

Session 5: Your New Life in Community

It is a privilege to enjoy fellowship with other believers in God's awesome family on earth—the Church.

What is the Church?

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (**John 1:12-13**)

Yes, the moment you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit placed you into a new family called the Church. The Church is spread across the whole world and made up of every culture and language—all believers alive on planet earth. It is not limited to a building, just as a natural family is not limited to their house. As Christ is the head of this family, all members are considered part of the Body of Christ. And, this family of God's own children is given an amazing purpose—the privilege of showing the world who God is.

But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests,^[a] a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light (**1 Peter 2: 9, NLT**)

The Local Church

While you are part of the universal Church, God wants you to be part of a local church family. It is like having relatives all over the world but living with your immediate family. A local church is a group of believers committed to worshipping Christ, teaching his Word, supporting each other as they follow Jesus, growing together and proclaiming the good news to others.

Key Question: Why do you think it would be important for you to fellowship and do life together with other Christians?

[Discover the benefits of life in this new community](#)

1. The Benefits of Community

“And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works, not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing,

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but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Just as logs burn more brightly when placed together, so Christians need each other for warmth and encouragement. The local church provides opportunity for us to enjoy this community. You will see that the benefits are mutual.

a. Growth. Read **Ephesians 4:11-14**. Pastors and teachers help you grow in your Christian life as they feed you the spiritual food of the Bible and help you to know God better. In what areas of life do you need to grow?

b. Protection. Read **Acts 20:28**. Just as a house keeps people protected from harm, a good local church community can keep Christians safe from false teachings. Leaders who stay true to the Word of God will also encourage the church community to stay true to God’s Word. Would you be able to recognize false teachings on your own?

c. Love for Others. Read John 13:34-35. Being part of a church family helps you learn how to love others for who they are. As we do so, we model his love to the world. Why do you think Christians loving one another would be such a powerful witness?

d. Spiritual Gifts. According to **1 Corinthians 12:4-7** and **Ephesians 4:16**, God has given you gifts to serve your church family. A local church family can help you discover your gift and learn how to use it to bless the Body of Christ. Whether God gave you the gift of singing, teaching, giving, helping others or encouraging, that gift is a crucial one for the healthy functioning of the Body of Christ. How do you think someone discovers and develops his or her gift?

Key Question: Did you know that you are meant to play a crucial part in God’s family?

2. Finding Community in a Local Church

God knows you need the guidance of a pastor, the care of other Christians, and the safety and support of a good church to help you grow as a Christian. What makes a good church? No church is perfect just like no family is perfect. But, as stated on the first page, a healthy church is committed to certain things. So, a healthy church is one that:

a. Worships Christ

A healthy church presents Jesus as the Son of God and faith in him alone as the only way to be saved from your sins and have a relationship with God.

b. Teaches His Word as Truth

A healthy church honors the Bible as God's Word, completely true, and the guidebook for life and decision-making.

c. Nurtures and Inspires Believers to Follow Jesus

A healthy church encourages you to personally follow Jesus as his disciple and grow stronger in your faith—what you read in **Ephesians 4:11-14** earlier in this lesson. When you are joined together with other believers who are growing in Christ, you each encourage one another and keep each other “fired up” in your mutual faith.

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you are in fact doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

d. Encourages Believers to Proclaim the Good News

A healthy church is actively obeying Jesus' command in **Matthew 28:19** to share the good news about Jesus with those who don't know him yet. This is the assignment of the worldwide Church—to tell others about Jesus that they, too, may be saved and added to God's family.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...” (Matthew 28:19)

Key Question: Do you feel personally included in Jesus' command to tell the world about him and make disciples in all nations?

Pray and ask God to help you find the local church he wants you to join. He has promised to provide for you, so you can trust him to answer your request. When you find a healthy church that is committed to the four things listed above, thank God! Ask him how you can serve there.

3. Living as Part of the Family

Enjoying community as part of a church family is called fellowship (from the Greek word “**koinonia**” which means “sharing in common”).

The sharing of our lives requires sincere love, kind speech, continuing encouragement, heartfelt forgiveness, and selfless generosity. All these qualities are possible because of the Holy Spirit living inside each member of the family and binding us all together.

Relationships among believers should be marked by love for each other, which is the very thing that attracts those who do not have a relationship with Jesus.

Jesus told his disciples, “I give you a new commandment – to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples – if you have love for one another.” (**John 13:34-35**)

Jesus knows our hearts. He knows the difficulty we all have at times with one another. Our relationship with him does not prevent us from experiencing misunderstandings or differences of opinion. Sometimes these relational challenges tempt us to harbor grudges against someone with whom we differ or to isolate ourselves from the community. Neither of these is healthy for a believer and the church family. That is why it is important to:

a. Mend Broken Relationships as Quickly as Possible

Jesus helps us, his disciples to handle and grow through conflicts with one another. By faith in Christ, we are not only commanded to love but are given his love to give to others even when we have disputes or misunderstandings with them. God’s Spirit enables us as we trust him to do so. We can do it through him.

Read **Matthew 5:23-24**. How should we respond to a broken relationship with a fellow believer?

b. Stay Connected

One of the main reasons some Christians live defeated lives is that they have isolated themselves from other believers. Coming together with other believers in Christ’s name is similar to hot coals, which keep each other hot when

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lumped together. A coal that is separated from the others will soon grow cold. Isolation will lead to stunted spiritual growth and a lack of joy in your life.

According to **Hebrews 10:24-25**. Why is it important to stay connected to other believers? Someone once said, “Believers are ‘Jesus in the flesh’ to one another.” It is truly awesome and encouraging to “fellowship” with others who love Christ...and are living for him!

How to Get Actively Involved in Your Local Church Family

- Ask God to direct you to other believers
- Attend a Bible preaching and teaching church regularly.
- Join a small group (cell).
- Use your gifts to serve and reach others for Christ.
- Look for mature believers who can mentor you as you grow.
- Ask God for someone you can disciple and share with them what you are learning.

Memory Verse for Week 4

“I give you a new commandment – to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples – if you have love for one another.” (**John 13:34-35**)

This week read **chapters 12-16 of Mark** to learn more about Jesus who is now your Saviour and Lord.