

Life Principles Center

Course: The Church and Her Ordinances

T2_CC_L1: The Church: What Is It All About? (MO050)

Introduction:

In other *Faith Foundations* lessons, we focus a great deal on who God is and how He operates. Now, we need to examine not only who God is, but how He desires us to experience Him. This is done through the Church.

In this course, entitled The Church and Her Ordinances, we will explore answers to the following questions:

- " What is the role of the Church?
- " How can you find a church home?
- " What is the purpose and meaning of baptism?
- " And, why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

With our salvation secured in Jesus Christ, it's important that we join an active, Christ-centered church body. If you are not an involved member of a local fellowship, I pray that this course spurs you to find a church home.

Lesson 1, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Understand varying perspectives of church, and evaluate your own.
- B. Understand Scripture as it relates to the church.

Scripture

Read Matthew 16:13-19

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have

been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Lesson 1

Throughout *Faith Foundations*, we have given much attention to understanding who God is and how He operates. In this course, I would like us to broaden our view a bit by studying what God is doing in this world through His chosen instrument, the Church.

Let us begin with some honest questions: *Why would anyone want to join a church? Why do some churches have so many buildings? What goes on inside the church? Is it necessary to belong to a church to be a godly person and to walk in holiness with Him? And finally, Does God say it is important to be a member of a church in order to go to heaven?* All of these are excellent questions, and I have heard them from people all over the world.

Most Christians fall into one of two categories in relation to their view of church. Some are supporters of church life, meaning that they have aligned themselves with a local church body and have committed to the ministry of that congregation. Others, however, are critics of the church. This group is generally comprised of individuals who have had at least one bad experience within a local fellowship, whereby their perception of church was marred. Many who can be seen as critics, though, have never had a bad experience; rather, they may allow the sharp criticisms of others to color the way they view the church.

J1: Take a moment to ponder your own perspective of church—both as you see it now and as you saw it in the past. How has your perspective changed, if at all? What experiences and/or interactions with others have colored your view of church, whether positively or negatively?

Today’s Scripture passage lets us see the establishment of the church through Jesus’ interaction with His disciples. This is a passage that has been horribly misinterpreted time and time again. Therefore, let’s take a moment to note the central points of the text.

When Jesus asks His disciples who they think He is, Peter steps forth and declares, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). What a wonderful answer. The dominant misinterpretation emerges in verses 17 and 18, in which Jesus responds, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon

this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

Because the name “Peter” comes from the Greek word *petros*, meaning “rock,” it is widely held that Jesus is founding the church upon this one man. This is completely unscriptural. It is certainly not like the ways of God to establish His holy church upon any one man. So, we must ask, *What “rock” was Jesus referring to?*

Rather than pointing to Peter, the man, Jesus was referring to the confession Peter had just made. The Lord is saying that the church will be founded upon the bedrock of Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Q1: True or False? While only two general categories exist to classify a believer's view of church, one such category can sharply influence other believers' perspectives of church.

Q2: Choose the BEST answer. In Matthew 16:16-18, what does Jesus mean when He uses the term "rock"?

- A. He is referring to the physical foundation of a church.*
- B. He is referring to the chosen instrument, or pastor and/or leaders, on which a church is founded.*
- C. He is referring to the body of Christ, otherwise known today as "the church."*
- D. He is referring to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.*
- E. He is referring to the truth upon which a church is founded—that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.*

Objective

Lesson 1, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Identify, understand, and evaluate the purpose and function of a local church.

Now that we have taken a good look at the church's formation, let's get back to the original question: *Why should anyone belong to a church in the first place?* You will most likely find several answers to this question outside the Word of God. Some people belong to a church body because it soothes their guilty consciences. Others join as part of their establishment in the neighborhood or social community. Still others may

attend to enhance their business relationships or expand their sphere of influence. The sad truth is that many, many people join churches for all the wrong reasons.

J2: Evaluate your own motives behind joining the church. Ask God to reveal to you any intentions not in accordance with His will. Record His revelations in your journal.

This is, of course, not what Christ intended for His church. The very word for “church” in the Greek language demonstrates the uniqueness that Christians should reveal to the world. The Greek word *ecclesia* is literally translated as “called out ones.” This means that the church is comprised of those people who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior and He has called them out of the world’s system in order to unite them in godly community.

With this idea, we can divide the church into three categories. There is the *universal church*, which is made up of all people in heaven and on earth who are believers in Christ and saints of God. Second is the *global church*, which is made up of believers currently living all over the world. And third is the *local church*, which is made up of the individual, local bodies of believers.

Now, there are many people who are saved and yet have not joined a church. They may argue, “Well, I already know I’m going to heaven, and I have received Jesus as my Savior, so why do I need a church?” I would respond to that by pointing to Matthew 16:14-20 and asking, “Do you believe that Jesus established the church? If so, then why do you think Jesus would establish something so important if He did not intend for us to be a part of it?”

My friend, Jesus is without a doubt interested in our union with a local body of believers. If it were not important, He would not have even bothered establishing the church. Therefore, we must seriously examine our own spiritual lives and church commitment. We will do this over the next few lessons, as we investigate the make-up, ministry, methods, and message of the church. Once these concepts are firmly rooted in our hearts and minds, I will provide some practical suggestions to help you find a church body that is perfectly suited to your needs. Or, if you already belong to a church home, I will give you some guidelines to ensure that your church is operating in the most effective, Christ-like way.

Q3: Reflecting on the three categories or divisions of the word "church," specify to which ONE division the Institute Prayer Community belongs.

- A. Universal
- B. Global
- C. Local
- D. All of the above

J3: In light of your answer to the previous question, explain why your involvement in the Institute is not a suitable replacement for participating in the ministry of an active local church.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for establishing the church. Thank You for acting to ensure that we would not be left all to ourselves, standing alone against the world's system. And Father God, help us as we seek to understand what the church is and how the church operates. Thank You for effectiveness, usefulness, and love that comes with being united to the body of Christ. In Jesus' perfect name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory:

The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Assignment:

For homework, study Matthew 16:18. Then, record a journal entry in response to these questions: *When Jesus explains the truth that Hades, or His own physical death, will not overpower the church, what do you think He means? How does this implication affect your perspective of the church as more than a local fellowship, but also a worldwide body of believers?*

Life Principles Center

Course: The Church and Her Ordinances

T2_CC_L2: The Church: What Is It All About? Part 2 (MO050)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 2, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- B. Understand the original, New Testament meaning of the term "church."
- B. Distinguish between different uses of the term "church."

Scripture

Read Colossians 1:17-18

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Lesson 2

As we have been studying the church, I am sure that several images have come up in your mind. When you hear the word "church," maybe you think about a particular building, or a pastor, or a choir with nice, clean robes. Let's take a moment to explore what the believers in the New Testament meant by the concept of "church."

First, look at 1 Timothy 3:14-15. Here, Paul gives his young apprentice, Timothy, a word about the importance of personal conduct in the church. Paul obviously places a high value on the church, as he refers to it as "the household of God" and the "pillar and support of the truth." This means that an authentic church proclaims the truth in every way, without error.

This emphasis on *every church* proclaiming the truth may lead you to question the validity of all the many denominations within the Christian church. Well, the existence of denominations is not scriptural. This was not the original intent of Christ in establishing the church. However, as

the Gospel was passed through large groups of believers, different interpretations began to emerge and as a result, different groups began to follow slightly different interpretations of the Word of God.

Now, when we join a church, its particular denominational affiliation may be an important factor to us. Quite often, a church's denominational ties reveal much about its doctrine, or basic Christian beliefs. In choosing a church, you must be careful to make sure their interpretation of Scripture is doctrinally sound, which we will explore in more detail later on in this course.

J1: In preparation for our later study on what to look for in a church, what are some things that would draw you to a particular body of believers? What basic beliefs or activities would you look for? Or, if you are already in a committed church body, what do you most enjoy about your place of worship?

Second, let's take a look at Colossians 1:17-18, in which we see Paul's description of the church as the very body of Christ. Paul also uses this image in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. The point of this illustration is that we should never view the church as a mere collection of believers. Instead, we are all part of a larger body: the body of Christ. In the body, each part has a particular function, but all are necessary and important. And, within this body, Jesus Christ is the head, or director, of all activity. Just as a human brain governs the activity of the body, so must the church acknowledge Christ's place as the head of the body of believers.

With this biblical understanding of what the church actually is, we can see two specific parts of the make-up, or organization, of the church in general. As we have just seen, Christ is, foremost, the head of the church. He is the one who rules and reigns. While all believers share the responsibility for the work of the church, we must all remember that it is Jesus—not the pastor, deacons, or other clergy—who serves as the head of the church.

Another important factor is recognizing our own place in the make-up of the church, or the body of Christ. By this definition, the church is not simply a building. The word "church" here identifies a group of people who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Every single person within the church should be able to echo the confession of Peter that we saw in the previous lesson, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Having received Jesus as Lord, we have each become sons and daughters of God. Consequently, when we take

part in church membership, we are confessing that Jesus is Lord of our lives and expressing our place in the family of God.

Unfortunately, too many people join churches for the wrong reasons. Belonging to a church is not like belonging to a civic club or community service group. The universal church is made up of those people who have trusted Jesus as Savior; if someone has not made this decision, then they should not join a church. While church membership is intended only for those who have entrusted their lives to Jesus Christ, non-Christians often attend and even get involved in church activities for a variety of reasons.

This third group that makes up the church, who we will call *deceived*, have no idea that they are not within the will of God. Perhaps they joined the church because they were raised in a Christian home and it was simply part of the family environment. Or, maybe they started attending because it made them feel as though they were being a good person by sitting through a worship service. Regardless of their reasons, it is the responsibility of the pastor and other Christians in the church to make sure that the saving message of Jesus Christ is presented boldly and regularly. A person should never be able to sit in church week after week and remain ignorant of his or her need for Jesus.

Q1: Which of the following is NOT in accordance with God's original intent for the church?

- E. Being divided into denominations.*
 - F. Having the church comprised of those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ.*
 - G. Assuming that your parent's faith or moral upbringing "makes" you a Christian.*
 - H. Being sure that your church doctrine is in accordance with Scripture.*
- A and C*
- I. A and D*

Lesson 2, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Recognize the role of the church in the life of non-Christians.**
- B. Recognize false teaching and evaluate the life of your local church.**

If you have been a Christian for a while, you may have heard of or even participated in something called a "membership drive." This is a time when a church makes a concentrated, concerted effort to bring new

people into the church. However, let me give you one strict warning: if you invite a person to join your church without confronting them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you will be doing them a great disservice. Remember, the true church is made up of only those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. If you give church membership to someone without giving him or her this opportunity, then you may put them in a situation where they neither have Jesus nor see the need for Him. This only goes for actual *membership*, though. This should certainly not prevent us from inviting all of our unchurched friends to worship with us!

J2: Have you ever been taught to lead others into church membership without first ensuring that they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

In the next lesson of this course, we will continue our thorough look into the purpose of the church by examining the three ministries in which every church should be involved, as well as the three primary points of the saving message that every church should proclaim. Until then, I pray that you allow this important information to settle into your hearts and minds as you strive to understand your own place in this magnificent body of Christ.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for speaking to us through Your holy Word to show us what the church really is. Forgive us for anything we've done as part of a church that was inconsistent with Your original purpose, and guide us as we seek to serve You alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank You for making us part of a larger body, and give us the confidence to trust You as the head of that body. In Jesus' powerful name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Before moving on to the next lesson in this course, carefully read Colossians 1:17. Knowing that Christ is the true head of the church, can you identify some areas in which you may hold distorted views of the church or church leadership? Record your response as a journal entry, and we'll examine these questions in greater depth as we discover the various purposes of the church.

Life Principles Center

Course: The Church and Her Ordinances

T2_CC_L3: The Church: What Is It All About? Part 3 (MO050)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 3, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate truths you learned in the last lesson.
- B. Recognize the purpose and ministry of the church.

Scripture

Read Ephesians 4:11-12

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

Lesson 3

Over the past two lessons of this course, we have seen that the church was not the invention of man, but of God, as Christ established the church upon Peter's confession of faith, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). We have also learned that the church is not a random gathering of individuals, but is instead an active, interconnected body of believers with Christ as the head. Now, as we continue our study into the nature of the church, we will examine three crucial ministries of the church, as well as the central message that every healthy church must proclaim.

When talking about the ministry of the church, the primary importance must be placed upon its ministry to God, which is worship. When we meet together, it is not for the social connections or to witness a religious program. Instead, our gathering should have the singular purpose of bringing glory and praise to the Lord. Within that goal we may

sing songs of praise and carefully study His Word, but what motivates us to do this? It is our desire to honor holy God.

J1: Your homework assignment from the last lesson asked you to study Colossians 1:17 and record any possible misconceptions you have previously had regarding the church. How does understanding the primary purpose of gathering with the church body—to honor God—impact, or change your perspectives as recorded in the homework assignment?

Just because this is the first ministry of the church, do not be fooled into thinking that you can only honor God when the body of believers is gathered together. There is something equally beautiful about the worship of the individual, lifting praise and glory to God when no one else is present. And, when you worship God by yourself, you are completely free to sing as long as you like, pray for as long as you need, and throw yourself upon His mercies without worrying what someone else may think of you. Regardless of whether we are worshipping with a group or alone in our rooms, we must always keep worship at the heart of our participation with God. (Psalm 132:7)

The second essential ministry of the church is the edification of the saints. Who are the saints, you may ask? My friend, all of us who believe in the name of the Lord are called saints in His Word. Ephesians 4:11-12 explains that all believers are specially and specifically gifted. Gifted for what? We are given gifts to equip the saints for service and to build up the body of Christ. That means we all have the responsibility of lifting up and encouraging each other.

Q1: Carefully read Ephesians 4:11-12. Then, choose the BEST answer. According to your memory verses, God gives all of His saints different gifts for the purpose of . . .

*displaying them to the lost
equipping believers for ministry
building up the body of Christ
encouraging believers*

All of the above

A and D

A, B, and D

B, C, and D

Obviously, if you are active in a church, your pastor has the responsibility of teaching you the truth of the Bible. So, if you go to church and do not hear anything worth practicing or any biblical principles worth writing down, then you may need to ask yourself if you are in the right church. The church is responsible for feeding its members the meat of the Gospel. If your church doesn't do this, then do not be scared to ask *why*.

Q2: True or False? The secondary ministry of the church involves equipping saints to use their God-given gifts through pastoral teaching and encouragement from other believers.

Lesson 3, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate truths you learned in the last lesson.
- B. Recognize the purpose and ministry of the church.

The third vital ministry of the church is evangelism and missions. This means that a healthy church does not just keep the joy of Christ inside of its own walls, but instead takes that message outside into the world. Now, the *methods* may change depending on where the Gospel is preached, but the *message* itself must never change.

This brings us to a very important question: *what is the message of the church?* Well, there are clearly some things that must be evident in every presentation of the Gospel:

1. Man is sinful and accountable to God for that sin. (Romans 3:23, 14:12)
2. There is nothing that we could do to earn God's favor. (Romans 2:9-29; Isaiah 64:6)
3. God loves us unconditionally, despite our sinfulness. (John 3:16)
4. Because of His great love, God made a way for us to be free from our sin while at the same time remaining true to His perfect justice. (Romans 3:23-27)

What is the message of the church? It is not social reform. It is not politics. It is not the environment. All of these things are important, but we must never lose sight of the fact that the message of the church is the lost condition of mankind and the redemption that is provided through Jesus Christ. When someone comes to faith in Christ and

commits himself to Him, all the other areas of his life can then fall into place behind the bedrock commitment that Jesus is Lord.

J2: Consider the ministry of your church, or if you are not yet a member, evaluate the ministry of the church you last visited. Which of these statements apply to your experience? Give examples in support of your answer.

- A. My church leans heavily on Christ-centered worship, biblical teaching, and edification of the saints.*
- B. My pastor teaches new things on a regular basis from the Word of God.*
- C. My pastor challenges and inspires me to apply the Bible practically in my daily lifestyle.*
- D. I regularly leave church after worship with a general sense of encouragement.*
- E. My church emphasizes missions—through both local outreaches and sending saints abroad.*
- F. My church equips me with teaching about spiritual gifts and provides opportunities for me to use my gifts in various areas of ministry.*
- G. My church presents the Gospel clearly and regularly.*
- H. My church does not do any of these.*

Too many churches have become completely issue-oriented, focusing only on one social issue after another. When this happens, the church loses its focus on its central reason for being: honoring God. As a result, the propagation of the Gospel begins to fall behind as the church talks more about sporadic issues than about the Word of God. My friend, faithfulness to the Word does not mean that we should pay less attention to the problems and heartaches of our community. Instead, when people are instructed in the ways of God and begin to live holy lives, they will begin to make a tremendous impact on the world. (Matthew 5:13-16) However, the focus must not be on the world's problems, but upon the power of God to bring deliverance from our darkest troubles. That is the message of the church.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of coming to You in praise and worship. We thank You for the power of the Gospel message and for its mighty impact on the world. Help us, Lord God, to stay steadfast in our devotion to the central message of the church: our

salvation through Christ Jesus. Give us boldness as we work within the church and out in the world to make His name known. And it's in that strong name of Jesus that we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

As you reflect on the last question, in which you evaluated your church or a church you recently visited, consider what God is speaking to you. If you're not already a member of a church, is He leading you to commit to a specific church home? If you see an area of weakness in your church, is He calling you to a particular ministry of service? Is He calling you into missions or to find out more about opportunities within your church to learn or teach others? Take some time to sit quietly before the Lord and ask Him to speak to your heart. Then, record in your journal what action(s) He impresses upon you or any Scriptures that come to mind.

Life Principles Center

Course: The Church and Her Ordinances

T2_CC_L4: How to Find a Church (MO050)

Introduction: This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

Lesson 4, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate truths you learned in the last lesson.
- B. Recognize the purpose and ministry of the church.

Scripture

Read Acts 2:42-47

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Lesson 4

So far in this course, we have learned what the church is, how it operates, and why it is important for all believers to be joined to a church body. Your assignment in the last lesson of this course was to pray about God's leading for you within the church. If you've forgotten what resulted from that prayer as recorded in your journal entry, it would be a good idea to refer back to your entry before continuing with this lesson.

Now, let us spend some time carefully examining the things we should look for in a church. If you do not currently belong to a church, use

these items as a resource while you search for a church home. If you are already an active church member, use these guidelines to measure your level of contentment with your church home.

The first thing we must investigate when attending a church is its doctrine. You may remember from previous lessons that a church's doctrine represents its fundamental beliefs. As we recently discussed in examining different denominations, not all Christians believe exactly the same interpretation of Scripture. So, what I'd like to do is give you eight key questions to pose to any church you attend.

1. *Do they believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God?* That is, do they believe that the Bible is without error or falsehood, and that all of Scripture is useful and necessary in our daily lives? (2 Timothy 3:16) Many professing Christians try to *excuse* certain unbelievable or miraculous aspects of the Bible, such as the Creation account in Genesis or the final judgment in Revelation. Friend, if a church cuts and pastes any part of the Word of God, trying to make it more comfortable or understandable by sacrificing something, then it fails to maintain the integrity of the Word. The Bible is not a book of suggestions for a happy life; it is the perfect Word of God to His people. There is absolutely no room for changes, additions, or subtractions.
2. *Do they believe in the deity of Christ?* That is, do they believe that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but God Himself? (John 1:1-2, 14) If a church does not believe that Jesus Christ is God, then you do not want to belong to it. Why? Because, if He is not God, then we have no hope for salvation. If He is not God, then He was a mere man; and, if He were an ordinary man, He was a sinner. As we have seen in previous lessons, the only One who could have paid the penalty for our sins was someone who had never sinned before. The Word of God teaches that that man is Jesus. If He did not do that, then I am left to face the full wrath of God, who will judge my sins. (Hebrews 9:27) The deity of Christ is absolutely a fundamental belief of any biblical church.
3. *Do they believe that Jesus was born of a virgin?* This is a key point wherein many people try to make the Bible say something that it simply does not say. It is amazing to think that there are thousands and thousands of people in the world who claim to have placed their faith in Jesus and yet do not believe that He was born of the virgin Mary, as told in the Gospels. If you do not believe this important piece of Scripture, then what else are you willing to sacrifice in the

Word? If we believe in the inerrant Word of God, then we must believe that it speaks the truth regarding Jesus' miraculous birth.

4. *Do they believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ?* When Jesus left the tomb, He left it *physically*. He was not simply a spirit floating around; He was a Person, alive, and in the flesh. (John 20:24-29)

J1: How is your church, or the last church you visited, doing so far? Does it follow the first four aspects of doctrine? Support your answers with specific examples or excerpts from your church's statement of faith.

5. *Do they believe that He is going to return?* Scripture is clear that Jesus will return to the earth to call His children home and to bring judgment on the ungodly. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
6. *Do they believe that there will be a future judgment?* When Jesus returns, He will return as a righteous Judge. At that time, He will divide His people from those who do not know Him. Some churches are not comfortable with this portrayal of Christ, but it is thoroughly biblical. (Matthew 25:31-46)
7. *Do they believe that there is a heaven and a hell?* This goes right along with the truth of the coming judgment. After all, if the "sheep" and "goats" are separated (Matthew 25:31-46), then each group must have a place to go.
8. *Do they believe that Jesus went to the cross and died a sacrificial, atoning death?* This is the most important point of all. The cornerstone of our faith is that Jesus Christ bore the punishment that we deserved, that through His death and resurrection, we gained the freedom of God's forgiveness. This was the price that was necessary to forgive, redeem, reconcile, justify, crucify, and glorify us, and to conform us to the image of God's Son. This was the proof that God truly loves us unconditionally, perfectly, and through no work of our own. (John 3:16, Romans 5:5-7)

J2: You may have trouble being able to measure your church's beliefs with the doctrine listed here, especially if you have not been a member for very long, or if you're measuring a church you have only visited. Whether you're having trouble or not, take a break from your lesson and find out the name of someone at your church who could answer some of these questions. Make sure you have the church number, too. Record both of those here in your journal before moving on.

Lesson 4, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate your church's vision for ministry and outreach.
- B. Recognize where God is leading you; or, confirm that He has guided you to where you currently are.

These eight points of doctrine must be carefully considered. My friend, if you go to a church that does not believe these things, then for your sake and for the sake of your family, depart from that church. These eight things are not simply my own opinions; they are core beliefs taken straight from the Word of God. And, if a church is not grounded upon the Word, then it has no sure foundation.

You may say, "Well, I don't think all these things make that much difference." If this represents your feelings, then please do not miss this: What you believe does indeed make a difference. Why? First, what you believe determines where you will spend eternity. Second, what you believe determines how you will live here on earth. No hell? No heaven? No judgment? How do you think you'd live? You would most likely live a morally offensive lifestyle. It is impossible to live out a godly faith if these core doctrines are not firmly set in your walk of faith.

Once you get past the doctrine test, you need to ask two more questions of the church. First, *is the church building your faith?* An indication that you may not be in the right church may be that the church is not strengthening your relationship with God or enabling you to understand Scripture.

Second, *does the church have a ministry to the world?* That is, a true Christ-centered church will not be satisfied to keep the power of the Gospel locked within its own walls, available only to its own members. Rather, a solid, biblical church expresses a deep desire to reach the world for Christ, taking the Gospel to those who have never heard it.

Q1: *True or False? You can discern a healthy, Bible-based church by examining what it believes, what it teaches, how it's teaching impacts you, and how it impacts the world at large.*

If you follow these three tests—doctrine, faith-building, and missions—they will guide you to a biblical church. If you are already part of such a wonderful body of believers, then these three tests will help solidify your understanding of what your church believes. It is a great

delight and a pleasure to be part of a local group of people who are doctrinally grounded in the Word of God, who love to be edified in the Word, and who are concerned about a world that does not know their God. My friend, God is intimately concerned with your church affiliation, and He desires to meet with you in new and exciting ways every time you come to Him in worship. Therefore, do not just “be a church member”; instead, come to recognize your proper place within the growing, vibrant, active body of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Father, how grateful we are for the precious, precious Word of God, Your Word. I pray the Holy Spirit will sink this message into every heart that hears it. That those who’ve been critical would ask for Your forgiveness of their criticism of the church and find one in which they can become a part. For we ask it in Christ’s name, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Q2: Basing your answer specifically on Acts 2:42, what were the early church members devoting their time and energy to? Choose one.

- J. Eating meals and taking communion together
- K. Praying together
- L. Learning together
- M. Spending time, or “fellowshipping,” with each other
- N. All of the above
- O. B, C, and D

J3: *Examine your own relationship with your church or with a church you recently visited. Do you, or would you, feel comfortable, challenged, and inspired to learn from other members of the church body, take communion with them, pray with them and for them, etc.? Record your answer and explain it in your journal.*

Life Principles Center

Course: The Church and Her Ordinances

T2_CC_L5: Baptism: Obligation or Option? (MC018)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 5, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate your beliefs about and preconceptions of baptism.
- B. Recognize fundamental, scriptural truths about baptism.

Scripture

Read Acts 8:26-38

But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH." The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he

answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Lesson 5

When I think about the commands that God gives us in the Bible, I can think of two specific reasons as to why God would call us to do certain things. First, the action must be something for our own good, even if we do not realize it. Second, it must be something that fits within the purposes of God. Knowing that our heavenly Father is an all-wise God, I know that He would never place a single command in Scripture if it were not important. With this in mind, I want to spend time in this lesson exploring one of Scripture's most important commands: baptism.

The primary thing I want to say is simply this: baptism is not a suggestion, recommendation, or option for believers. It is a divine obligation. In this lesson, we will take a close look at some facts about baptism and then we will answer the question, "Why be baptized?"

In thinking about baptism in general, I think it is important to begin with a fundamental principle for baptism: it is for believers only. Only when someone has already placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior should they submit to baptism. Nowhere in all of Scripture do we find someone being baptized without having made this confession of faith.

J1: Take a few moments to explore your own beliefs about baptism.

- A. What are some assumptions you have about baptism?*
- B. Have you ever been taught or ever believed that being baptized is the equivalent to being saved?*
- C. If you have been baptized, examine your own experience; was it before you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior or after?*
- D. If you've not been baptized and you are a born-again Christian, why haven't you been baptized?*
- E. Ask God to help you be transparent as you meditate on these questions and then answer them in your journal.*

In today's focal passage, we see that Philip opened up the Word to the Ethiopian, who immediately accepted Jesus as Lord. As they passed by a small body of water, the new believer exclaimed, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). What was Philip's only condition? He replied, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (Acts

8:37). Clearly, belief in Jesus as the saving Son of God is an absolute necessity for anyone seeking baptism.

Second, let's look at the different ways people experience baptism. There are essentially three different methods used for baptism: pouring, sprinkling, and immersion. In the New Testament, however, we only see one method used: immersion. This means that a person's entire body was taken under the water and then brought back up.

Occasionally, though, someone needed baptism and yet was too sick, old, or weak to be fully immersed. For those cases, pouring was used as a substitute method, as water was poured over the person's head in place of immersing his entire body. Sprinkling came along later as a matter of convenience.

What we should notice here is that pouring was originally meant as a rare substitute when a person's health necessitated an alternate method to immersion. Every instance of proper baptism in the Bible testifies to the use of immersion. The very word used in Scripture that we translate as "baptism," *baptizo*, actually means "to dip, submerge." This is a word that is also used of a sinking ship, clearly showing the idea that *baptizo* indicated a complete submersion under the water. Now, since baptism is a divine obligation, I firmly believe that it is necessary to do it in the manner presented in God's Word, and that, my friend, is by immersion.

Third, I want to be clear that while baptism is without a doubt an obligation for the believer, it is not required in order for someone to go to heaven. I want to be very careful here, however, because this should never be a reason for someone's refusal to be baptized. While it is not required for salvation, it is certainly essential to one's obedience to God.

You may say, "Well, I've been a Christian for years but I have not been baptized, but I believe I am being obedient to God." No you're not. Baptism is not an option, it is an obligation. And, if the Lord Jesus commands you to do something and you willfully refuse to do it, how can you claim to walk in obedience?

Q1: What essential elements have you learned so far about the act of being baptized?

F. It is an obligation for Christians.

G. It is an option for Christians.

H. It is an option for non-Christians.

I. *Although three methods have been used, baptizo signifies being submerged, or immersed; thus, immersion is God's preferred manner of baptism.*

J. *It does not signify your salvation, nor does it signify that you are not going to heaven.*

A, D, and E

B, D, and E

Lesson 5, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

A. Recognize fundamental, scriptural truths about baptism.

B. Evaluate whether or not your actions conform to your beliefs about baptism.

Now, why do we say that baptism is not required for our salvation? The reason, my friend, is that we are saved *only* through the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is it, and there is nothing we can add to that act of salvation. When we accept Jesus into our hearts and lives, accepting the work of salvation He accomplished on the cross, then we are saved and secure eternally. John 3:16 clearly tells us that whoever believes in (that is, personally accepts the life and work of) Jesus Christ will be saved. There is no mention of baptism there.

Likewise, Ephesians 2:8 shows that we have been saved not by works, but solely by the grace of God. In Galatians 2:16, Paul argues that there is nothing—no work or deed—that we can do to earn or improve upon our salvation. This includes something as important as baptism. Therefore, baptism has nothing to do with receiving the grace of God and being saved; instead, it is an act of obedience that should follow a genuine salvation experience.

Now, let's examine another question: *Why should we be baptized in the first place?* I want to briefly give you a list of six key reasons why we as believers should all submit to biblical baptism. If you have already experienced believer's baptism, then I hope these things will strengthen and affirm that wonderful act of dedication. If you have not been baptized and yet have placed your faith in Jesus, then I hope that these things will encourage you to follow through with God's call of obedience.

1. *Jesus commanded it.* If we have trusted Jesus as our personal Savior, then we must acknowledge His role as supreme Lord of our lives. This means that He has every right to make demands on our lives. (Matthew 28:19)

2. *To make a public profession of our faith in Jesus Christ.* This is a powerful, important testimony to the world, that you have made a decision to follow Christ in a world that often stands against Him. (2 Timothy 2:8)
3. *It represents what has happened to us in salvation.* In baptism by immersion, think about what you are physically representing. You stand above the waters, then go down below, and then are raised back up. This is a wonderful representation of the life, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus was put into the ground at death and then raised to new life, so are we made dead to the power of sin over our lives and then raised to new life in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11)
4. *It marks a specific time of obedience to Christ's command.* When we are baptized, we claim a specific time and place in history when we rise up in obedience to the Lord. This is a wonderful hallmark moment in our lives on which we can later reflect.
5. *It stands as a declaration of our faith in our own bodily resurrection.* Every time a believer rises from the baptismal waters, he is proclaiming his assurance that like Christ, he will be raised from the grave—through the power of God—and taken onward to his eternal home in heaven. (Galatians 5:24-25)
6. *With baptism, there is always a blessing.* Remember, baptism is an outward sign of the believer's obedience to the command of God. And, my friend, God rewards every act of obedience. God is pleased when one of His children is baptized, and He grants a blessing of confidence and assurance to those coming up from the baptismal waters. (Proverbs 8:32)

Q2: Match the Scripture reference with the appropriate reason why all believers should take part in biblical baptism.

- A. *It represents what happened to us at salvation.*
- B. *It marks a specific time of obedience to Christ's command.*
- C. *To make our public confession of our faith in Jesus Christ.*
- D. *With baptism, there is always a blessing.*
- E. *It stands as a declaration of our faith in our own bodily resurrection.*
- F. *Jesus commanded it.*

1. *"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).*

2. *“Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways” (Proverbs 8:32).*
3. *“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25).*
4. *“Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip” (Acts 8:13). Read Acts 8:9-13.*
5. *“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to the gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8).*
6. *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).*

Some of you reading this have never been baptized, even though you have accepted Jesus as Savior. This is not an option; it is a divine obligation that brings an awesome blessing, not only to you, but to all those who witness your commitment to Christ. I want you to know that despite your church membership, Bible studies, or acts of ministry, you will never achieve fullness in your Christian life as long as you refuse to follow Christ in baptism. If He is truly the Lord of your life, then you must do what He says; and, one of the clearest things He says to do is to be baptized. There is truly no more beautiful act of worship in the Christian life than to submit to Christ in the wonderful waters of baptism.

J2: How has this lesson changed or strengthened your views on baptism? What is God leading you to do as a result of this lesson? Record your thoughts as a journal entry, and use the “My Goals” section of your personal homepage to hold yourself accountable to what God has laid upon your heart.

Prayer

Father, we love You and praise You. What a wonderful God You are. You're so patient, so kind to put up with us when we know the truth and don't live by it. We know exactly what You say in the Scriptures and yet we put it off. I just ask in Jesus' name right now. Give all of us, Father, the Spirit. Say... Yes, Lord. Yes, to be saved. Yes to be baptized. For we ask it in Christ's name, amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

J3: Carefully read Acts 8:36b-37, and answer the following questions in your journal. A) What would have prevented the eunuch from being baptized? B) How did Philip's role in the eunuch's life lead to his baptism? C) How does this passage support God's desire for baptism to be in the manner of immersion?

Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip

When to Be Baptized?

A question that I hear often is, “When should a believer be baptized?” In the book of Acts, we see that new believers were baptized just as soon as possible. We see this over and over again. In Acts chapter eight we see the wonderful story of Philip’s testimony to a traveling Ethiopian. Immediately upon receiving Jesus as Lord, the new believer saw a body of water at the side of the road and asked, “What prevents me from being baptized now?” The new believer wanted to be baptized as quickly as possible.

Many Christians fall into the trap of putting off their baptism over and over again, making it less and less a priority as the years go by. I remember a certain lady who approached me one Sunday morning during the invitation, asking to be baptized. I asked her if she had just recently received Christ, and she said no, that she was saved as a teenager. She was now in her seventies and had gone all those years without being baptized.

She began to tell me about her Christian life, and how for years and years she had doubted her salvation. She had been through all manner of doubts and difficulties in her relationship with God. I knew that these problems were tied up with her refusal to be baptized for so long. So here’s what I told her: when you delay a command from God, when you refuse to do something that He has told you to do, you are living in a state of rebellion. And rebellion is simply refusing to obey the will of God. Now, most people don’t like to hear that word “rebellion,” but that’s exactly what it is.

How can you expect to live a life of fullness and blessing if you are living in a state of rebellion? Baptism is not an option for the believer; it is a divine obligation. Baptism is symbolic of your death to your old way of life as a sinner and resurrection to newness of life in the power of His Spirit. If Jesus is truly Lord of your life, then you must submit to His command and follow Him in baptism. If you want to walk in obedience to God but have not yet experienced baptism, let me challenge you to take this step just as soon as possible.

Life Principles Center
Course: The Church and Her Ordinances
T2_CC_L6: The Lord's Supper (PX262)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson.

Lesson 6, Section 1

Objective : At the end of this section of Lesson 6, you should be able to:

A. Recognize the purpose and ministry of the church.

Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Lesson 6

There has always been misinterpretation and misunderstanding when it comes to talking about the Lord's Supper. People hear this talk about the body and blood of Jesus, and oftentimes just do not know what to think. In fact, very early in the history of the church, Christians had to defend themselves from charges of cannibalism! With all the different beliefs and theories out there, what are we as Christians to think about this command to observe the Lord's Supper?

Scripture's clearest teaching about the Lord's Supper is found in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Take a moment right now to read this complete passage.

J1: Before continuing with the lesson, carefully read 1 Corinthians 11:26. Spend some time meditating on this verse, asking God to reveal its

significance to you. Record your insights, questions, and conclusions as a journal entry before proceeding.

Now that we've read the apostle Paul's discussion of the matter, let's spend some time examining what he said. **First, we need to be familiar with the background of this passage in order to understand Paul's argument.** You see, in the early church, the observance of the Lord's Supper was much different from what we do in most churches today. At that time, the church members gathered in large numbers, representing all the different social classes. Rich people, poor people, Jews, and Greeks all met together for a large meal, each person bringing a special dish for the dinner. They would sit and enjoy the feast for a long time, and then celebrate the Lord's Supper sometime later that night.

Well, as this went on for a while, the atmosphere of the feast began to change. The wealthier people began to gorge on all the food, and there was often little left for the poverty-stricken people who had nothing to eat at home. Also, many of the participants drank so much wine throughout the evening that they were actually intoxicated by the time the actual observance of the Lord's Supper came. When Paul heard about this, he was obviously upset and wrote to correct their errors.

He begins in verse 17 by making the assertion that the participants were *worse off* for having participated in the Lord's Supper at all! Have you ever felt as though going to church made you *worse off* than you were before? Most likely you have not; however, this is precisely what was happening with these Corinthian Christians. By their selfish and sometimes immoral behavior, these worshippers lost the true motivation for observing the Lord's Supper and instead became drunkards and gluttons.

The table of the Lord should be a place of unity, love, and fellowship. The Christians in this passage lost sight of that. So, Paul reminded them of the true meaning of the Supper.

J2: Have you ever lost sight of the proper motivation behind obeying one of God's commands? We are told to do many things, not out of duty, but out of our love for God and gratitude toward Him. They are things like praying, studying and applying the Bible, being baptized, submitting ourselves to authority, and yes, partaking in the Lord's Supper. Write about a time or incident that skewed your focus. What caused you to regain your proper motivation?

In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the night Jesus shared a final meal with His disciples before His arrest. Even though we may be very familiar with this scene because we have read about it in the Gospels, Paul wrote this letter before the Gospels were written; so, this was a vital piece of history to pass on to the church.

The purpose of the Lord’s Supper, as explained in this passage, is to recognize and celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to testify to our own involvement in that wonderful act. Why did Jesus say we should observe this meal? “This is My body, which is for you. . . . This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, *in remembrance of Me*” (1 Cor. 11:24-25). So you see, we actively remember Jesus Christ by symbolically taking His sacrifice into ourselves.

Verse 26 takes this a step further by indicating that this act of worship is not simply a personal matter between the worshipper and God, but also involves those around us. When we receive the Lord’s Supper, we “proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). This means that every time we partake of the Supper, we are, in effect, preaching a sermon. By our act of worship, we are proclaiming to the world that Jesus lived, died, and rose again, and that saving act had life-changing consequences for all of us.

Remember, Jesus’ sacrifice is not simply some old, stale, historical event. Instead, each of us who have received Jesus as Lord can claim participation in the victory won at Calvary. When Jesus died to sin and rose in glory, those of us who are in Christ did the same thing. In Him, we have new life. If you do not recall these important truths, I encourage you to review the *Faith Foundations* course entitled, “Christ and the Cross.”

Q1: True or False? The two primary motivations behind the Lord’s Supper are: 1) the personal expression of fun and fellowship and 2) the public expression of Jesus’ resurrection and its consequences on our lives.

Many of you may be confused about what the Bible means when it refers to the bread and wine representing Christ’s body and blood. Should we take this to mean that the very elements we place in our mouths are transformed into the flesh and blood of Jesus? Well, some traditions believe just that; however, I don’t think this is a biblical view. Rather, the bread and wine become symbolic of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross.

Another point of confusion may be the fact that many traditions and denominations use grape juice or non-alcoholic wine in observing the Lord's Supper. This is what I do myself. The reason is that for people who believe in complete abstinence from alcohol, grape juice provides an excellent alternative. The symbolism remains the same, and this alternative is certainly as meaningful as the wine of biblical times.

Finally, I want to say that **partaking of the Lord's Supper is both an *obligation* and a *responsibility***. We are obliged to follow the Lord in this act of worship because we see clearly that this is a dynamic way of remembering and proclaiming Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 11:24-26) It is a responsibility in that this Supper reminds us of our place in Christ and our duty to those around us. If we come to the table with hate and bitterness in our hearts, then we have lost the spirit of worship and honor. Verse 29 declares that in doing this, we "eat and drink judgment to [ourselves] if [we do] not judge the body rightly." Rather, we must honor God by coming to His table as one body, unified in purpose and love for each other. (1 Cor. 11:33)

J3: How does knowing that the Lord's Supper is more than an obligation, but also a responsibility, change your attitude toward it? How does this impact the approach you take each time you receive the Lord's Supper with other believers and/or your church family?

This course has been a brief overview of the importance of the church and the two primary ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—that we practice as Christians. It is my prayer that these past several lessons have led you into a growing, active, dynamic church home. Or, if you already belonged to a church, I pray that this course has given you the resources and understanding necessary to find your own place in this glorious body of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Father, we thank You for loving us. If we knew how ignorant we really were, we would probably all be shocked. Our pride would be shattered like thin, plate glass thrown against the brick wall, and we would become what we really are already and don't know it; and that is, helplessly, desperately, nothing within ourselves, but everything in Christ.

Father, I pray in Jesus' name, so work in our hearts, so work in this fellowship, so saturate us with Your love and Your devotion, a

commitment to You, an understanding of the Cross. And Lord, I want to understand it—just as absolutely and completely, fully as a person can possibly can understand it. I want to grasp its full meaning. I want to understand all sides of it. I want to understand it from both sides of eternity. On this side of the Cross, and on that side of the Cross. The total effect in a human heart, what can really happen when—the Crucified life—the life that You spoke of—the life that Paul described, when we are totally committed to that life, we open our hands of every single, solitary, possibility of any and all things in this life that say, “Lord (with Paul), 'not I, but Christ.' Not mine, but Christ. Just Him. Him alone.”

Teach us how to worship You, Father, to understand what is holy and sacred, sanctified, and set apart for You. How to walk worthy of this precious name that we have as Christians. How to love each other unconditionally, to edify one another, to build up each other, that when we come to this Supper, we can honestly sing, “We are one in the bond of love.” All that You want to do in our hearts, Father, it is my personal plea in Jesus' name, that we would allow You to do it. Oh, my God, my God, my God, my God, I pray that we might be willing to say, “Yes, Lord. Yes, yes, yes.” That we might sense Your presence so powerfully, That we wouldn't want to get up and just rush out, just leave, for Lord, I wouldn't personally ever want to walk out on You. May our loving devotion to You be such that our rushing will be to arrive on the scene of where you are. Quick to arrive, slow to depart, and this I pray in Jesus' name.

Homework

Scripture Memory Review

Fill in the blanks to complete this course's memory verse.

*They were _____ themselves to the _____'s
_____ and to _____, to the _____ of _____ and
to _____.*

Acts ____ : ____

J4: As you reflect upon this course about the church and her ordinances, how do God's specific purposes in believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper display His larger purposes for the church and our interactions with each other? Use at least three Scripture references to support your journal entry.

Conclusion

At this point, you should have a solid understanding of what the Church is and how it operates. You should also be aware of why we, as Christians, practice baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let me take a moment to ask you some important questions:

- Have you found a church home? Are you actively involved in the life of a church body?
- Have you expressed your faith in Jesus Christ by being baptized in front of a group of believers?

Your salvation is not dependent upon these things, but failing to follow biblical instructions demonstrates a lack of obedience to Almighty God. If you are serious about your Christian growth, then you simply must be obedient to the commands of Jesus. There's just no other way to have the full, successful, Spirit-empowered life that your heavenly Father has in store for you.