

The Church



381) What is the church?

- A. The Greek word for "church" means "called out ones." It was the word used to describe an assembly or congregation of people who meet for a common purpose.
- B. The church is that group of people that God has called out of the world's system to serve Him. Because God has called His people to be separate from the world, they are a holy people.
- C. The church has two expressions: the universal church and the local church.

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

MATT 16:18 NIV

"And God placed all things under his (Jesus') feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,"

EPH 1:22 NIV

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

1PETER 2:9 NIV

382) What is the universal church?

- A. The universal church is the entire group of the redeemed. Anyone who has ever been born again, whether dead or alive, is part of the universal church.
- B. There are many different congregations, from many differing cultures, with many differing points of view, that make up the universal church.

383) How do you become a member of the universal church?

- A. There is only one way to become a member of the universal church. You must be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. You do not become a member of the church because your parents were members or because you grew up in the church. Everyone must accept Christ as Savior on an individual basis.

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"praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their (the church's) number daily those who were being saved."

ACT 2:47 NIV

384) Is every person who calls themselves a Christian, part of the universal church?

- A. No. There are many people who consider themselves Christian just because they aren't Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim. They might be a "cultural Christian," but they are not born again and therefore not part of the universal church.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' [23] Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

MATT 7:21-23 NIV

385) What boundaries does the universal church cross?

- A. The universal church crosses all racial, denominational, doctrinal, cultural, and language boundaries.
- B. The earliest barrier that had to be crossed was the Jew/Gentile barrier. The Jews were slow to accept the Gentiles as equals in the church, even though Jesus had warned them He had "other sheep that are not of this sheep pen."

"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

JOHN 10:16 NIV

"When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. [12] Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group."

GAL 2:11-12 NIV

386) What is the basis of unity in the universal church?

- A. The basis for unity is twofold; while holding a strong stand on the important doctrines, we respect each other's different traditions.
- B. We must hold to a strong stand on such doctrines as salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the deity of Christ, the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, etc.

"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. [20] But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. [21] I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. [22] Who is the liar? It is the man who denies

that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist - he denies the Father and the Son."
1JOHN 2:18-22 NIV

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

1JOHN 4:1-3 NIV

- C. We must respect each others different points of view on cultural and less important doctrinal issues.

"To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. [21] To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. [22] To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."

1COR 9:20-22 NIV

387) Does getting "saved" make us a member of the church?

- A. Yes and no. When we are justified we become a member of the universal church. We become part of the elect, the body of Christ.
- B. When we are justified, we do not automatically become a member of a smaller body of believers called a local church. A local church must be joined.

388) What is the local church?

- A. It is the local expression of the universal church.
- B. The universal church is too large and too wide spread to meet together for regular services. For practical reasons, saints from the same region or locale began to meet together as a "local" expression of the universal church for regular corporate worship and fellowship.
- C. A local church shares the same foundational doctrines as the universal church and the same mandate to spread the good news to every creature.

"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - their Lord and ours:"

1COR 1:2 NIV

"Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you."

1THESS 1:1 NIV

389) What is corporate worship?

- A. Corporate worship is when the body of Christ gathers to worship together.
1. God calls each person to worship God as an individual. God also expects us to worship as a group.

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2. Corporate worship can include praise, adoration, prayer, Bible reading, teaching, preaching, and ministering to the needs of the saints.
- B. Each person is to come prepared to contribute to corporate worship. We can contribute by being involved in an aspect of ministry such as ushering or the choir. We can contribute by joining our voice with the congregational singing or encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- C. God has gifted each member of the body of Christ. The gift is not an end in itself. The purpose of any spiritual gift is to build up the body as we worship together.

"What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church."

1COR 14:26 NIV

"So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church."

1COR 14:12 NIV

390) What is fellowship?

- A. The English word "fellowship" means people sharing similar interests, ideals, or experiences. Fellowship will result in the development of close friendships and mutual support.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

ACT 2:42 NIV

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. [3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."

PHIL 2:1-3 NIV

- B. Saints share fellowship on two different levels; natural friendship and spiritual kinship.
 1. Natural friendship can result from sharing common interests and values.
 2. Our spiritual kinship exists because we all share the same heavenly Father. The new birth has made all born again saints of God brothers and sisters in Christ. These spiritual family ties can be much stronger than those we feel for our natural families.
- C. God designed the living organism we call the church to be the center of a Christian's natural and spiritual fellowship.
 1. It is no longer desirable or wise to maintain intimate fellowship with our old, unsaved friends. They don't understand our love for Christ and their influence can draw us back into old sins. We should, however, reach out to them with the Gospel so they, too, may be released from their sins.

"While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. [47] Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." [48] He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" [49] Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. [50] For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

MATT 12:46-50 NIV

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? [15] What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

2COR 6:14-15 NIV

- D. As part of our fellowship, God calls each member of the body of Christ to serve and strengthen each other.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

GAL 6:2 NIV

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

1JOHN 4:11 NIV

391) Should every local church be the same?

- A. No. Each local church has distinct strengths and weaknesses. The best example of this is the seven churches of Revelation which are found in Revelation Chapters two and three. These churches were all located in the present day nation of Turkey within in a 70 mile radius of each other, but each had a distinctive character.
1. Ephesus
 - a. The church in Ephesus was filled with hard working people who endured hardship and hated false teachers. They had, however, allowed their busyness to become more important to them than Jesus was. They had lost their first love.
 2. Smyrna
 - a. The church in Smyrna was under intense persecution, facing strong opposition from a group of demonically inspired Jews. These faithful saints were suffering financially as well as being imprisoned for their stand for Christ.
 3. Pergamum
 - a. The church in Pergamum was located in a hot bed of demonic activity, yet remained true to Jesus. Their main fault was that they were too "open minded." They were tolerating false teachers who spread their clever lies in the church, making a way for sexual immorality and idol worship to creep into their fellowship.

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4. Thyatira
 - a. The saints at Thyatira were a faithful, hard working, growing body, but they made the mistake of tolerating a false teacher who called herself a prophetess. She claimed to be teaching the "deep secrets" of God, but was only providing excuses to sin. Through her influence, sexual immorality and idolatry were gaining entrance among the saints.
5. Sardis
 - a. Sardis was a church that had fallen asleep on the job. They had a good reputation that was undeserved. They knew how to say all the right things, but their lives did not match up. They were a church on the brink of disaster with only a few healthy saints left in the entire fellowship.
6. Philadelphia
 - a. The church in Philadelphia was a weak but faithful group of saints who were facing strong opposition.
7. Laodicea
 - a. The saints at Laodicea were lukewarm, fence sitters. They knew the truth but would not take a strong stand for Christ. They were rich in the things of the world but spiritually poor.

392) Do all local churches have to believe the same on all issues?

- A. No. There is room in the scriptures for honest doctrinal disagreements within a biblical framework.

"One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. [6] He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God."

ROM 14:5-6 NIV

393) Will every local church have the same ministry emphasis?

- A. No. Each local church has a unique calling and commission from God. It is the senior pastor's responsibility to see that their church fulfill its unique calling and not try to mimic any other church.
- B. Each church takes on the character or spirit of its founder.
 1. If the church is established by an evangelist, it will always have a strong evangelistic influence.
 2. If the church is founded by a teacher, the church will have an emphasis on teaching, training classes and perhaps Bible School.
 3. If the church was formed from a rebellious split from another church, rebellion, strife and dissension will follow that congregation.
- C. Church location will influence a church's ministry. A church located in a wealthy suburb is not likely to run a soup kitchen or a second hand clothing shop but these would be perfect ministries for an inner city work.

394) Why should I become a member of a local church?

- A. No Christian can stand independent of the rest of the Church. The church is spoken of as a many membered body, each part important to the functioning of the whole. The church can only function properly as a united body.

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, [5] so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

ROM 12:4-5 NIV

"Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. [15] If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. [16] And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? [18] But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. [19] If they were all one part, where would the body be? [20] As it is, there are many parts, but one body. [21] The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'"

1COR 12:14-21 NIV

- B. God calls us to gather in regular fellowship with the saints. Meeting together with those who share our love for Jesus strengthens and encourages us while we fight the good fight of faith.

"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

HEB 3:13 NIV

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [25] Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

HEB 10:24-25 NIV

395) How do you become a member of the local church?

- A. Anyone wishing to join a local church must meet that church's membership requirements. Each local church can have different requirements for membership.
- B. Typical requirements for membership are:
1. Being born again (that is, you are a legitimate member of the universal church).
 2. Willingness to support the local church with your tithes and offerings.
 3. Faithfully supporting the local church through attendance of the services and working in some aspect of church ministry.

396) What are the two distinctive responsibilities of a local church?

- A. Preach the Gospel to the lost.
1. The church is God's body of believers that He has called to fulfill the Great Commission.

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2. This aspect of the church's ministry is reaching out beyond its four walls. The vast majority of sinners do not come to church. Preaching salvation to the saints on Sunday morning does not fulfill our call to preach the Gospel to every creature. It is up to us to take the message "out to the streets."

"He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

MARK 16:15 NIV

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'"

LUKE 14:21 NIV

3. Another way to spread the Gospel is through the support of home and foreign missions. No one local church can do the entire job God has called the universal church to accomplish. Through prayer and financial support of different mission works, a local body can contribute to spreading the Gospel around the world.

"For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. [27] They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings."

ROM 15:26-27 NIV

B. Train the saints.

1. The saints are to be equipped for works of service as well as brought into personal spiritual maturity.
 - a. Our works of service include fulfilling the Great Commission as well as maintaining and strengthening the body of Christ.
 - b. God takes us from sinner to saint through justification. As we participate in church, we grow from spiritual babe to mature worker. If called by God, we can go on to a position of leadership in the body.
2. Training includes learning to honor God and His appointed leaders. It is important to learn the scriptures and biblical principles, so we can live a righteous life.
 - a. As we grow in the knowledge of God's word, we will then be equipped to teach God's word to others.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MATT 28:19-20 NIV

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [12] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure

Name: _____ Group Leaders: _____

Date: _____

Homework for Chapter 26

Please answer the following questions from the textbook in full sentences and return to your Group Leaders next week.

- 1) Define the universal church?

- 2) Explain how you become a member of the universal church.

- 3) Explain the twofold basis of unity of the universal church.

- 4) Define the phrase "local church."

- 5) Explain why you should become a member of the local church.

- 6) List and define the distinctive responsibilities of a local church.
