By Don Krow

Today we're talking about the importance of Christ's church. I'd like to read a scripture out of Hebrews 10:25. It says, *"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."* As we look into the importance of Christ's church, my question is, "What is the church?"

I took the Discipleship Evangelism program into a local church here in Colorado Springs. We trained people in the church in how to use it, and we used it out on the field. Within six weeks of working with this local church, we had established twenty Bible studies outside of that local congregation. For months, we were working with these people in the Bible studies. The pastor really confused me one day when he said, "You know, the Bible says that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Why aren't we seeing these people from the Bible studies come into our church?"

When we were out on the field, people were being saved and they were being discipled and ministered to. But what the pastor really meant was, "Why aren't they coming to meet together on Sunday morning in this building?" My concept of the church was a little off too. What the pastor said really troubled me, and I didn't know what to do. I thought, *Is the* Discipleship Evangelism *program really working? Are we really reaching people's lives?* I knew we were reaching many people, but what confused me was why they were not coming to the Sunday morning service.

I decided to do a study on the word "church." What's covered in this lesson is what I discovered. In Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2, Acts 5:42, and Acts 20:20, the Bible primarily speaks about the early New Testament church meeting in someone's home. I know that there are all kinds of churches. There are home churches, churches with small and large congregations, and very large mega-churches. The one thing that really caught my attention in the Scripture was that the New Testament church seemed to meet together in small congregations in people's homes.

The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words by Lawrence O. Richards (p.164) says, "Anyone may be excused for being a bit confused about the meaning of the word, 'church'; we use the word in so many ways. It means a particular building (e.g., the church on 4th street), a denomination or organized faith (the Reformed Church in America) [or the Baptist Church], and even a Sunday meeting (e.g., did you go to church today). None of these uses is particularly Biblical." And I got to thinking, *What does this really mean? What does the word "church" really mean?* I'm going to quote further. It says, "Since many persons think of a church as a building for religious services rather than a congregation engaging in worship, the rendering church can be misleading." The Greek word for "church" is *ecclesia* and literally means an assembly of people together for the purpose of worship or prayer or praise or just looking unto God. I'm going to read

some other things here. It says, “Ecclesia in the New Testament can encompass any number of believers. It can be used of small groups that met in homes (Romans 16:5). It encompassed all believers living in a large city (Acts 11:22), or a large geographical district, such as Asia or Galatia.” It goes on to say, “The typical meeting of the church was in a home. When such a congregation met ‘everyone [had] a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation’ (1 Corinthians 14:26). Individuals shared and others ‘weighed carefully what was said’ (1 Corinthians 14:29)...such sharing remains essential to the very existence of the church as a community of faith...Each person was expected to contribute and to serve others with his or her spiritual gift(s).”

In Hebrews 10:25 it says, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.”* The church is an assembly of people coming together for the purpose of looking to Jesus, praising the Lord, to receive direction from the Lord, to follow through with that direction. The primary purpose of the early New Testament church was edification. They met together for the purpose of building each other up in the faith.

The early church was an evangelistic church. People were scattered everywhere, sharing their faith in Jesus Christ, and as they did, the Lord added to the church—not to a building—but added to the people of God as they repented and believed. Then they assembled themselves together to encourage one another, to exercise their spiritual gifts, to serve one another, and to have a time of fellowship with one another by sharing a meal together. When they were together, they exercised their spirituals gifts to edify one another. Then they would go out and preach the Word, and the whole cycle would begin again. They believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they assembled themselves together. It didn’t matter where they assembled. It could’ve been in a building or someone’s home. It could’ve been a large amount of people, or it could’ve been a small number of people meeting in homes. It didn’t really matter, as long as they met together in the name of the Lord for the purpose of exercising their gifts, to encourage one another, and to fellowship with one another with the end result being edification, or building, each other up.

I discovered that what we were doing with the Discipleship Evangelism program through the local church I had mentioned earlier, by meeting in twenty different Bible studies throughout the city is we were meeting in twenty different churches. It wasn’t churches as we know them today, but we were meeting as the church, twenty times a week, because we were meeting together in the name of the Lord Jesus to encourage one another, to look to the Lord Jesus, to be instructed out of the Word of God, and to exercise our spiritual gifts.

No matter what church you go to—no matter if you’re in a denominational church or a non-denominational church, if you are meeting in a mega-church or a small home group—the Scripture is telling us that as you see the Day approaching, and as sin abounds, the grace of God much more abounds. Grace is going to abound within these assemblies of God’s people. In the church where each believer has a part of the ministry of Jesus Christ, you can minister to one another, exhort one another, and encourage one another as you exercise your spiritual gift with one another.

We would all benefit by meeting with a group of believers in this way. Even if it's just two or three that are meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus, we need to meet together on a regular basis. It is good to meet together to use our spiritual gifts, to exhort one another, to encourage one another, to look to Jesus together, and to pray for one another. There's a lot we could say about the church. We could talk about the elders, overseers, pastors, and church government, but that's not the purpose of our teaching today. The purpose of our teaching is to know the purpose of the church and to know we do not have to be isolated like one man on an island all to himself. We cannot survive that way. When we received salvation, God put us in the body of Christ—the universal body of believers. We need one another, and we need to meet together as God's church to encourage one another and serve one another with the spiritual gifts that God has given us. I encourage you, meet together today with God's people.

Discipleship Questions

1. Read Hebrews 10:25. What are we not to forsake?

_____

2. Read Acts 5:42. Daily in the temple and in every home, Jesus was _____ and _____.

3. Read Acts 2:42. What four things did the early church continue to do?

_____

4. Read Acts 2:44-45. The early church continued to give money to build a church parking lot. True or False.

5. Read 1 Corinthians 12:28. List eight different kinds of gifts that God has placed in His church.

_____

6. Read 1 Corinthians 14:26. When the people of God meet together as the church, there was freedom to express their gifts. Name five things that happened when they met.

_____

7. Read Acts 6:1. The early New Testament church shared daily food with _____.

8. Read James 1:27. The only kind of religion that God cares about is the religion that _____.

9. Read 1 Timothy 5:9-11. Widows who were supported by the early New Testament church had to meet what criteria?

_____

10. Read 1 Corinthians 9:14. Besides the church supporting widows, orphans, and the poor, it also supported _____.

11. Read Matthew 25:35-40. Why do people think giving money in an offering plate is the only way to give to God? _____

12. Read Acts 4:32-35 and Proverbs 3:9-10. The early church elders and pastors did what with the finances? _____

Scriptures to Use with Questions

Hebrews 10:25 – *"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."*

Acts 5:42 – *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."*

Acts 2:42 – *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

Acts 2:44-45 – "[44] *And all that believed were together, and had all things common;* [45] *And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."*

1 Corinthians 12:28 – *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."*

1 Corinthians 14:26 – *"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."*

Acts 6:1 – *"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."*

James 1:27 – *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

1 Timothy 5:9-11 – "[9] *Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,* [10] *Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.* [11] *But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry."*

1 Corinthians 9:14 – *"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."*

Matthew 25:35-40 – "[35] *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:* [36] *Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* [37] *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?* [38] *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?* [39] *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?* [40] *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

Acts 4:32-35 – *"*[32] *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.* [33] *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.* [34] *Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,* [35] *And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."*

Proverbs 3:9-10 – *"*[9] *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:* [10] *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."*

Answer Key

1. Read Hebrews 10:25. What are we not to forsake? **The assembling of ourselves together as believers.**

2. Read Acts 5:42. Daily in the temple and in every home, Jesus was **taught** and **preached**.

3. Read Acts 2:42. What four things did the early church continue to do? **They continued in the apostles' teachings, fellowship, breaking of bread (eating together and sharing communion), and prayer.**

4. Read Acts 2:44-45. The early church continued to give money to build a church parking lot. **False.**

5. Read 1 Corinthians 12:28. List eight different kinds of gifts that God has placed in His church. **Apostles, prophets, teachers, those who do miracles, those who have the gifts of healing, helps, those with gifts of administration, and those who speak in unknown tongues.**

6. Read 1 Corinthians 14:26. When the people of God meet together as the church, there was freedom to express their gifts. Name five things that happened when they met. **One person had a song, another a teaching, another would tell some revelation God had given, one would speak in an unknown tongue, and another would explain what the unknown tongue meant.**

7. Read Acts 6:1. The early New Testament church shared daily food with **widows**.

8. Read James 1:27. The only kind of religion that God cares about is the religion that **cares for orphans and widows in their troubles**.

9. Read 1 Timothy 5:9-11. Widows who were supported by the early New Testament church had to meet what criteria? **"A widow who is put on the list for support must be a woman who is at least sixty years old and was faithful to her husband. She must be well respected by everyone because of the good she has done. Has she brought up her children well? Has she been kind to strangers? Has she served other Christians humbly? Has she helped those who are in trouble? Has she always been ready to do good? The younger widows should not be on the list…" (1 Timothy 5:9-11,** *New Living Translation***).**

10. Read 1 Corinthians 9:14. Besides the church supporting widows, orphans, and the poor, it also supported **those who minister the Word.**

11. Read Matthew 25:35-40. Why do people think giving money in an offering plate is the only way to give to God? **Because that's what they have been taught.**

12. Read Acts 4:32-35 and Proverbs 3:9-10. The early church elders and pastors did what with the finances? **Gave to those in need, honoring the Lord with the giving.**

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