

WHAT IS THE TRUE CHURCH?

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY

- *What Does Church Mean?*
- *What Does the True Church Do?*
- *Why Belong to a Church?*
- *What's Happening to the Church?*

PART 1

WHAT DOES CHURCH MEAN?

The word church has several meanings:

Those Who Belong to Christ

Jesus said, "I will build my church." The word He used means "called out ones." Christ calls us out to follow Him. We leave our old life of sin and become members of that great body of called out ones who recognize Jesus as their Head. This is the true Church. Only God knows who all of its members are. Many of them are already in heaven.

Colossians 1:18. He is the head of his body, the church; he is the source of the body's life.

Romans 12:5. Though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body.



The Local Church

In any community those who share the same faith in Christ get together regularly to worship Him, just as they did in Bible times. They form a local church and work together for the Lord.

Matthew 18:20. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.

Colossians 4:15. Give our best wishes to the brothers in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house.



National Church or Denomination

A national church, or denomination, is an organization of many local churches. They help one another and can do much more for the Lord by working together than they could separately. They publish literature, train ministers, open up new churches, and operate schools and orphanages.

The leaders of the national church or denomination help the local churches with their problems, as the apostles did in Bible times.

Acts 15:6, 23, 41. The apostles and the elders met together to consider this question. . . . They sent the following letter He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.



Different denominations have been formed because of the differences in belief about the right form of worship, the best form of church organization, and the meaning of certain parts of the Bible. However, many denominations agree on the most important points, and they cooperate in work and worship.

The word church also means a building where God's people meet together. Whether it is large or small, richly decorated or simple in form is not important. What really matters is God's presence there.

For You to Do

Underline the one phrase that completes each sentence correctly.

- When Jesus said, "I will build my church," He used a word for church which meant a
 - a. national organization of leaders and officials.
 - b. group of people called out from the world.
 - c. building set apart for worship and prayer.

For You to Do (cont)

- When the Bible says that the church is like a body, it is drawing attention to the church as a
 - a. living unity of different parts with Christ as its head.
 - b. network of local groups of Christians who work together.
 - c. society of people who teach children and help orphans.
- Those who are part of the true church all
 - a. belong to one national organization.
 - b. follow identical forms of worship.
 - c. share the same faith in Christ.

PART 2

WHAT DOES THE TRUE CHURCH DO?

Church here and in Part 3 refers to the body of Christ as it works through local and national churches.

The True Church Loves God and Lives for Him

God wants us to love Him fully and completely. He made us so that we could be His children, enjoy His love, and love Him too. The church meets with God in worship. Together and individually its members express their love to God in prayer, praise, music, giving, Christian service, and obedience to His commands.

The True Church Tells the World About Jesus

Every Christian should tell his family and friends how they can be saved. The Holy Spirit helps us take the gospel message to every part of the world. We work together to do this.

Memorize This

Mark 5:19. Go back home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.



Mark 16:15. Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all mankind.

Acts 1:8. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me . . . to the ends of the earth.

The True Church Teaches God's Word

The church uses every way it can to teach its members the truth and train them to follow Jesus.

Matthew 28:19, 20. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.

The Church Cares for Its Members

The church provides for the spiritual growth of its members by meeting regularly for worship, Bible study, fellowship, and Christian service.

The church gives counsel and help to those who have problems. It does what it can for those who are in need, both members and non-members.

For You to Do

- The people in David's church care for each other, meet to worship God, and have times of Bible study. What do they also need to do that they are not doing? Write your answer in the space provided.

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PART 3

WHY BELONG TO A CHURCH?

Because You Need the Church

God has placed people in the church to help you and teach you. In this way He meets your spiritual needs.

Ephesians 4:11, 12. He appointed some to be . . . evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, to build up the body of Christ.



You should not join a church with the idea of getting it to help you with money, food, or other material needs. As you put God first in your life, He will see that all your needs are met.

Because the Church Needs You

Every part of the body has its work to do. There is work for you as a member of the body of Christ. By itself, a finger is not useful. It must join with the hand to become useful. Likewise, you must take your place in the church and let God use you to help others.

Romans 12:4, 6. We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us.

Because You Can Serve God Better in the Church

When you are baptized in water and join a church, this is a good testimony to others as well as an act of obedience and dedication to God.

You serve God also by giving to His cause. You can do this best through a church. It administers the money carefully, paying the expenses for taking the gospel to the local community and to many other places. Because someone gave, you heard the gospel. Because you give, others hear and are saved.

2 Corinthians 9:6, 7. Remember this: the man who plants a few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop. Each one should give, then, as he has decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly.



You have many opportunities for Christian service in the church: praying, witnessing, giving out literature, singing, teaching, preaching, and taking others to church. Even your faithful attendance pleases God and encourages others.

Hebrews 10:25. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another, all the more since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming near.



For You to Do

Vincent believes that he doesn't need to meet with other Christians because he can read the Bible and pray at home. What should you do to help him realize that he is misguided? Draw a line under the description of the best response.

- Point out that he needs friends even though he thinks he does not.
- Explain the reasons the Bible gives for meeting with other Christians.
- Tell him that other Christians can help him with his financial problems.

PART 4
**WHAT'S HAPPENING
TO THE CHURCH?**

Twenty Centuries of Warfare

Ever since Jesus Christ founded His church, Satan has been fighting against it. The church is battling to rescue souls from his lies and deceptions.



Ephesians 6:12. We are not fighting against human beings, but against the wicked spiritual forces.

1 Peter 5:8. Be alert, be on the watch! For your enemy, the Devil, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Satan's Strategy and Weapons

Satan tries to separate Christians from Christ so that he can defeat the church. His main strategies are persecution, deception, and temptation.

He uses people to persecute and kill Christians. He infiltrates the church with false teachers and blinds some of its leaders with unbelief. He tempts Christians to sin so that they become weak and powerless. He tries to make them doubt God and neglect their relationship with Him.

The Church's Strategy and Weapons

Our defense is to stay in touch with our Commander in Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our main weapons are prayer, faith, and the Word of God. The Holy Spirit, who is stronger than Satan, gives us the strength and power to defeat him.

Ephesians 6:10, 11. Build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power. Put on all the armor that God gives you, so that you will stand up against the Devil's evil tricks.



The Victory of the Church

Through the ages persecution has purified the church and made it grow. The Holy Spirit has sent waves of revival to deliver her from sin and false teachings. We may have to suffer now, but soon

the war will be over. Satan will be defeated, and the church will reign forever with Christ.

Matthew 16:18. I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it.



Romans 8:37. In all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us!

Your Part in It All

In this war every Christian is a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:3. Take your part in suffering, as a loyal soldier of Christ.



Revelation 2:10. Don't be afraid of anything . . . Be faithful to me, even if it means death, and I will give you life as your prize of victory.

For You to Do

- Every Christian is a soldier in the spiritual battle that is taking place because every Christian is a target for
- The Christian defeats Satan and his lies by using the sword of truth which is the

**CONGRATULATIONS ON HAVING
FINISHED THIS COURSE!**

Now, complete the questions for Lesson 6 in the Lesson Review Questions at the end of this booklet. Then send your answers to the review questions to your local ICI director or office. The address is on the back cover.

We hope you have enjoyed studying these lessons. We encourage you to enroll in another ICI course so you can learn more about God and His wonderful plan for you.