

LESSON 5 The Church Body

In the last lesson, we saw that believers are called many names: disciples, saints, brethren, and Christians. Each name tells us something about them. In the same way, the church is called different names. Each name tells us something about the church. We will look at one of these names.

The Bible often says the church is like a body. In this lesson, we will learn what that means. In the church, you have contact with other believers. They are important to you. Thank God for these people. Ask God what you can do to help them. They can help you, also. This study is wasted unless you apply the information to your own life. Put into practice today what you learn.

The Plan

- A. Christ and the Church
- B. Relationships Within the Church

The Goals

1. Indicate the source of the church's spiritual life.
2. Describe the relationships within the church.

A. CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Goal 1. Indicate the source of the church's spiritual life.

The Bible compares the church to many things. It says the church is like a building (Ephesians 2:21), a wife (Ephesians 5:22–23), a flock (John 10:16), and a vine (John 15:4). This list is not complete. Someone has counted more than 200 such pictures of the church in the New Testament! We cannot study all of these, but I have chosen one—the church is like a *body*.

Christ the Source of Life

A living body is growing and active. Each body has a head. The relationship between the head and the body is very important. Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, “He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). The church takes its life from Christ. Buildings, organization, and meetings do not bring life. Only Jesus can do that.

Each believer and the whole church “have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” (Colossians 2:10). The body is identified with the head, and the church is identified with Christ.

Application

1 Choose the best answer of each two given in parentheses, and write it in the blank space.

a) The church lives because it draws life from

.....
(its organization) (Christ)

b) Who is the head of the church?

.....
(the bride) (Christ)

2 Read Colossians 2:12–13 and complete the following sentence.

Believers are identified with Christ in His
and in His



Christ the Lord

Christ is not only the source of life. He is also the Lord of the church. Just as a wife obeys her husband, the church obeys Christ (Ephesians 5:24). The hand does not tell the head what to do—the head tells the hand. Likewise, the church must be obedient to Christ. “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22–23).

Everybody has a lord. Some people obey a human master, and many obey sin. The message of the early Christians was “Jesus Christ is Lord!”

Christ the Provider

Jesus Christ is a loving Lord. In love, Christ takes care of us. Paul explained, “No one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body” (Ephesians 5:29–30). The church lives

because of its contact with Christ. It grows because of Christ. He is “the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow” (Colossians 2:19).

Application

3 Think of some of the ways Christ has provided for the church in your area. List them here.

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4 List the three ways that Christ is related to His body, the church.

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B. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Unity in the Church

Goal 2. Describe the relationships within the church.

The New Testament is written more to the church as a whole rather than to individual believers. Christians cannot live away from other believers. In the early church, new converts were quickly taken into the fellowship. Luke wrote, “All the believers were one in heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).

Regardless of race, nationality, or social standing, all believers are united in one church. “There is one body and one Spirit” (Ephesians 4:4). This unity does not mean that all Christians must belong to the same church organization. It does not mean that all believers must worship in the same way. It does

mean, however, that there should be a spirit of love and oneness among believers.

Divisions in the church are painful, and the church suffers because of them. The church at Corinth had this problem. (See 1 Corinthians 1:12–13.) So Paul appealed for unity “so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Corinthians 12:25). Divisions in the church are usually caused by people having greater concern for themselves than for others.

Application

5 Choose the best answer of each two given in parentheses and write it in the blank.

a) Biblical unity means the same

.....
(organization) (spirit)

b) Church divisions are usually caused by

.....
(selfishness) (love)



Variety in the Church

Unity does not mean that every Christian is exactly the same. No! Every Christian is different. Variety gives strength and balance. This is evidenced in Paul’s description of the church: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

One part of the body cannot say to another part, “I don’t need you!” Just as each part needs every other part, Christians need each other. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12–26.) Believers may differ in what they do (v. 17), in strength (v. 22), and honor (v. 23). But there is only one body. Paul explained this same truth to the church at Rome: “In Christ we who are many form one body, and

each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Romans 12:5–6).

Application

6 In Romans 12:6–8 is a list of some of the gifts that God has given to the body. Read through the list, then put an X by gifts which you have used by God’s grace.

- a) Speak God’s message
- b) Serve
- c) Teach
- d) Encourage others
- e) Share
- f) Authority
- g) Show kindness

7 Now notice how each of the gifts should be used. How are you to use the gifts that you have? Pray about this matter.

Caring in the Church

You have a part in God’s church. Accept this seriously, as a service to Christ. Part of your responsibility is to care for other believers. As Paul writes, “From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16). No part of the body can get along by itself.

This relationship requires honesty. Paul instructs, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Ephesians 4:25). So we must help each other: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). The care for others is the mark of the

church. If we love one another, then everyone will know that we are Christ's disciples (John 13:35).

Application

8 Look over this section. List ways that you can express care for others. Do you do all of these?

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9 Review this lesson. Ask God to help you find and fulfill your part in the body. Write below the things that you need to start doing as your part in the body of Christ.

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.....



Check Your Answers

9 Your answer. Ask God to help you.

1 a) Christ.

b) Christ.

8 Telling the truth.

Helping with burdens.

Suffering with others.

Rejoicing with others.

Loving others.

2 death, resurrection.

7 Your answer.

6 Your list could have several items marked with an X. Ask God to use you in the ministry of spiritual gifts to the body. Pray about them.

3 Your answer, but maybe things like good leadership, opportunities to witness, unity, etc.

5 a) spirit.

b) selfishness.

4 Christ is the source of life.

Christ is Lord.

Christ is the provider.