



Living the Christian Life Bible Study

Lesson 13b (NIV)

Understanding the Church (Part 2 of 2)

Student's Name _____ **Unit** _____

Instructor _____

Comments _____

2.0 What to Expect in a Local Church

When you are released from incarceration, you will be looking for a good local church. If neither you nor your family have an association with a good local church, you may find yourself saying “How do I find a church that is like the teaching in the Bible?” Let us offer a few practical things to look for as you consider a home church.

1. The preaching and teaching should be soundly based on the Bible. The sermons should explain a passage of the Bible, not just use verses to prove a point that the pastor wants to make. (2 Timothy 4:2.)
2. There should be many opportunities to meet together during the week: Sunday morning worship, Adult Bible classes on Sunday morning, Sunday evening worship, mid-week prayer meetings, small group Bible Studies during the week, and men’s and women’s ministries. While not every church will follow this pattern exactly, there should be many opportunities to meet in different formats. Church is not for Sunday morning only. (Hebrews 10:25)
3. Look for singing that is enthusiastic and words that are meaningful. Generally avoid worship that is simplistic and very repetitious. Instrumentation and style are far less important than the content of the words and the love of God reflected in the enthusiasm of the congregation. (Matthew 22:37; Psalm 150)
4. Look at people’s faces; are they happy to be in church? (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
5. Expect people to welcome you into their church, they should be happy to have visitors in their services. (Philippians 4:21)
6. Avoid a church where there is evident controversy or criticism of leaders. (Hebrews 13:17)
7. Expect the church to hold you accountable. Part of a shepherd’s job is to watch the sheep to keep them from going astray. (1 Peter 5:1-5)
8. Expect to find a place where you can begin to serve. While you may not be mature enough to be a teacher, you can cut the grass, clean the floors, direct traffic in the parking lot, and care for babies in the nursery. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

1.0 Leaders in the Church (cont'd)

1.2 Who the Leaders Are (cont'd)

Deacon: from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning “a servant.” In the church, a deacon is a person who serves the church by attending to the practical aspects of life, such as caring for the poor. The qualifications for a deacon are given in 1 Timothy 3:7-12. An example of the work of deacons is given in Acts 6:1-6. What task was assigned to the deacons by the Apostles?

Note that while the offices of evangelist, pastor, teacher, and deacon refer to specific individuals, all believers should be doing all of these things to some extent, thus growing into a recognized leader in the church. So all of us at times serve others in practical ways; all of us teach at times by word and by example; all of us are to bring the good news of the gospel to unbelievers; and all of us will at some times comfort and counsel other believers.

Saint: from the Greek word *hagios*, meaning “holy one.” This term is not about leaders, but is applied to all who are born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All such people are declared righteous by God, though their lives may not fully reflect a holy lifestyle. The word saint is never used in the Bible as a title for one individual; rather, it always used in the plural to indicate all the believers in a local church, as in Ephesians 1:1, 15, 18; 3:18; and 6:18.

1.0 Leaders of the Church

1.1 What the Leaders Do

As head of the church, Christ has placed a variety of people as church leaders. Other than the Apostles themselves, there does not seem to be any hierarchical structure of authority over groups of local churches. This kind of structure came along later in church history. But there are clearly a variety of roles to be filled in the local church.

Read Ephesians 4:11-13 and answer the following questions.

1. What five kinds of leaders does Paul identify in this passage (verse 11)?
_____, _____, _____,
_____, and _____.
2. What do the leaders in the church do (verse 12)?

3. What will be the result if they do their work well (verse 13)?
_____ and _____
4. What will this unity and maturity look like? Fill in the key words in verses 14 - 16. *Then we will no longer be _____, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the _____ in _____, we will in all things _____ into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, _____ and _____ itself up in love, as _____ does its work.*

From this passage we see that God has given the gift of leaders to the church to equip the members for service. This service will build the body in both strength and size.

1.0 Leaders in the Church (cont'd)

1.2 Who the Leaders Are

The Bible uses many terms to describe various kinds of leaders in the church. The following definitions cover most of the terms used in the New Testament.

Apostle: from the Greek word *apostolos*, meaning one sent with a special message or commission.

Read Luke 6:12-16. Who selected the twelve apostles? _____

Later Matthias was added to replace Judas (Acts 1:12-26), and Paul was also designated an Apostle (1 Cor. 15:3-11, Gal. 1:1). Two requirements for the Apostles were that they had seen the risen Christ and had been appointed by Him. All the New Testament writers were either Apostles or their very close associates.

Prophet: a person to whom God spoke directly, giving a message for the people (Numbers 12:6).

Read Deuteronomy 18:17-22. What was the test of a prophet?

Read Deuteronomy 13:1-5. What was another test of a prophet?

What was to happen to a false prophet (13:5; 18:20)?

Note that apostles and prophets appear to be gifted people limited to biblical times. They received revelation from God and recorded it for us in the Bible (Ephesians 3:4-5). Their work is shown as foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20), but not of an ongoing nature in the life of the church. For someone to speak now as a Prophet or Apostle would be to claim authority equal to that of the Bible, but that is forbidden in Revelation 22:18-19.

1.0 Leaders in the Church (cont'd)

1.2 Who the Leaders Are (cont'd)

Evangelist: from the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning “gospel” or “good news.” So an evangelist is a person who is gifted by God in proclaiming the good news (the gospel) of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The main work of an evangelist is outside the local church, seeking to build up the church by bringing in new believers. Acts 8 tells the story of an evangelist named Philip.

Look at Acts 8:5, 35, and 40. What did Philip do?

Pastor: from the Greek word *poimen*, meaning “shepherd,” indicating a person that provides spiritual leadership and care for the people in a local church. This is carried out in preaching, teaching, individual counseling and discipline. Other words used interchangeably with pastor are elder, bishop, and overseer. In explaining the duties of pastors, Peter implies that pastors are “undershepherds,” and Christ Himself is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-5). The qualifications for an elder are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Teacher: a person who is gifted by God with the ability to study and explain the message of the Bible in such a way that it can be understood clearly and to show how it should be applied to people’s lives. A good teacher should also be able to recognize and refute false doctrine. Titus 2:1-6 gives instructions to a teacher about what he is to teach. Verses 7 and 8 tell the teacher how he is to behave.

What warning does James 3:1 give about teachers?
