

LESSON 3 God's Design for Workers

Kim saw that there were many kinds of needs that brought believers together—needs for teaching, for encouragement, for material help, for guidance, for strength. But Kim wanted to know more about what the church should be like so that it could actually meet those needs. He wanted to know how its different parts should work together.

As Kim continued to study his Bible, he found several pictures or illustrations of the church. Each one helped him to understand better God's purpose and design for it. He also discovered that people who were members of the church had ministries—special abilities to help each other. When the members of the church used their abilities, the church was able to fulfill God's purpose. Kim was amazed to find out how many of these abilities there were!

You are about to discover more about God's purpose for the church and the ministries of its members. May the truths you learn in this lesson inspire you to be part of God's purpose and fit into His design for the church.

The Plan

- A. Images of the Church's Function
- B. The Body at Work

The Goals

1. Describe the church by using three illustrations.
2. Differentiate between the work of Christ as head of the body and of believers as members of the body.

A. IMAGES OF THE CHURCH'S FUNCTION

Goal 1. Describe the church by using three illustrations.

A Bride

As believers in Jesus Christ, we unite to worship God, to encourage one another, and to make Christ known to others. By working together, we accomplish more for His Kingdom. The New Testament gives several illustrations of the church. We will look at three of these: a bride, a building, and a human body.

The apostle Paul used the image of a bride to help the Corinthian believers understand their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Revelation uses this same figure of speech to describe the wedding of the Lamb (Christ) and the bride (church). "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7–8).

An angel of the Lord spoke to John, the writer of the book of Revelation, saying, "'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb'" (Revelation 21:9). The church is

described as the bride of Christ to help us understand our close relationship to Christ.

A Building

Just as the apostle Paul compared the church to a bride, so another Bible writer compared it to a building. Stones were a common building material in Israel, so it was natural for Peter to think of stones when he wanted to tell us about a building. In 1 Peter 2:4–5, he urges us to be built into a spiritual temple of living stones. Notice that there is only one building but many stones, just as there are many believers but only one church.

First Corinthians 3:9 also notes that we are God’s building. We become a dwelling place for God. He lives in each of us as believers, but it is also important to realize that all believers together make a spiritual building where God dwells.

A Body

A third picture of the church compares it to a human body (Ephesians 1:23; Romans 12:4–5). The body of Christ is not just a group of Christians gathered in one place. Its members are like different parts of the body that work together. Though they are different from each other, there is unity of purpose and oneness of heart. So the body does not express the idea of just one member; it presents itself as a complete unit. Christ’s body, the church, is made up of many members that form one body that works together.

Application

1 Circle the letter in front of each Bible verse that compares the church to a building.

- a)** Romans 12:4–5
- b)** 1 Corinthians 3:9
- c)** 1 Corinthians 10:17
- d)** Ephesians 1:23
- e)** 1 Peter 2:4–5

2 Each of the three pictures of the church shows a special truth about it. Match each picture (right side) to the truth you think it emphasizes the most (left side).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| ... a God's dwelling place | 1) Bride |
| ... b Parts working together | 2) Building |
| ... c Closeness to Christ | 3) Body |



B. THE BODY AT WORK

Goal 2. Differentiate between the work of Christ as head of the body and of believers as members of the body.

One of the great wonders of God's creation is the human body, which has the ability to heal itself and to recover after illness or accident. The body of Christ, the church, has this ability too. When problems come, it has a way of healing itself through the Holy Spirit. This healing ability functions best if every part is present and working. God wants the church to be a healthy body that has no parts missing. Consider how the body of Christ works.

Christ Is the Head

In the Bible, the example of the human body is used to show the way believers work together with Christ. The human body without a head is useless. The head of the church is Jesus Christ.

In a human body, the head directs the body and causes all the parts to function as one unit. The head controls the activities of the body. When something is needed in the body, the head is aware of this. In the same way it is the work of Christ, the head, to direct the different parts of the body so that they work together and help each other.

A brother may be suffering and in need of help. As the head, Christ tells another member of the body to pray for the sick

member. When a teacher is preparing to give a Bible study, he prays and Christ gives guidance. Thoughts come to his mind to help him teach. This is the work of Christ as the head.

Sometimes Christ gives directions, but we disobey. When that happens the work of the church is hindered. The story is told of a woman who was impressed by the Holy Spirit to give money to a poor family. She planned to obey but was always busy with her work. Three days went by before she gave the family the money. The mother cried, “Oh thank you, thank you. We have been without food for three days and now God has answered our prayers.”

As the head, Christ gives gifts to His church to provide it with all it needs to do its work. Before Jesus returned to heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 1–2). God wants each of us as members of the church to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38–39). The church must cooperate with Christ. When we as members of the church pray, the Holy Spirit helps us understand what Christ wants us to accomplish.

Application

- 3** The relationship of Christ to the church is compared to that of the human body to show that
- a)** the church must be directed by Christ.
 - b)** each member of the body has a different function.
 - c)** the human body is useless without a head.
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Believers Are the Body

Through His body, Christ continues His work in the world. God has given different gifts and ministries to the members of the body so that this work can be done. These gifts and ministries also keep the body strong and help it fight against evil. As each member, filled with the Holy Spirit, allows the life of Christ to flow through him or her, the church is strengthened.

Let us study these gifts and ministries, which are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:6–8, and 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. Read each of these passages and pay careful attention to the following explanations:

1. An apostle is sent to start new churches.
2. A prophet speaks forth God's Word.
3. An evangelist goes from place to place preaching the gospel.
4. A pastor guides the church as a shepherd guides his sheep.
5. A teacher explains the Word of God.
6. One who exhorts calls people near to God and to His purpose.
7. Serving means giving relief and assistance.
8. Sharing is giving, whether money, time, or talents, to spread the gospel.
9. One who has authority wisely governs those under him.
10. One who shows kindness gives practical help to the needy.
11. A divine message of wisdom gives advice or helpful words.
12. Knowledge is the use of information and facts for a particular need as God directs.
13. Faith is believing God in a special way.
14. Power to heal is the ability to pray effectively for the sick.
15. Power to work miracles is special ability to do things that overcome the laws of nature.
16. One who speaks God's prophetic message builds up, comforts, or encourages others.
17. Ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not is that of knowing whether or not the Spirit of God is present.

18. The ability to speak in strange tongues is the power to say things by the Spirit in a language unknown to the speaker.

19. The ability to explain what is said is the power to give the meaning of words spoken in an unknown language.

When these gifts are active among the believers, the body is blessed and strengthened, and God's work is done.

Application

4 Match each need (left side) to the gift or ministry that would best help meet the need (right side). Write the number of the gift in front of each need it could meet.

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| ... a Sara feels discouraged. | 1) Teaching |
| ... b Jim is very sick. | 2) Encouragement |
| ... c Robert does not understand the Bible. | 3) Power to heal |
| ... d Larry's family needs clothing. | 4) Showing kindness |
| ... e Susan wants to learn about spiritual gifts. | |



Check Your Answers

- 3 a)** the church must be directed by Christ.
- 1 b)** 1 Corinthians 3:9.
e) 1 Peter 2:4–5.
- 4 a)** 2) Encouragement.
b) 3) Power to heal.
c) 1) Teaching.
d) 4) Showing kindness.
e) 1) Teaching.
- 2 a)** 2) Building
b) 3) Body
c) 1) Bride