



## **Living the Christian Life Bible Study**

### **Lesson 13a (NIV)**

## **Understanding the Church (Part 1 of 2)**

**Student's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Unit** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments** \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.0 Two Pictures of the Church (cont'd)

#### 3.2 The Church as a Body

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In this passage, Paul uses the analogy of the human body to teach us additional truths about the church. He pictures all the members of the church as parts of a human body.

1. There is \_\_\_\_\_ body, but it is made up of \_\_\_\_\_ parts (verse 12).
2. How do we become a part of the body (verse 13)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Is any part of the body unnecessary (verses 14-17)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many parts of the body have a function to perform (verses 14 - 17)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Who plans what each part of the body will do (verses 18-19)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which parts of the body are unnecessary (verses 21-23)? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How do the parts of the body relate to each other (verses 25-26)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Whose body are we (verse 27)? \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 1:18 gives us a further bit of information about the church. *And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

9. Who is the head of the body? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What does the head of a body do? \_\_\_\_\_
11. So who controls the actions of the church? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.0 Two Pictures of the Church

In order to help us understand the church, Paul uses two analogies to emphasize various aspects of the church.

#### 3.1 The Church as a Building

Read Ephesians 2:19-22. In this passage, Paul uses the analogy of a building to describe the church. We are all building blocks making up the building.

1. Who is the chief cornerstone of the building (verse 20)?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who are the foundation stones (verse 20)?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Where do we fit in (verses 21 and 22)?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Who lives in the building (verse 22)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Verses 11 - 18 of this chapter tell us that Paul is especially concerned to make the point that both Jews and gentiles (non-Jews) are being built together in this building. If we imagine a building made of fieldstone, we realize that each stone has to be cut and shaped purposely to fit in a certain place, and that the beauty of the building is enhanced by the diversity of shapes, sizes, and colors of the stones, all working together to make a harmonious and beautiful building. And God Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, dwells within this building, which is the church.

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 To the Church

When we think about the word "Church" various thoughts may come to mind: a quaint white building with a steeple located in the middle of town, a group of people singing hymns and listening to a sermon, or a very large, hierarchical organization of Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests. These are common uses of the word church today, but we should really get our understanding of what church means from the Bible.

*Ekklesia* is the Greek word which is translated "church" in our Bibles. It is simply a group of people called together for a purpose. In the Greek language, *ekklesia* was not specifically religious, and was often translated assembly. But when translated Church, it takes on very specific meaning for Christians.

Our first understanding of the church comes from the meaning of the word itself; it is clearly a group of people. In the Bible, church never refers to a building, it is always a group of people.

The first use of the word Church in the Bible is in Matthew 16:18b where Jesus says *I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* There are several things we can learn from this brief statement.

1. Who is responsible for building the Church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Church is more powerful than \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many Churches are there? \_\_\_\_\_

Yet much later in the New Testament, Jesus tells the Apostle John in Revelation 1:11, *"Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."*

4. How many churches does Jesus mention in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

## 1.0 Introduction (cont'd)

### 1.1 To the Church (cont'd)

From these two statements we see that there are two expressions of Church. The first is the *universal* church, which is made up of all those who are born again believers, followers of Jesus Christ. The second expression is the *local* church. In the New Testament we see many examples of believers who gather together in one location, and who are called a church.

There are three common uses of the word Church today that do not come from the Bible:

- a building (as in the church on the corner)
- a denomination (as in The Baptist Church)
- or a national church (as in The Church of England)

Denomination is a term used to describe a group of local churches which have a common set of beliefs and have established some degree of authority structure. Some denominations have a very rigid hierarchical structure; others are very informal in their association.

Non-denominational is a term used to describe a local church which has no organized connection with other churches.

## 1.0 Introduction (cont'd)

### 1.2 To the book of Acts

The name "Acts" is a shortened version of "The Acts of the Apostles," which is the older name for this book of the Bible. This name is very descriptive as this book records some of the actions of the Apostles for the first thirty years in the life of the church. The book begins with the ascension of Jesus into heaven forty days after His resurrection from the dead. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on the infant church in a mighty and miraculous way. The remainder of the book describes the growth and expansion of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit from Jerusalem throughout Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). While some of the events of Acts are unique to the Apostolic times, most of the activities are descriptive of how the gospel is proclaimed, how churches are started, and how they grow, so Acts becomes a pattern for the church today.

### 2.0 The Church in Acts

The first picture we see of a church is in Acts 2:14-40, which tell about Peter's first sermon. The next verses give us the results of that sermon. Read Acts 2:41 - 47 and answer the following questions about the first church.

1. What were two characteristics of those who made up the first church (v. 41)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
2. What four things did they devote themselves to (verse 42)?  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did they do if one of them had a financial need (verse 45)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How often did they meet together (verse 46)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What was their attitude as they met together (verses 46 and 47)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What was the result of their meeting together in this way and with this attitude (verse 47)?  
\_\_\_\_\_