

8 Belonging in the Church Community

Chee Kim was an orphan. Although he was only six years old, he lived in the streets of Hong Kong. He did not belong to anyone.

One day a kind man met Chee Kim and took him to a home where many other boys and girls lived. Here he was given good care, and he was taught about Jesus. Soon Chee learned to read and to write his own name.

After a few months Chee Kim was taken to the home of a lovely Chinese family. He was adopted and treated like a true son. He now was very happy because he belonged to a family.

One of our basic needs is to belong. Belonging to a family gives a sense of comfort and security. When you became a Christian, you became a part of God's family. In this lesson you will study what it means to belong to the family of God—the community of believers who make up His Church.

The Plan

- A. Worshipping Together
- B. Fellowship
- C. Ministering Together

The Goals

1. Identify the values of worshipping with other believers.
2. Describe results of the combined ministry of believers in the church.
3. State the results of joining with others in ministry.

A. WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Goal 1. Identify the values of worshipping with other believers.

In an earlier lesson we said that the church is not a building—it is a body of believers united to do the work of the Lord. When we become Christians we become part of the body of Christ. We are part of His worldwide church. This body of people unites together to do the work of the Lord and to worship Him. They form church groups in their community. In the book of Acts we read about the early church, and about how the Christians went from one community to another, helping to form new church groups. These early believers had a great desire to worship their Lord together.

Worshipping God means giving your devotion to Him. You give Him honor and praise. You adore Him more than any other. God made people so that they like to be with other people. It is natural for believers to want to join together in worship. We give and receive encouragement when we worship together.

There are many ways to express worship to God. In the Psalms we are instructed to worship Him in different ways—by clapping our hands, by singing unto Him, by praising Him with

our voices, by praying, by using musical instruments, and in other ways. When we join with other believers in worshipping in these ways, we find it easier to express our love and adoration to God. Worshipping with other believers gives us greater strength to serve God.

Another way to express worship to God is through service to others. True worship, an expression of love and adoration to God, naturally results in expressing love and kindness to other people. This is expressed in Jesus' words in Matthew 25:3, which we have seen in another lesson. When we serve others, we are doing it as unto the Lord.

Application

1 Circle the letter in front of the statements that describe values of worship with other believers.

- a)** We receive strength.
- b)** We become more concerned about ourselves.
- c)** We give and receive encouragement.
- d)** Through service to others, we honor God.
- e)** We find it easier to express our worship.
- f)** We find it harder to think about God.

2 Make a list of some ways to worship God.

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B. FELLOWSHIP

Goal 2. Describe results of the combined ministry of believers in the church.

In our first lesson we saw that one of the meanings of community is “fellowship.” The highest form of fellowship can be found among Christians. The local church is a good place to find fellowship with other believers. Young people enjoy being with each other and sharing in times of recreation and

work. Adults, too, need to get to know one another and share in activities together.

Through fellowship activities in the church, the whole community can be reached. Special activities for the children can be a means of bringing in other children. Getting together for a picnic, or to work on a project together, or just for a time of talking and sharing are all ways of getting to know people better. And as we get to know each other, we are better able to minister to one another when there is a need.

In the Gospels are many accounts of Jesus eating with people. He used these informal times of fellowship to share deep truths about the kingdom of God or to minister to individual needs. We all need times to relax, to enjoy one another, and to get better acquainted. Often, community members not part of the local church are brought into fellowship with the Lord and the church in this way. Sharing, caring, and loving are shown to be community actions.

Application

3 Christians can fellowship best with

- a)** people they work with.
- b)** their neighbors.
- c)** other believers in the church.

4 A major benefit of fellowship is that we

- a)** learn how to study together.
- b)** get to know others better.
- c)** forget our own problems.

5 Describe some ways to fellowship with other believers.

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C. MINISTERING TOGETHER

Goal 3. State the results of joining with others in ministry.

One of the greatest advantages of regular church attendance is the privilege of studying with other Christians. In most churches Sunday school classes or Bible training sessions are held. Regular study of the Bible gives a person a good background and understanding of the Word. Pastors prepare sermons to help us grow and become mature. As we are ministered to in these ways, we are able to minister to others.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Titus have a lot to say about Christian conduct and responsibility. In these verses the apostle Paul speaks of the things that agree with sound doctrine or teaching. Helping widows, instructing youth, and teaching workers to be submissive are all mentioned here. All of these things are part of the ministry of a church.

People joined together can do things they could never do alone. When my wife was a small girl living on a farm in Canada, the farmers would help each other harvest the crops because they had no machines to do this work. People would leave their own work to help another farmer pick his corn or harvest his wheat. As everyone worked together, all of the crops were harvested. They could not have done the work alone.

The same principle works in the church. For example, the Bible needed to be translated into the language of the people of Burma. The project was too large for one person or even for one church. So a large number of people from many churches put their money together and paid to have the Bible translated.

As you become mature in the Lord, you have a greater desire to minister to others. Your world gets bigger, and you become sensitive to the needs of others.

When some people hear of others going hungry it does not bother them. They just think people should work harder so they will have money to buy food. But when Christians hear of people suffering from lack of food, they ought to empathize and help. Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given

much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48). In other words, if God has given you many things, you will be held responsible for how you use these gifts and how you respond to the needs of others.

When you hear of people on the other side of the world suffering from lack of food, or from a terrible storm or earthquake, does it trouble you? A sign of your maturity is how these things affect you. Ask yourself these questions: Do I really care about my neighbor? Is it really important to me if thousands of people die in some faraway place? Am I really concerned about being involved in a worldwide ministry? Am I helping in my church to minister to those in need?

Application

6 God expects us to give to others

- a)** everything that we have.
- b)** according to the measure that we have received from Him.
- c)** only when we want to do so.

7 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a)** One of the true marks of Christians is that they have concern for others.
- b)** As you become mature in the Lord, you become more sensitive to the needs of others.
- c)** When Christians hear of suffering and destruction, they feel pain for the people involved.
- d)** Much more is required of people who have received little.
- e)** When God has given you many things, it does not necessarily mean that more will be required of you.
- f)** People working together can accomplish much more than individuals working alone.

8 Examine yourself by answering the following questions.

	Yes	No
a) Are you a member of a local church?
b) Are you faithful in attendance?
c) Do you enjoy fellowship with other Christians?
d) Do you support the church with your money or in other ways?
e) Does your church have activities to minister to the community?
f) Do you need to do more to be involved in any of these activities in your church?



Check Your Answers

- 4 b)** get to know others better.
- 1** Statements **a)**, **c)**, **d)**, and **e)** are true.
- 5** Your answer. Some answers are: Eating together, talking or sharing together, working on a project together, sharing in recreation.
- 2** Your list might include these: singing, praising with our voices, using musical instruments, clapping our hands, praying, or serving others.
- 6 b)** according to the measure that we have received from Him.
- 7** Statements **a)**, **b)**, **c)**, and **f)** are true.
- 3 c)** other believers in the church.
- 8** Your answer. If you answered *no* to some of these questions, think of ways you can improve your relationship to God through your local church.