

Session 3

The Body of Christ – The Church, Groups, and Fellowship

The Church

The word 'church' can mean different things to different people, so the first question we need to answer is this: "What exactly is the church?" Is it the building where we meet on a regular basis, or is it the physical location (property where the buildings are located), or is the 'church' really neither of these two things?

To answer our question, look at the Greek word for church, which is: *ekklesia*. It was originally used to refer to a group of people who were meeting together, but it was never used to describe the meeting place or a building!

So then by definition, the Church is 'us,' a gathering of Christ Followers! But some people believe that they really do not need to gather in a large group as long as they read their bibles at home. Do you think this a valid belief?

WE are
the Church!

Read Hebrews 10:24-25. Does this verse agree or disagree?

If the Church is us when we gather, what two things are we doing?

1. Studying and learning from God's Word.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Through studying God's Word, we are learning how to love God better. Read John 14:21. What does this verse tell us regarding HOW we demonstrate to God that we love Him?

2. Corporate worship (praising God together in a group setting).

"Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.² Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. ³Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy." Psalm 33:1-3

Worship is always about praising and thanking God. Our focus should be upward, not inward. When we sing our praises, it is a great time for us to tell God out loud how much we appreciate and adore Him. But not the ONLY time! We should do that in private too.

Read Ephesians 4:11-16. Is God showing you there is more to being a Christ Follower than just attending church on the weekend? Going forward, what role do you see yourself in as part of the body of Christ?

Groups

Groups have one simple purpose: to bring people together. They are a place where we connect with others and learn to 'do life together.' They are also a way we can make a big church filled with people seem smaller and more intimate. We see this small group model being demonstrated for us by some of the first believers.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

Groups bring like-minded people together by meeting in a private home, or in a class that meets at church. One of the reasons groups exist is to make it easy for you to get connected with other Christ followers! Whether you are new to the area, have a busy schedule, are a little shy, or have not been ready to get more involved, groups are an easy way to get connected. Groups are safe, comfortable places where you can meet new people, make friends, and grow spiritually as you learn about Jesus, and have fun in a social setting. When you are part of a group, the church begins to feel like a part of your family.

Once again, we see the early Church modeling this for us in Acts 2 and Matthew 18:

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20

Groups are a place where others do not just know your name; they care about what is happening in your life and want to support and encourage you.

In a group you will:

- ▶ Connect with other believers
- ▶ Grow in Christ together
- ▶ Support and encourage each other in times of need

Fellowship

We already learned that relationships are a very important part of our lives as Christ Followers. But there is another type of relationship we should have too. The type of relationship we are talking about is in a setting even smaller than a group. This would look more like a few close Christian friends, or even a 'best friend' at church.

Christ Followers grow by being disciplined, or learning 'hands on,' from spiritually mature believers. But really the first steps in discipleship are friendships and fellowship. Jesus himself demonstrated this fellowship concept for us.

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” Matthew 17:1

If we are not connected with other believers in fellowship, here is something to consider: who will pray for us and with us when we have a need or a problem?

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16

When we do life together, our problems become smaller as God uses others to bring support and encouragement into our lives. Connecting with other Christ Followers through fellowship provides accountability, discipleship, and facilitates our spiritual growth.

Read Proverbs 27:17. What benefit do you find in that verse?

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

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11. What are the two things we are told to do? one another and

The purpose of gathering is for mutual encouragement and strengthening one another.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

Summary Points:

- ▶ WE are the Church.
- ▶ Groups are safe, comfortable places where you can meet new people, make friends, and grow spiritually as you learn about Jesus, and have fun!
- ▶ Christ Followers grow by being discipled, or learning ‘hands on,’ from spiritually mature believers.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Commit to attending church on a regular weekly basis.
- ▶ Read Galatians 6:1-10 and think about how a group may help you to model this.
- ▶ PRAY about joining a group, either in a private home or a Bible study at your church.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another
on toward love and good deeds...”
Hebrews 10:24