

Questions About the Church

A GotQuestions.org Bible Study



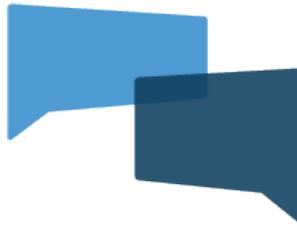


Table of Contents

Lesson 1: What is the church?	4
Lesson 2: Is there supposed to be only one church?.....	7
Lesson 3: What is the purpose of the church?	15
Lesson 4: What should be the mission of the church?.....	20
Lesson 5: What are the ingredients to a truly biblical worship service?	23
Lesson 6: How can I recognize a healthy church?	28
Lesson 7: How should conflict in the church be handled?	33
Lesson 8: How can a church achieve a true, biblical unity?.....	37
Lesson 9: What is the value of having a church family?.....	40
Lesson 10: Why is going to church important?	45
Wrap Up	50
Reference List.....	51

How to Use This Bible Study

Welcome to the Got Questions Bible Study! We're so glad you're here!

In these studies you will find GotQuestions content, Bible search questions to dig deeper, and heartfelt questions to spark reflection and discussion. Whether you are a new or seasoned believer, using these Bible studies for personal study or as a small group/Sunday School resource, we hope you will increase in your understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ and that you will seek Him more passionately.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.
– Jeremiah 29:13

These Bible studies are tools to help you grow in your knowledge of the topics at hand. However, knowing about God is not the same as actually knowing Him. God invites each of us to know Him personally and to have eternal life through Him.

Throughout this study, there will be information to read and questions to answer. Next to the questions will be icons. Here is your key to understanding them:



Content Qs



Engage Qs



Bible Look Up Qs



Reflection Qs

If we place our faith in Him, trusting in His death on the cross to pay for our sins, we will be forgiven and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son so that anyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.
– John 3:16

If you have not yet trusted in Him for salvation or are unsure if you are saved, please visit: www.gotquestions.org/eternal-life.html.

May God richly bless you as you seek to study His Word and grow in your walk with Him (Joshua 1:8)!





Lesson 1:

What is the church?

Many people today understand the church as a building. This is not a biblical understanding of the church. The word “church” is a translation of the Greek word ekklesia, which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.” The root meaning of church is not that of a building, but of people. It is ironic that when you ask people what church they attend, they usually identify a building. Romans 16:5 says, “Greet the church that is in their house.” Paul refers to the church in their house—not a church building, but a body of believers.



How do you define a church? What components make a church what it is?



How does thinking of the church as a people rather than a building change the impact and importance of church?

The church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head. Ephesians 1:22–23 says, “And 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.” The body of Christ is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until Christ’s return. Biblically, we may regard the church in two ways, as the universal church or as the local church.

The universal church consists of everyone, everywhere, who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). This verse says that anyone who believes is part of the body of Christ and has received the Spirit of Christ as evidence. All those who have received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ comprise the universal church.



How do you view someone who claims to be a believer but is not part of a local church? What about another believer who is not a part of your local church? How would seeing these believers as your brothers and sisters within the universal church impact the way you interact with them?

The local church is described in Galatians 1:1–2: “Paul, an apostle . . . and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia.” Here we see that in the province of Galatia there were many churches—they had a localized ministry and were scattered throughout the province. They were local churches. A Baptist church, a Lutheran

church, an E-Free church, etc., is not the church, as in the universal church; rather, it is a local church, a local body of believers. The universal church is comprised of everyone who belongs to Christ. Members of the universal church should seek fellowship and edification in a local church.



Look up the following verses. How should church attendance impact your faith and how you live it out?

Acts 2:42-47:

1 Corinthians 12:14-26:

Ephesians 4:11-32:

Hebrews 10:23-25:

In summary, the church is not a building or a denomination. According to the Bible, the church is the body of Christ—all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Local churches are gatherings of people who claim the name of Christ. Members of a local church may or may

not be members of the universal church, depending on the genuineness of their faith. The local church is where believers can fully apply the “body” principles of 1 Corinthians chapter 12—encouraging, teaching, and building one another up in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.



In what ways has the local church helped you grow in your faith?



If you do not belong to a local body of believers or you are not engaged in your local church, what are you wrestling through regarding God’s instructions to be in fellowship and the reasons you have for not? What is preventing you from surrendering your hurts, frustrations, or experiences to follow God’s instructions?

If you do attend church, thank God for your local body of believers as well as the universal church. Think of someone in the universal church who is not a part of your local church to encourage and edify this week.



Lesson 2:

Is there supposed to be only one church?

The word translated “church” in the New Testament is ekklesia, which literally means “those who are called out.” In one sense, the church is the group of people that God has called unto Himself from everywhere and from all time. In this sense, there is only one church—one body of believers that God has called unto Himself—believers both living and dead in any part of the world.



What unites the ekklesia? What is true of all churches?



What do the following verses reveal about what unites the church?
Romans 12:5:

1 Corinthians 10:16-17:

1 Corinthians 12:27:

Colossians 1:24:

The New Testament also uses the word churches (plural) as in “the churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house” (1 Corinthians 16:19) and “he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches” (Acts 15:41). Here the word refers to local bodies of believers meeting in a particular location. In this sense, there are many churches.

One way to understand the two uses of the word church is that there is only one church—one body of people called unto God. However, there are local manifestations of that body in different places, and these are called “churches.” We are familiar with this concept through the modern business franchise model. On one hand, there is only one McDonald’s Corporation. However, in a slightly different sense, there are many McDonald’s all over the world. There is one company with many different locations or local manifestations. When speaking of the church, people often speak of the universal church and the local church, or sometimes the invisible church and the visible church. (The universal church is

“invisible” in that it never meets all together and no one can observe it in the way that they can observe a local church.)

In one sense, there is only one church, the Body of Christ. In another sense, there are many local manifestations of that body, which are also called “churches.” Each local church may have unique features due to the part of the world it is in or the people who comprise it, just as each McDonald’s restaurant may have a different layout and seating arrangement, and a McDonald’s in Central America or Hong Kong will have some different menu items than the standard McDonald’s in the United States. This concept is relatively easy to understand and is not controversial. If all local churches were in complete agreement with each other, with only minor variations in style and emphasis, then there would probably be no confusion. As it is, there is much disparity in the practice and teachings of various churches (and local organizations that call themselves “churches”), so the question arises: isn’t there supposed to be only one church?



In what sense is there only one church?



What does the diversity of beliefs, people, and types of local churches reveal about God and people? How does that diversity work within the unity of the universal church?

Some local churches are independent, which means there is no human board or organization that regulates what they do. They follow the New Testament as they understand it and answer directly to Christ. Other local churches are part of a larger church (or denomination) that exercises control over that individual, local church. Thus, one can speak of the Evangelical Free Church as a single entity (church) but with many local manifestations

(churches). The problem arises when one local church or denomination believes and/or practices something entirely different from another church, yet they both claim to be following the teaching of the New Testament and claim to be committed to the lordship of Christ. Obviously, this is a problem and has been from the earliest days of Christianity.



Read John 17, 1 Corinthians 1:10-31, and Ephesians 4:1-16. What unites the local churches under the universal church?

When Jesus ascended into heaven, He left apostles who exercised authority in the church. These men spoke directly for God and were largely responsible for the production of the New Testament. However, even in the earliest days, others challenged the authority of the apostles. Paul was constantly struggling against men who followed him around trying to disrupt his work. After he established a church in a city and moved on to another city, these men would come in after him and say that his teaching was incorrect or incomplete or that Paul himself was inadequate. In some cases, the new teaching was so contrary to the truth of the gospel that Paul had to condemn it (and those who propagated it) in the strongest terms (see Galatians 1:6–9). In other cases, where people in the churches

began to identify with one leader over another, Paul cautions that there should be no divisions: “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:10–13). Thus, even during the days of the apostles, there were divisions springing up in the church.



When is division a good or necessary thing?

After the apostles passed from the scene, church leaders were responsible for teaching the Bible and maintaining the integrity of the church. However, as in the days of the apostles, there will always be some who will pervert or distort the gospel and gather a following unto themselves, claiming to be teaching truth. Others may teach the truth but do it in such a way that they gather a following based on their own personality and leadership technique. But distortions of the gospel are not the only reasons

why different denominations or local churches exist. Churches have also formed because of stylistic, cultural, or other non-doctrinal differences. This has given rise to the multitude of local churches and denominations that we have today. Most say they are following Jesus Christ and the teachings of the New Testament, but all of them cannot be right. And, unfortunately, some today have abandoned all but a pretense of following Christ or of conforming to the New Testament.

Churches are made up of sinful people who change over time. Sometimes the people within a local church or several churches within a denomination will change their beliefs and want to exit the church or denomination and form a new one that will more accurately reflect their new beliefs. Sometimes a church or denomination will change their beliefs, and individual members or churches will want to exit because the church is no longer teaching what they feel to be true. Thus, new churches and/or denominations

are formed. We saw this in the early twentieth century as many denominations abandoned a belief in the Bible as authoritative. Individual churches left these “liberal” or “modernist” denominations and started new “fundamentalist” ones. More recently, as many mainline churches have started to normalize homosexual behavior and ordain women, individuals and churches have withdrawn to join or form churches in line with more biblical beliefs.



Reviewing John 17, 1 Corinthians 1:10-31, and Ephesians 4:1-16, how do we determine which churches are true, biblical churches?

Because of the variety of beliefs and interpretations of the New Testament, it is inevitable that different churches and denominations will form. It may be impossible for an individual to find a church that perfectly aligns with his or her beliefs. Likewise, a church may be in a denomination that does not

perfectly reflect the views of the membership. Each individual and each church must decide, based on their own study of God’s Word, which issues are of critical importance and which issues can be compromised for the sake of fellowship.



What issues would you say are of critical importance to stand firm on and why? How did you come to your conclusions?



Read the following article regarding the essentials of the Christian faith: www.gotquestions.org/essentials-Christian-faith.html. How would upholding these essentials and holding loosely (but still biblically) to other issues free you to love and respect others in your local body of believers and in the universal church?

Individual churches and even denominations will often cooperate with other churches and denominations when they have agreement on essential doctrine. For instance, well-known pastors John MacArthur and R.C. Sproul were great friends. They ministered together at conferences and fought side by side in struggles regarding the authority of God's Word and the integrity of the gospel. However,

they had significant differences on secondary issues such as baptism and the end times. They even debated each other on some of these issues. While they would never think of combining their churches, they were still able to fellowship and cooperate with each other in the spirit of Christian love and unity. This is a good example of unity in diversity that should be common among true believers.



How does the gospel and the essentials of the faith enable believers to uphold love and unity in the midst of diversity in their local churches and in the universal church?



How have you experienced unity in the midst of diversity in the church?

All evangelical churches agree on certain core teachings such as the Trinity, the authority of Scripture, and justification by grace through faith. Many evangelical Baptist, Independent, and Presbyterian churches cooperate with each other in various ministry endeavors. However, they could probably never combine and become one church because it would be impossible to accommodate the various secondary beliefs. Most Baptist churches believe in congregational rule, whereas Presbyterian churches believe that elders should make the final

decisions. You cannot have both systems of church government in the same church. Likewise, Baptists believe that baptism is for believers who have consciously chosen to be baptized as a sign of their faith in Christ, whereas Presbyterians believe in infant baptism as a sign of the faith of the parents. You might have one church that says they will do either one, but you cannot have one church that says infants should be baptized and at the same time says they should not. So different churches are inevitable and even in a sense necessary to keep the peace.



Create a list comparing the essentials of the Christian faith that are non-negotiables vs. secondary issues or beliefs.

Ideally, there should only be one church; however, we do not live in an ideal world. We live in a fallen world, and people are sinful. Some will purposefully try to distort the Word of God and mislead people yet still call their organizations a “church.” Some have abandoned the Word of God as their authority in favor of modern ideas about “human flourishing” but still maintain the word church in their names. Some are sincere but mistaken about their interpretation of God’s Word on secondary issues. No church is perfect. Yet all churches that teach God’s Word and

live out the gospel are part of His universal church. God uses the diversity found in local churches to reflect His character and the gospel to the world. It is important for individual Christians to join churches where the Bible is the authority, and it is important for individual evangelical churches or denominations to cooperate with other evangelical churches so that division over secondary issues remains truly secondary. All true believers in Jesus Christ and all churches that preach and teach the gospel are united by much more than divides them.



Reflect on what unites the universal church and local churches. In what ways is God calling you to personally promote unity in the midst of diversity in your local church? Or how is God calling you to promote unity in the midst of diversity in the universal church?



Lesson 3:

What is the purpose of the church?

Acts 2:42 could be considered a purpose statement for the church: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” According to this verse, the purposes/activities of the church should be 1) teaching biblical doctrine, 2) providing a place of fellowship for believers, 3) observing the Lord’s supper, and 4) praying.



To what extent are you participating in these four purposes of the church? How are each of these currently helping you grow in your faith and in relationship with other believers?

The church is to teach biblical doctrine so we can be grounded in our faith. Ephesians 4:14 tells us, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”



Read John 14:26. How are you partnering with the Holy Spirit yet assuming responsibility for taking something to heart each week from the biblical teaching you receive at your church?

The church is to be a place of fellowship, where Christians can be devoted to one another and honor one another (Romans 12:10), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32), encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and most importantly, love one another (1 John 3:11).



Look up the following verses. How are believers called to live and relate with one another?

Romans 12:10:

Romans 15:14:

Galatians 6:2:

Ephesians 4:2, 32:

Ephesians 4:15:

Philippians 2:3:

Colossians 3:13:

1 Thessalonians 5:11:

James 5:16:

1 Peter 4:10:

1 John 3:11:

The church is to be a place where believers can observe the Lord's Supper, remembering Christ's death and shed blood on our behalf (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The concept of "breaking bread" (Acts 2:42) also carries the idea of having meals together. This is another example of the church promoting fellowship.



Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. How would observing the Lord's Supper—remembering that it is meant to be done in intentional community (as opposed to simply an individual experience)— help you uphold its purposes?



How is intentionally "breaking bread" (having meals) with other believers in fellowship different than just hanging out?

The final purpose of the church according to Acts 2:42 is prayer. The church is to be a place that promotes prayer, teaches prayer, and practices prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and

petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."



What examples in Scripture are there of people praying together, and what was the outcome? Use 2 Chronicles 20:1-30, Acts 12:5-19, and Acts 21:5-6 to get started. What other examples in the Bible can you find?



In what ways is corporate prayer different from praying alone?

Another commission given to the church is proclaiming the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The church is called to be faithful in sharing the gospel through word and deed. The church

is to be a “lighthouse” in the community, pointing people toward our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The church is to both promote the gospel and prepare its members to proclaim the gospel (1 Peter 3:15).



Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. What is the gospel message the church is to proclaim?

Some final purposes of the church are given in James 1:27: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” The church is to be about the business of ministering to those in need. This includes not only

sharing the gospel, but also providing for physical needs (food, clothing, shelter) as necessary and appropriate. The church is also to equip believers in Christ with the tools they need to overcome sin and remain free from the pollution of the world. This is done by biblical teaching and Christian fellowship.



In what areas of your community (for those within the church and for those outside of the church) do you see your local churches caring for tangible needs? What areas of need do you see in your community?

So, what is the purpose of the church? Paul gave an excellent illustration to the believers in Corinth. The church is God’s hands, mouth, and feet in this world—the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We are to

be doing the things that Jesus Christ would do if He were here physically on the earth. The church is to be “Christian,” “Christ-like,” and Christ-following.



How are you contributing to living out the purposes of the church? This week, focus on one area of the purpose of the church where you would like to see more involvement or growth, and ask God to show you how you can better be the hands, mouth, and feet of Jesus.



Lesson 4:

What should be the mission of the church?

The church is a creation of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 17; 15:9), founded and owned by Jesus Christ—“I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18)—and directed and energized by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:5–27; Romans 12:4–5). Therefore, it is the church’s joy to look to God to explain His design for the church and His mission for it. God’s mission for the church proves to have several parts.



***Does your church have a mission statement, and if it does, do you know it?
What would you say is the mission of the universal church?***

1. The mission of the church is to make disciples. Just before Jesus returned to heaven, He commissioned His disciples this way: “Therefore, as you go, disciple people in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20a, ISV). A disciple is a follower, someone who attaches himself to his leader. Therefore,

we reason, Jesus sent the church on its mission to acquaint people in every place with Himself. As the church makes disciples, people can admire, worship, trust, follow, and obey Jesus as their Savior and Lord. The church’s members, having become enamored of Jesus Christ, assemble around Him as Master, Leader, Savior, and Friend. Our joyful mission is to put Him on display to every nation.



What is your church reflecting about God to those around you? What do you want your life to reveal about God to those around you?

2. The mission of the church is to glorify Christ. Paul wrote, “In Christ we were also chosen ... in order that we ... might be for the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:11–12). Part of God’s purpose for the church is to exalt Jesus Christ by the way that the church lives and by what it does. Christ designed His church to represent His supernatural, life-saving work to the world. In His church, Christ shows to the world what a freed and

forgiven people can be—people who are satisfied with God as the result of Christ’s joyful, triumphant self-sacrifice. He has planned the church’s values to be His values. He expects its lifestyle to reflect His character (2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Ephesians 5:23–32; Colossians 1:13, 18; 1 Timothy 3:15). As the moon reflects the sun, so the church is to reflect the glory of God to a dark world.



How would intentionally glorifying God in all things (1 Corinthians 10:31) impact those people God has put in your sphere of influence?

3. The mission of the church is to build up the saints. The church is to encourage and comfort its individual members (1 Thessalonians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 13:11). “There should be no division in the body, but . . . its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Corinthians 12:25). Jesus is the chief cornerstone, and the church is likened to a building “joined together and [rising] to become a holy temple in the Lord. And

in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19–22; see also 4:4–25). Jesus Christ designed His Church to showcase God’s family on earth, so that the pagan world can see how God builds His family around Jesus Christ and how that family cares for one another (see Mark 3:35 and John 13:35).



How does discipling and building up believers within the church impact unbelievers and the other two missions of the church?

The mission of the church is to know and love Christ so supremely as to represent Him and His values accurately and vividly to the world and serve people’s deepest needs in the way Christ Himself would meet them. As W. C. Robinson says in Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, “Our Lord Jesus Christ is the sun about which the whole mission of the church revolves. Public worship is the encounter of the risen Redeemer with

His people; evangelism is calling men to the Savior; publishing the law of God is proclaiming His lordship; Christian nurture is feeding His lambs and disciplining His flock; ministering to the needs of men is continuing the work of the Great Physician.” The church’s mission is to present Jesus Christ to the world, while He presents to the same world His rescuing work in and through His church.



Together we reflect Christ to the world. Together we shine brighter for Christ. Together we reflect God’s love more fully. Thank God for the community of believers He’s given you. How are you intentionally making disciples, glorifying Christ, and building up the saints?



Lesson 5:

What are the ingredients to a truly biblical worship service?

Humans are instinctively worshiping creatures. The psalmist expressed this when he wrote, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1). Cicero in the first century BC observed that religion, regardless of its form, was a universal trait of man. Seeing that people are going to worship something or someone, we should ask what is worship? Whom and how shall we worship? What constitutes a biblical worship service, and, most importantly, will we be “true worshipers” (John 4:23) or false worshipers?



Look up the following verses. What do they tell us about what worship is?

1 Chronicles 16:23-31:

Psalm 22:22; 35:18; 95:1-2:

John 4:23-24:

Romans 12:1-2:

Hebrews 12:28:

Christ commanded that true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The apostle Paul explained that we worship by the Spirit of God (Philippians 3:3), meaning that true worship comes only from those who have been saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. Worshiping in spirit also refers to having the proper heart attitude, not simply adhering to rites and rituals. To worship in truth

means to worship according to what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture. In order for our worship to be biblical, it must abide within the doctrine of Christ (2 John 1:9; see also Deuteronomy 4:12; 12:32; Revelation 22:18–19). True worship relies on the instructions given in the Bible and can be offered with or without a Book of Confessions, Rules of Order, or other manmade book of instructions or guidance.



When has an improper heart attitude affected your worship?



Why is our heart attitude as individuals and as a congregation important in worshipping God in spirit and truth?

The first-century church engaged in several devotional acts in their worship services, from which we can determine what comprises a truly biblical worship service: the communion supper was observed (Acts 20:7), prayers were offered up (1 Corinthians 14:15–

16), songs were sung to the glory of God (Ephesians 5:19), a collection was taken (1 Corinthians 16:2), the Scriptures were read (Colossians 4:16), and the Word of God was proclaimed (Acts 20:7).

Communion and prayer were also essential elements of the early church service. The communion supper commemorates Jesus' death until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). Prayer is directed to God (Nehemiah 4:9; Matthew 6:9) and in harmony with

the will of God (1 John 5:14). Corporate prayer is important because it creates unity (John 17:22-23) and is a key aspect of believers' encouraging one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and spurring one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).



How does communion and corporate prayer unite those in the church? How does viewing communion and corporate prayer as opportunities to encourage and unite believers change your heart attitude about both of them?

In our worship, we should sing. The apostle Paul commands us to “speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God

the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20). Singing to the Lord and to one another conveys truth set to music (Colossians 3:16).



Read Colossians 3:16. What is the relationship between truth, heart attitudes, and singing?



Why do Christians sing so much (see Psalm 13:5-6, 63:3-4, 98:4, 100; Isaiah 12:5)?

Part of true biblical worship is giving an offering, as Paul instructed the Corinthian church: “Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:1–2). Our regular giving for the support of the Lord’s

work is a serious responsibility. The opportunity to give should be viewed as a thrilling blessing, not as a burdensome matter for grumbling (2 Corinthians 9:7). Additionally, freewill giving is the only explicitly biblical method for financing the work of the church. The church of Christ is not meant to be a commercial enterprise (see Matthew 21:12–13).



What are some things that negatively impact people’s view of giving?



What do these verses reveal about how and why we give?

Matthew 6:19-24:

1 Corinthians 16:1-2:

2 Corinthians 9:6-7:

Finally, preaching and teaching are major ingredients of true biblical worship. Our teaching must be the Scriptures alone, the only means of equipping believers for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The godly preacher or teacher will teach God's Word and rely on the Spirit of God to do His work in the minds and hearts of his listeners. As Paul reminded Timothy, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). A church gathering that does not include the Word of God as a major component is not a biblical worship service.

As we follow the pattern of true worship in Scripture, let us worship God with great passion. We must not convey to the world the impression that the worship of our God is a boring, lifeless ritual. We have been redeemed from sin. Let us therefore praise our Creator as His children who are grateful for His bountiful blessings. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28-29).



Reflect on your heart attitude toward the elements of the church service. Where are you engaging in the service with joy? What elements spur on your love for God? In which elements is God calling you to engage in a more God-honoring way? Ask for forgiveness, repent, and ask Him to change your heart in those areas. Practice intentionally preparing your heart for the elements of the service this week.



Lesson 6:

How can I recognize a healthy church?

God established the church to be the primary agent for carrying out His purposes on earth. The church is the body of Christ—God’s heart, hands, feet, and voice reaching out to people in the world. Healthy churches come in every shape and size. While numerical growth may be an indicator of health (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 16:5), it does not guarantee the well-being of a church. The healthiness of a church is measured in spiritual and biblical terms rather than numerical.



How would you define a healthy church?

While no denomination or congregation is perfect, the Bible does present several characteristics to help us recognize a church that corresponds with God’s standard:

A healthy church teaches sound doctrine based on the whole counsel of God’s Word (Titus 1:9; 2:1; 1 Timothy 6:3–4; 2 Timothy 2:2). When believers meet together, both for corporate worship and small group study, the Bible ought to be the center of the teaching. Faithful

interpretation and everyday application of sound biblical doctrine will produce wholesome Christian living (1 Timothy 1:10; 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:15–17). The centrality of scriptural truth preserves the well-being of the local church as well as its leadership (2 Timothy 1:13–14; Titus 1:6–9). And when biblical truth and sound doctrine are prioritized, safeguarded, and taught without compromise, then all other traits of a healthy church will naturally follow.



Look up the following verses. What do they reveal about the importance of God's Word?

1 Timothy 6:3-4:

2 Timothy 2:2:

2 Timothy 3:15-17:

Titus 1:9, 2:1:



How is the health of the church impacted by its individual members?

A healthy church recognizes the biblical qualifications of spiritual leaders. For example, godly leaders are not to be arrogant, quick-tempered, violent, greedy, or dishonest, but rather must be hospitable, wise, just, upright, disciplined, and devout (Titus 1:6–9; 1 Timothy 3:1–7).

A healthy church will produce leaders after the example of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:15; 5:23 Colossians 1:18). Jesus led through servanthood (Matthew 20:25–28; John 13:12–17). Jesus also spent most of His three years in ministry interacting closely with the twelve disciples,

teaching and training them, and letting them observe His life. Good leaders identify and train other leaders (Acts 6:1–7).

Biblical leaders are good stewards of the ministry and the resources that have been entrusted to them by God (1 Corinthians 4:1–3; 9:17; 1 Peter 4:10). While we shouldn't expect the overseers of a healthy church to be perfect, they ought to be servant leaders who participate in training disciples, equipping believers for ministry, and helping other servants of God become mature and godly leaders (Ephesians 4:11–16).



Read Ephesians 4:11-16. In what ways do leaders impact their followers, either positively or negatively?

A healthy church emphasizes discipleship, which produces faithful followers who, again, aren't perfect, but who know and love God and seek to obey His Word (John 8:31-32; 14:15; 1 John 2:3-6). Discipleship includes getting involved in the life of the church, building authentic relationships with other believers (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 10:17), exercising gifts of ministry and service (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7), growing in sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23), and bearing fruit (John 15:5-8).



Who has been influential in discipling you, and how have they impacted you?



Who is currently discipling you and whom are you discipling? What spiritually intentional relationships are you cultivating in your church?

A healthy church does its part in obeying the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) of spreading the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was raised from death to life, and now reigns to offer forgiveness of sins, new life in the Spirit, and eternal life to all who repent and believe. Evangelism encompasses local outreach, world missions, and simply sharing the gospel with people in our everyday lives. As ambassadors for Christ on this earth, believers are called to be “the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life” (2 Corinthians 2:15–16).

Other marks of a healthy church can be observed in the newly emerging church of the book of Acts (Acts 2:42–47). The early church was devoted to biblical doctrine, meeting together for prayer, worship, and communion. These early Christians fervently dedicated themselves to one another, forming a loving, generous environment where members cared for one another. A healthy church today will exhibit similar enthusiasm for authentic Christian living and participate in the purposes and work of God’s kingdom on this earth.



Why were Paul and the early church leaders so protective of the church? Why did they respond to sin and false teaching so seriously on both individual and corporate levels?



How is your involvement in the church impacting your spiritual health? How is your spiritual health impacting your local church body or the believers around you? Write out a prayer for where you would like to see God continue to grow you and use you and your community of believers for His purposes and work in God's kingdom on this earth.



Lesson 7:

How should conflict in the church be handled?

There are many areas of a church where conflict can develop. However, most of them tend to fall under one of three categories: conflict due to blatant sin among believers, conflict with leadership, conflict between believers. Admittedly, many issues can cross over and actually involve two or more of these categories.



When have you seen church conflict handled well? Why is handling conflict so difficult, especially in the church?

Believers who blatantly sin pose a conflict for the church as described in 1 Corinthians 5. The church that does not deal with sin among the members will open the door to more problems. The church is not called to be judgmental of unbelievers, but the church is expected to confront and restore believers who are unrepentant of sins such as those listed in 1 Corinthians 5:11: “. . . anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer,

a drunkard or swindler.” Such individuals are to not be accepted by the church until they are willing to repent. Matthew 18:15-17 provides a concise procedure for the confrontation and restoration of a believer. Confrontation should be done carefully, meekly, and with the goal of restoration (Galatians 6:1). Churches that lovingly discipline sinning individuals will curtail a great deal of conflict in the church.



Read Matthew 7:1-6, 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, and 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. What role does judgment play in the lives of believers (as opposed to unbelievers)? What does this look like practically?

At times believers might not be content with the direction or actions of church leaders. This was the case early in the history of the church (Acts 6:1-7). Complaints about the lack of care of a certain group in the church were taken up with the leaders. This was remedied, and the church grew (Acts 6:7). The early church used a conflict to improve the ministry. However, when churches do not have a clear process for dealing with such concerns, people tend to create their own platforms. Individuals may begin polling others in the church, get involved in gossip, or even develop a bloc of “concerned people.” Leadership

can help avoid this by leading like selfless, loving shepherds that are examples of servants rather than ones that lord over others (1 Peter 5:1-3). Those who are frustrated should respect the leaders (Hebrews 13:7, 17), be slow to accuse them (1 Timothy 5:19), and speak the truth lovingly to them, not to others about them (Ephesians 4:15). On those occasions when it appears the leader is not responding to the concern, an individual should follow the pattern set down in Matthew 18:15-17 to ensure that there is no confusion as to where each stands.



At what point do issues become worthy of addressing? Which Scriptures led you to your conclusion?

The Bible warns that people in church may have difficulties with conflict. Some conflict is due to pride and selfishness (James 4:1-10). Some conflicts come about because of offenses that have not been forgiven

(Matthew 18:15-35). God has told us to press toward peace (Romans 12:18; Colossians 3:12-15). It is the responsibility of each believer to seek to resolve a conflict.



How can dealing with issues in the church (doctrine, unmet needs, ungodly practices or patterns, etc.) or interpersonal conflict benefit and strengthen a church?

Some steps toward resolution include the following:

1. Develop the proper heart attitude - Meek (Galatians 6:1); Humble (James 4:10); Forgiving (Ephesians 4:31, 32); Patient (James 1:19, 20).

2. Evaluate your part in the conflict - Matthew 7:1-5 (removing the log from your own eye first is necessary before helping others).

3. Go to the individual (not to others) to voice your concern - Matthew 18:15. This is best done in love (Ephesians 4:15) and not to just get something off your chest. Accusing the person tends to encourage

defensiveness. Therefore, attack the problem rather than the person. This gives the person a better opportunity to clarify the situation or to seek forgiveness for the offense.

4. If the first attempt does not accomplish the needed results, continue with another person or persons that can help with mediation (Matthew 18:16). Remember that your goal is not to win an argument; it is to win your fellow believer to reconciliation. Therefore, choose people who can help you resolve the conflict.



Think of major conflicts you have had. How were they handled? If the above steps were used in the conflict, how did following them impact the outcome? If the above steps were not used, how do you think the outcome would have been different if they were?

Conflict is best handled when individuals prayerfully and humbly focus on loving others, with the intent of restoring relationships. Most issues of conflict should be manageable if the above biblical principles are followed.



What is your response to conflict? If you are repelled to conflict, how could seeing the benefits of handling conflict humbly, lovingly, and biblically allow you to accept and deal with it when it arises?



If you engage very easily in conflict, where do you need to surrender your wants, attitudes, and justifications for the growth, unity, and benefit of the church as a whole?



Think through your last three major conflicts. Were they biblically justified? Were they handled with the right heart attitude? What role did you play in their resolutions?



Lesson 8:

How can a church achieve a true, biblical unity?

The Bible underscores the importance of “unity” and “oneness.” Unity with others is “good” and “pleasant” (Psalm 133:1). Unity is absolutely essential because the church is the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27), and a body cannot be in disunity or disharmony with itself. If disunity occurs, it essentially ceases to be a body and becomes a disjointed group of individuals. Jesus’ plan for His church is people unified in the faith.



What does it mean to be unified? What does it not mean?



How can we be unified while still maintaining diversity (in opinion on non-essential issues, in background, in interests, etc)?

The secret to unity begins with how we view ourselves within the body and how we view others. The key verse that addresses this is Philippians 2:3: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.” Disunity in a church is most often caused when we act selfishly and consider ourselves better than others. Paul goes on to explain further in the following verse: “Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” Sadly, churches that experience disunity and are in

conflict and turmoil are generally filled with people looking to their own needs, their own desires, and their own ambitions. Such behavior is characteristic of unbelievers, not those with the mind of Christ. Worldliness, not godliness, is the hallmark of the disunited church, as Paul reminded the Corinthians: “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?” (1 Corinthians 3:3).



Read Philippians 2:1-11. How are we supposed to treat believers? What results when people are treated this way?

Paul tells us that we are to consider others' needs before our own. In all modesty, humility and lowliness of mind, we are to “be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). A church filled with such people cannot help but have peace, unity, and harmony. The truly humble person sees his own faults in light of the perfections of Christ; he does not seek to see the faults of others, but

when he does, he speaks the truth in love and desires their sanctification so they will be built up in the image of Christ. He sees his own heart and the corruption that lies hidden there, along with impure motives and evil ambitions. But he does not seek to notice the errors, defects, and follies of others. He sees the depravity of his own heart and hopes charitably in the goodness of others and believes their hearts are more pure than his.



Read Romans 12:3-21. What do these verses reveal about humility and our attitude towards fellow believers?

Most importantly, as Christians, we are to see one another in the light of the cross. Fellow Christians are those for whom Christ died a horrible and painful death so that He might exchange His righteous perfection for their sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). How can we not extend to them the love, compassion, and grace of our heavenly Father? How can we demean, criticize, and defame those covered with the precious blood of Christ? Were we not slaves to sin when He called us, hopelessly lost, dead in

our own transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1)? But we are now slaves of Christ, slaves to righteousness, and as slaves of the Master, the task before us is not to quarrel and demand our needs be met but to reflect His grace and love to those who are also His by His mercy. A church full of such people enjoying their “common salvation” will be a true, biblical church unified in, and earnestly contending for, the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3, NKJV).



At the cross, we are equally humbled, equally loved, and equally reminded of our need for the Savior. We all have different gifts and abilities, but without Christ’s sacrifice, mercy, and grace toward us, we were all equally destined to hell. How does reminding ourselves of our “common salvation” unite us and free us to treat each other the way God calls us?



Lesson 9:

What is the value of having a church family?

What value is there to becoming like family to other believers? Acts 2:42 could be considered a basic statement of quintessential church activity: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” The Bible places importance on the church family unit because of these reasons:

We study God’s Word together – A church family provides consistent Bible teaching. This often comes through small groups, Bible studies, teaching from the pastor, Sunday school lessons, and so on. The church family is called to grow spiritually together, spurring one another on. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”



What is God currently teaching you through the study of His Word, both personally and corporately?

We honor God together through worship – There is a unifying factor when believers worship God together, whether it's through music or preaching or serving.

Psalm 34:3 emphasizes a call to corporate worship: “Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.”



How does corporate worship unify the body of Christ?



How does the call to exalt God together encourage you to be committed to the church body?

We find accountability – The church provides a practical framework for accountability. Once relationships grow and friendships form, there is someone to encourage you, rebuke you when necessary, and rejoice with you. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron

sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Accountability is crucially important in the battle to overcome sin, and the church family is a great place to find someone to pray with, talk to, and confide in.



Where could you humble yourself and allow others in the body to provide accountability for you from sin?

We find support in trial – When trials come, a support system is crucial. When in need, you will want your brothers and sisters in Christ to uphold you in prayer and assist with practical needs like meals, cleaning, and childcare. Galatians 6:2 encourages us to “carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”



When have you found support in the body of Christ when you were walking through trials?

We gain opportunities for service – We not only receive support in the church; we give it as well. Your calling in the church is to contribute, not just to receive. When we are in close fellowship with other believers, we know when they need support and prayer. We can step in and help in practical ways. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”



Read the following verses. How are you challenged or encouraged to serve those in the body of Christ?

Mark 10:42-45:

Galatians 5:14:

Galatians 6:6-10:

1 Peter 4:10:

We make disciples – There comes a time when we need to learn to feed, not just be fed (Hebrews 5:12). We can evangelize, teach, encourage, and “disciple” our church family. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).



As we discussed in a previous lesson, who is discipling you and whom are you discipling? How could you be more intentional with the discipling relationships in your life?

In an age when the culture is increasingly secular, it is beneficial to be in a family of like-minded believers. These brothers and sisters can encourage you in your faith journey, respond to your questions about spiritual issues, and be a support in times of hardship. The church family can also give you opportunity to serve

and disciple others. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).



If you are not part of a church family, what from this study has challenged or motivated you to become a part of one?



If your church family is unhealthy, pray. Ask God to show you how He is calling you to act and how you can be part of the solution.



If you are in a church family, praise God for the believers and leaders He has given you! Praise Him for how the body has encouraged you, motivated you, disciplined you, reminded you of what is true, and helped you grow. Ask God to give you a renewed commitment to and love for the body of believers in which He has placed you.



Lesson 10:

Why is going to church important?

Simply put, the Bible tells us we need to attend church so we can worship God with other believers and be taught His Word for our spiritual growth. The early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). We should follow that example of devotion—and to the same things. Back then, they had no designated church building, but “every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46). Wherever the meeting takes place, believers thrive on fellowship with other believers and the teaching of God’s Word.



Why are the four things listed in Acts 2:42 the fundamental ways we grow and thrive as believers?

Church attendance is not just a “good suggestion”; it is God’s will for believers. Hebrews 10:25 says we should “not [be] giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Even in the early church, some were

falling into the bad habit of not meeting with other believers. The author of Hebrews says that’s not the way to go. We need the encouragement that church attendance affords. And the approach of the end times should prompt us to be even more devoted to going to church.



How should an eternal perspective that “the Day is approaching” encourage believers to continue meeting together?

Church is the place where believers can love one another (1 John 4:12), encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13), “spur” one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), honor one another (Romans 12:10), and be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32).



How do you practically live out these “one another” commands within your church? What are other ways you could practically live out these commands?

Love one another:

Encourage one another:

Spur one another to love and good works:

Serve one another:

Instruct one another:

Honor one another:

Be kind and compassionate to one another:

When a person trusts Jesus Christ for salvation, he or she is made a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). For a church body to function properly, all of its “body parts” need to be present and working (1 Corinthians 12:14–20). It’s not enough to just attend a church; we should be involved in some

type of ministry to others, using the spiritual gifts God has given us (Ephesians 4:11–13). A believer will never reach full spiritual maturity without having that outlet for his gifts, and we all need the assistance and encouragement of other believers (1 Corinthians 12:21–26).



Why is it not wise or biblical to be a lone Christian? What benefits are there in being in community with other believers? Give Scriptures or examples to back up your answer.



Read Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28. Which of these gifts describe your passions or abilities? In what ways have you noticed these gifts in use recently? If you do not know what your spiritual gift is, spend some time praying that God would show you.



Look up the following verses. What do they reveal about what our attitudes should be in serving?

Matthew 20:25-28:

Mark 12:28-34:

Romans 12:3:

Philippians 2:3-4:



List as many ways as possible that you can serve in your church. Which of these interest you? Why?



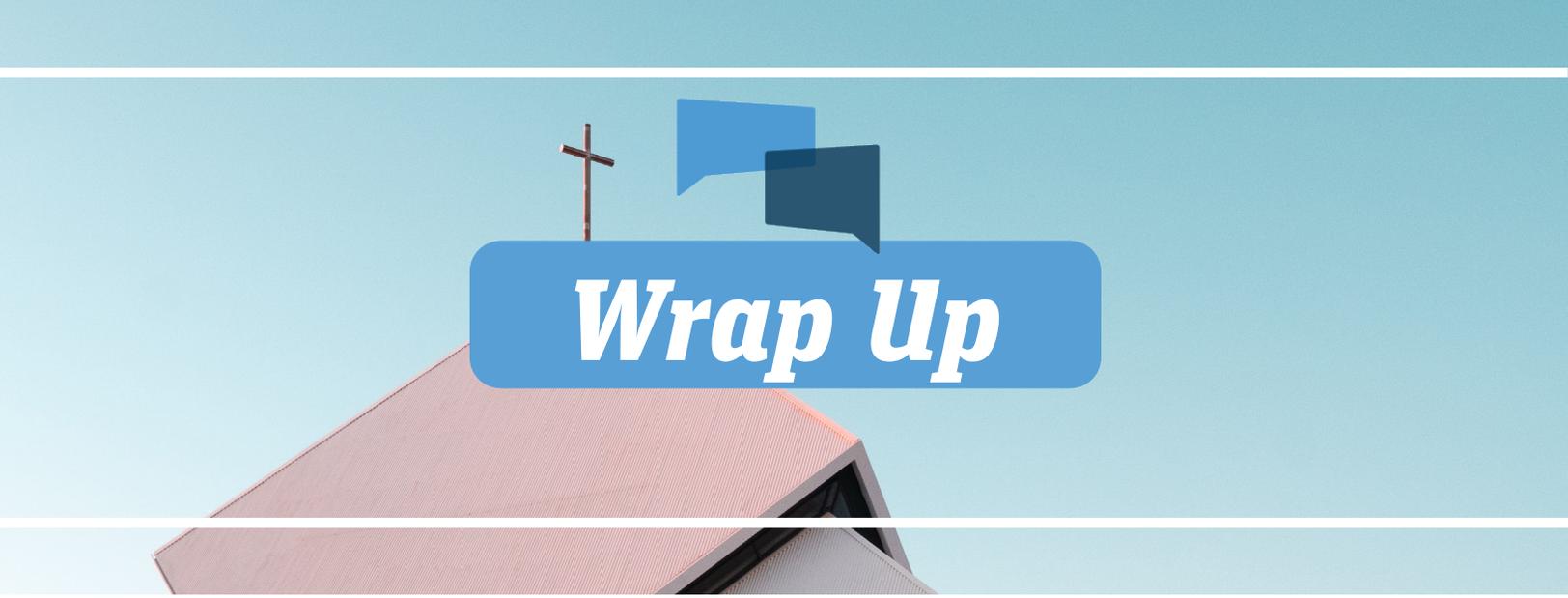
What would it look like practically and what impact would it have specifically to serve in the specific areas of service you identified above with the attitudes we looked at on the previous page? (For example, if you are serving in a children's program, what does a servant attitude look like?)

For these reasons and more, church attendance, participation, and fellowship should be regular aspects of a believer's life. Weekly church attendance is in no sense "required" for believers, but someone who belongs to Christ should have a desire to worship God, receive His Word, and fellowship with other believers.

Jesus is the Cornerstone of the Church (1 Peter 2:6), and we are "like living stones . . . being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). As the building materials of God's "spiritual house," we naturally have a connection with one another, and that connection is evident every time the Church "goes to church."



Thank God for the specific ways He has built the church to function as a body. Thank Him also for the ways that He has equipped you and other believers to fit within the body. If you do not know where to serve, pray and ask God to show you what needs exist (talk to your pastor if you do not know), what spiritual gifts He has given you, and where you can serve with godly attitudes that encourage the body of Christ and help it thrive.



Wrap Up

Now that you have studied ten lessons on questions about the church, take some time to reflect on what you've learned and how you will put what you've learned into practice.



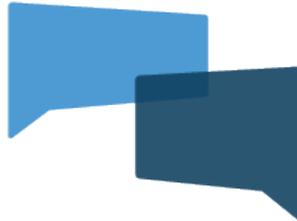
How has your understanding of the church changed or expanded as a result of what you've learned through this study?



What will you change in your life as a result of this study?



Who in your life needs to be encouraged by renewed commitment to the body of Christ? What will you do as a result of your renewed commitment to those in the local and universal church?



Reference List

Lesson 1: www.gotquestions.org/what-is-the-church.html

Lesson 2: www.gotquestions.org/one-church.html

Lesson 3: www.gotquestions.org/purpose-church.html

Lesson 4: www.gotquestions.org/mission-of-the-church.html

Lesson 5: www.gotquestions.org/worship-service.html

Lesson 6: www.gotquestions.org/healthy-church.html

Lesson 7: www.gotquestions.org/church-conflict.html

Lesson 8: www.gotquestions.org/church-unity.html

Lesson 9: www.gotquestions.org/church-family.html

Lesson 10: www.gotquestions.org/church-attendance.html

All Bible references are quoted from the NIV unless otherwise stated.