

**THE**  
**NEW TESTAMENT**  
**CHURCH**

*Personalized*

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BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE LORD'S CHURCH  
WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

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Twelve lessons for Class Study  
with  
Questions for Each Lesson

By Reg Ginn

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THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH – PERSONALIZED – A STUDY OF BASIC FACTS  
ABOUT THE LORD'S CHURCH WITH EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

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Twelve Lessons for Class Study  
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## Introduction to “The New Testament Church– Personalized”

The Lord’s kingdom/church is a “treasure hidden in a field” and a “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:44-46). Yet, it is an institution drastically undervalued by the world. Even the people of God often fail to consider how much His church actually means to their spiritual well-being both here and hereafter. We face a desperate need today to proclaim Bible truths about the kingdom and to reinforce those truths in the hearts of many who once knew them well but have allowed themselves to “drift away” from their significance (Hebrews 2:1).

It is one thing to understand *what* the Bible says about the church. It is quite another thing to understand *why* that information is so crucial to our eternal salvation. Until we come to *feel* the **full impact** of scriptural truth about the church in every aspect of our lives, we will never be able to enjoy fully the profound benefits that membership in the church offers us, nor can we ever participate extensively in sharing those glorious benefits with others.

“**The New Testament Church– Personalized**” is a series of lessons on a familiar subject, but with an emphasis not so common. Each lesson ends with observations that attempt to relate the Bible truths of the lesson to the student’s personal relationship to those truths. Perhaps honest responses to such observations and questions would help all of us to better assess the true value we place on the Lord’s spiritual body. It is hoped that such personal evaluations will help us to appreciate more completely our heritage as citizens in God’s kingdom.

The questions accompanying each lesson will provide an opportunity for individual preparation and/or review and for class discussion of important points in the lesson. Other questions, of course, may be added by the teacher to expand the discussions.

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# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 1: “The Called of God” The Church and I

### I) Introduction: There are many ways to study the N.T. Church:

- A) **Scrutinize it**– look at it closely to determine its details;
- B) **Analyze it**– divide our study into its particular areas and characteristics;
- C) **Synthesize it**– develop a composite view of it from its particular features;
- D) **Eulogize it**– speak very highly of the church in comparison with other churches;
- E) **Personalize it**– includes all of the above, but involves an effort to make applications to our *own* roles, responsibilities, and opportunities as a part of the New Testament church.
  - 1) Sub-title: “The Church and I” = “The Egg and I” (old book/movie about life on a chicken farm where producing eggs completely engrossed the lives of the couple who owned the farm)– the church is something that should become an integral part of every Christian’s life in every waking moment.
  - 2) We will see how the church is presented in the Bible collectively and institutionally, but, more importantly, personally for us! (e.g., worship – not just what “the church” does in worship, but what do “I” do?)

### II) The New Testament church is God’s “called out.”

- A) A study of “church” gives us insight into the *nature* of the institution that God planned from the beginning:
  - 1) Originally, there was no Greek word that meant “church.”
  - 2) The Greek text used “*ekklesia*” or “called out.” (*ek*- out of; *kaleo*- to call).
  - 3) Other words, sounding like “church,” presented the idea of the saved being called out to be God’s people:
    - (a) “*kuriakon*”– Greek– “the Lord’s house.” Germanic spelling produced our word “church.”
    - (b) “*kuklos*”– Greek– translated to “*circle*”– *Latin*– translated to “*kirke*”– *Middle English*. All mean “circle” (assemblies supposedly sat in circles); thus, our present word “church,” is used in nearly all translations now.
  - 4) “*Ekklesia*” describes the status of saved people – called out of darkness into light. Colossians 1:13.
  - 5) “*Ekklesia*” also describes the function of saved people.
    - (a) Adopted from the function of Greek city-state *ekklesias*:
      - (1) An assembly called to conduct the business of the city;
      - (2) Citizenship in the city was required for participation in the assembly.

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- (b) This precisely reflects the Lord's purpose for the church:
- (1) Called out to be an assembly to conduct the business of the Lord;
  - (2) Citizenship is required for participation in activities of the assembly.
- 6) Connotation of "church" signals its significance to us – it is a most important institution!
- B) The church ("called out") is the last of many individuals and groups called out by God to accomplish various important tasks:
- 1) Abraham was called out from Ur to a Promised Land. Genesis 12:1-9.
  - 2) Israel was called out of Egypt to occupy the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 26:8,9.
  - 3) The apostles were called out to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. Matthew 10:1,7.
  - 4) Devout people were called out to become God's people. Acts 2:39,47.
  - 5) Sinners continue to be called out by the gospel to serve God. 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14; 2 Timothy 1:9.
- C) The church is *called out* to receive profound blessings:
- 1) "All things" (in God's plan) work for its good. Romans 8:28.
  - 2) It is called to enjoy **liberty**. Galatians 5:13.
  - 3) It is called to have the **peace of God**. Colossians 3:15.
  - 4) It is called to **obtain God's glory**. 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 5:10.
  - 5) It is called to receive **eternal life**. 1 Timothy 6:12.
  - 6) It is called to receive an **eternal inheritance**. Hebrews 9:15.
  - 7) It is called to live in **God's glorious light and mercy**. 1 Peter 2:9,10.
- D) The church is *called out* to meet profound responsibilities:
- 1) Its members are called to be **saints** (A "set-apart" people). 1 Corinthians 1:2.
  - 2) Its members are called to live in **holiness**. 1 Thessalonians 4:7.
  - 3) Its members are called to **suffer** for Christ's sake. 1 Peter 2:21; 3:9.
  - 4) Its members are called to partake of the **divine nature**. 2 Peter 1:3,4.
- E) Thus, the gospel calls out ("sanctifies") the church in TWO WAYS:
- 1) **Negatively**– it is set apart from common/sinful things of the world;
  - 2) **Positively**– it is dedicated to serve God in things that others cannot.

### III) What is the church (*ekklesia*) in the New Testament?

- A) It is NOT (As defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1956ed.):
- 1) A building for public worship;
  - 2) Church services, divine worship;
  - 3) The organization of Christianity, as in a nation (e.g., the "separation of church and state");
  - 4) The clerical profession (e.g., "churchmen");

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- 5) A body of believers with the same creed, etc.; a denomination;
- 6) Any body of worshippers; a religious society.

- B) It is **people** who have been saved by Christ's sacrifice.
  - 1) It is composed of living stones, not bricks and mortar. 1 Peter 2:5.
  - 2) It is **people** who are special to the Lord. 1 Peter 2:9,10.
  - 3) It is **people** whose spiritual nature has been *changed* for the *better*. Ephesians 4:17-32.
- C) These **people** are "the church;" "the church of God;" "the churches of Christ;" "the general assembly;" "the church of the firstborn (ones)."

### IV) When is "a" church (*ekklesia* – a called out group) "the" church (*ekklesia* – God's called out group)??

- A) Not when it is just **any** group called out for **any** reason:
  - 1) The Jews were God's "called out" (*ekklesia*) in the Old Testament (Acts 7:38), but they fell from that status through disobedience (John 8:37-47).
  - 2) An unlawful mob at Ephesus was "called out" to harm Paul. Acts 19:41.
  - 3) Any group called to do anything other than God's business. This includes religious groups called out to engage in error. Matthew 15:8,9.
- B) When it refers to the Lord's people (group) in their various presences:
  - 1) As individuals comprising the *whole of God's saved on the earth*. Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 12:23; Acts 2:47.
  - 2) As individual Christians throughout a large area. Acts 9:31.
    - a) These can have no mutual organization or function.
  - 3) As individuals functioning together in a group **smaller** than the universal (whole) church; that is, in the **local church** (determined by [1] geography and [2] individual choice [Acts 9:26.]).
    - a) In their assembled role. 1 Corinthians 5:4,5; 16:1,2; 11:18.
    - b) In their unassembled roles. Acts 8:3; members are accountable for their conduct away from the assembly. 1 Corinthians 5:1,2,4,5; Titus 2:11,12; 3:1,2.

### V) The Church Personalized:

- A) The church is people – I am a **person** in the church. I am an integral part of whatever has to do with "the church". It is not "they" or "it", but "I" or "We".
- B) My **entire** life is driven by my church membership. Compartmentalization is not allowed! Everything I do and all that I am is directly tied to my being a member of the Lord's body.

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- C) I am not just called out of sin, but I am also called out to **serve** the Lord both negatively and positively. How actively do I pursue this calling (both ways)?
- D) I am still “in the church” wherever I am and in whatever circumstances I may find myself – at work, school, on vacation, etc. I am subject to the **same authority** (God’s word) as when “in church”. I am also subject to the discipline of my local congregation regarding my behavior in my personal and private activities. I must “let my light shine” continually.
- E) I must not try to convert people to the **church** but to the Lord. The church is made up of fallible humans, and sinners converted to the church will soon be disillusioned by the humanity of the members and will fall away. Remember – the Lord will *never* fail or forsake us! Hebrews 13:5,6.

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### Lesson One– Questions

1. Name several ways in which one may study the New Testament church. Tell how each way is different from the others and why *one* way is essential to the value of all the others.
2. Discuss the meaning of several words that contributed to the development of our English “church.” What is the base meaning of “church” as found in our New Testament?
3. Point out the relationship between the Lord’s “church” (*ekklesia*) and the Greek city-state *ekklesias*.
4. Who are some of the persons “called out” in Bible history to serve God in special ways?
5. Name some of the blessings that saved people are “called out” to share.
6. What are some responsibilities that our “calling” places upon us?
7. What are some things that the church **is not**, and what are some things that the church is? (The Bible versus Webster’s Dictionary!)
8. Cite scriptures that refer to **a** “church” (*ekklesia*) but not to **the** church. Show why each does not refer to God’s church (*ekklesia*).
9. Discuss the different ways (aspects) in which people are called “the church” in the New Testament.
10. **THINK about the “church personalized”** observations at the end of the lesson. Which ones are meaningful to **you**? Can you add other personal applications to those suggested in the lesson?

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## Lesson 2: “Thought or Afterthought?” My Part in an Eternal Plan

### I) Introduction:

- A) A little book called The Question Box was written nearly 100 years ago to answer questions raised by non-Catholics about the Catholic Church’s claims. It bears the imprimatur (official sanction) of the church that claims never to have changed. In discussing the catholicity (universality) of that church, the author states, “She is Catholic in time....Protestantism is not Catholic in time, for it did not dawn upon the world until the sixteenth century and we need more than the mere word of men...to bridge the chasm that divides them from the beginning.” (page 121) Catholics claim with great pride that theirs is the oldest church on earth. Generally, age is associated with worth, e.g., antique furniture, old coins and stamps, businesses with longevity, etc. No one wishes to be known as a “Johnny-come-lately” to any cause. Thus, age carries some notion of value even in religion.
- B) The Lord’s Church (whichever one it may be) must be older than all the others, for from it they all sprang for various reasons. It is “The Original” church which has never needed any improvement, for it was made perfect originally (Hebrews 9:11; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 10:14).
- C) It is comforting to believe that one belongs to a church that dates back to Jesus and His apostles. It’s a good feeling to be convinced that one is in a church that was the first church when there was not any other church. It is encouraging to realize that we are a part of a “kingdom that cannot be shaken” and that we have access to participation in many spiritual things which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:27, 28) – destroyed, changed, or made ineffective.
- D) Most wonderful of all is to know that the Lord’s Church was the product of a plan that did not originate just when Jesus appeared in the world. That plan for the church may be traced even further back than the Law of Moses or the first man and woman. In fact, God’s church exists today because God devised a plan for it in eternity past. One could scarcely hope to be a member of anything older than that. Nor could one wish for more stability and confidence than can be offered by a church whose “roots” existed long before men did. If age is indicative of value in churches, how valuable the church of Christ must be in the mind of God!

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### II) Not all people believe the Church is an eternally planned institution.

- A) They subscribe to a premillinial theory of end-time events.
- 1) They claim that God planned a kingdom, not a church.
  - 2) When the Jews rejected Jesus as king, the kingdom couldn't work without a king.
  - 3) The church was substituted for the kingdom as a temporary instrument of God in the world.
  - 4) The kingdom will be established when the Jews finally accept a King and He is established on His throne in Palestine toward the end of the "last days."
  - 5) The church will be "absorbed" into the kingdom for eternity, and only then will God's plan will be completed. The church is just God's *afterthought!*
- B) The Church and the Kingdom are the same institution.
- 1) Christ appointed a kingdom with a table (Luke 22:29,30). That table is found in the church (1 Corinthians 10:21; 1:2).
  - 2) The Word is the "seed of the kingdom" (Luke 8:11). When the word was sown in New Testament days, churches were established and became functional (1 Thessalonians 2:13,14; 1:1).
  - 3) The Kingdom would come with power (Mark 9:1), but when the power of the Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4), the church resulted (2:47). Jesus received the promise of Spirit (2:33) and then power was poured out on the apostles.
  - 4) Saints were in the kingdom **and** in the church in 1st century (Colossians 1:13,24).
  - 5) Christ now is on His throne (Acts 2:30,31). Deny the throne, deny the resurrection!
  - 6) The king now is ruling over His kingdom (Acts 17:7; Revelation 12:10; Revelation 17:14 thru 19:16).
- C) Christ's church is not an "AFTERTHOUGHT" to compensate for the failure of God's plan for a kingdom!

### III) The kingdom/church was in God's eternal plan.

- A) Formulation of the *eternal* plan:
- 1) Ephesians 3:1-11 discusses the *nature* of this plan:
    - (a) A "mystery" was hidden from beginning of the "ages" (verse 9).
    - (b) God's purpose thru Christ was "eternal" (verse 11).
    - (c) The mystery was revealed to apostles and prophets (verses 3 & 4).
    - (d) The PLAN: Gentiles to share in "same body" (church) (verse 6); partake of same promise in Christ (salvation) (verse 6); enjoy same "unsearchable riches of Christ" (verse 8).
    - (e) This plan was "made known" (comprehended) thru the nature of the church (verse 10). The church was an integral part of the eternal plan.
  - 2) 2 Timothy 1:8-10 reveals the *eternity* of the plan:
    - (a) The "called" are saved by a plan made before time (verse 9).

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- (b) To abolish death and give life and immortality thru the gospel (verse 10).
- 3) Colossians 1:22-28 declares the *eternal benefits* of the plan:
- (a) Paul was a minister to “fulfill word/mystery” hidden from eternity but which now had been revealed (verse 26).
- (b) Paul served the church by fulfilling (revealing) the word that Christ “in” the Gentiles gave them the “hope of glory” (verse 27).
- B) Preparation for executing the eternal plan:
- 1) The plan **announced** (Genesis 3:15). Christ was to triumph over Satan.
- 2) The plan **implemented**.
- (a) Through a chosen man– Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3): all people to be blessed (see Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1, above) in the church.
- (b) Through a chosen nation and their law (Galatians 3:24). The Jews were “led” to know that:
- They could not save themselves;
  - Their law could not save them;
  - Salvation was dependent on obedience;
  - *Absolute* obedience was essential (Leviticus 10:1,10).
- C) Completion of the eternal plan thru Christ.
- 1) At the proper time (Galatians 4:4,5).
- 2) By the proper agent (Philippians 2:5-8).
- 3) Through the proper sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1,9,10).

### IV) God’s eternal plan personalized:

- A) I am the end – product of God’s eternal plan to show forth His wisdom (Ephesians 3:10) and grace (Ephesians 2:7) and glory (Romans 9:23,24).  
How do I measure up to His expectations for me??
- B) How important I must be to God that He would persevere to carry out His plan for me when so many things sought to interfere? (An unfaithful nation through which to work, the crucifixion of the plan’s central figure, etc.) Do I behave myself as a Christian in a way that displays my appreciation for His perseverance?
- C) How perfect God’s plan (including the church) must be to have endured without any change from eternity past until today. How can I (or anyone) choose to try to change it now?

### V) Further Personalizing the establishment of the New Testament Church:

- A) My Life as a Christian in the Church must reflect:
- 1) Responsibility – God is counting on me to do honor to His plan!

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- 2) Appreciation – God has done so much for me – I must do what I can for Him!
- 3) Endurance – He has endured so much & for so long, surely I can endure small things for just a little while!

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### Lesson Two– Questions

1. Explain why people who subscribe to the “premillennial” theory of the church and the kingdom in fact relegate the church to being God’s “afterthought.”
2. Cite several scriptures that plainly identify the church and the kingdom of God as being the **same** institution.
3. God’s eternal plan (Ephesians 3:1-11) had **four** basic components. What were they, as listed in verses 6, 8, and 10?
4. When was the Eternal Plan first announced to mankind?
5. Who was the *man* through whom God’s plan was to be implemented initially? Which nation would be used over time to carry out this plan? Into what truths was this nation “led” by the Law of Moses (their “tutor”)?
6. What **three** “proper” elements of God’s plan were satisfied in the life and death of Jesus?
7. **THINK about the “church personalized”** observations made at the end of the lesson. Can you suggest some additional obstacles that had to be overcome before the kingdom of the Lord could become a reality? Elaborate on the responsibility, appreciation, and endurance that **you** should display in consequence of what God did for **you** in making His plan work for **you**.

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## Lesson 3: “The Beginning” When God Kept His Promise to Me

### I) Promises are serious matters.

- A) In business. ( Romans 13:8)
- B) In marriage (Malachi 2:16,14).
- C) Vows made to God ( Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).
- D) God’s promises to man are also serious ( Hebrews 6:17-18).
  - 1) He promised eternal life (Titus 1:2).
  - 2) He promised a Redeemer (Isaiah 59:20).
  - 3) He promised a kingdom (church) to His saints (Daniel 7:18).
- E) God has promised that kingdom to me – a saint (1 Corinthians 1:2)!
- F) God has **kept** that promise to me! My entire hope for the future depends on the reality of that promise (Hebrews 6:19).
- G) A study of the establishment of the church is more than an academic exercise.

### II) The Promise MADE:

- A) First made following man’s fall in Eden (Genesis 3:15).
  - 1) Satan’s head crushed – destroyed – by Christ in the flesh (Hebrews 2:14).
  - 2) The saved (the church) released from fear of death (Hebrews 2:15).
- B) The Promise repeated to Abraham in a covenant (Genesis 12:3).
  - 1) To be fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:16).
  - 2) Also fulfilled in church – all nations in one body (Ephesians 2:14-18).
- C) The Promise was specified by Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18).
  - 1) The promise was as dependable as His divinity ( a “great rock”).

### III) The Promise REMEMBERED:

- A) Through the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 2:1-4).
- B) Through the prophet Daniel (Daniel 2:44-45).
- C) Through the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32).
- D) Through John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1).
- E) Through Jesus Himself (Mark 9:1).
- F) Specifics of these prophecies (promises):
  - 1) The Kingdom to be established during the “last days” (Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28).

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- 2) To come during the time of “these” (Roman) kings (Daniel 2:44).
- 3) God’s law would go forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3).
- 4) The Spirit would be “poured out” (Joel 2:28).
- 5) Salvation to be offered to those who call on the Lord’s name (Joel 2:32).
- 6) The fulfillment was “at hand” – soon after John’s time (Matthew 3:1).
- 7) The Kingdom’s coming to be attended by “power” (Mark 9:1).

### IV) The Promise FULFILLED: Acts 2:1,4,36-41,47.

- A) Specifics of the Promise were all fulfilled:
  - 1) During the “last days”– Acts 2:16-17.
  - 2) Under Roman kings – Acts 25:10 (28 years after Pentecost).
  - 3) The Spirit was poured out on Jewish flesh – Acts 2:4.
  - 4) The Law of Christ first proclaimed from Jerusalem – Acts 2:5,37,38.
  - 5) Salvation offered to “callers” – Acts 2:21,37,38,40,47.
  - 6) Soon after John’s time (only 1-2 years after John’s death).
  - 7) Divine power accompanied the advent of the kingdom – Acts 1:8; 2:2-4.
- B) God’s Promise was fulfilled in the establishment of the church– Acts 2:47.

### V) The Promise DEMONSTRATED:

- A) In the Antioch church – Acts 11:26 – assembled; called Christians.
- B) In the Asia Minor churches – Acts 14:21-23 – elders appointed; the churches were commended to the Lord because of their faith.
- C) In the Corinthian church – 1 Corinthians 14:15,26 – worship offered to God.
- D) In the Philippian church – Philippians 4:15 – supported Paul’s preaching.
- E) In the Hebrew church(es) – Hebrews 12:28 – the kingdom was being “received.”

### VI) The Promise ENJOYED:

- A) The church has been purchased with Christ’s blood (Acts 20:28).
- B) Paul served as a minister of the church, Christ’s body (Colossians 1:24).
- C) The church is the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 2:9-10).
- D) It has been sanctified (made holy) and cleansed (without blemish) by the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 5:26-27).
- E) It is equipped to give glory to God (Ephesians 3:21).

### VII) The Promise PERSONALIZED:

- A) God kept His promise to me – I must keep mine to Him!
  - 1) I must put off sin to the best of my ability (Romans 6:1-6).
  - 2) I must put on the qualities of a faithful Christian (2 Peter 1:5-9).

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- B) God valued His promise enough to give His Son to make it happen. The church He purchased is equal in value to the price He paid. Therefore, the church should mean everything to me, even as it did to Him! I must not give up what it means to my life (here and hereafter) for anything or anybody (Mark 8:34-38)!

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### Lesson Three– Questions

1. What **three** spiritual promises did God make to mankind? How are these promises all interrelated?
2. How was the promise in Eden about Jesus crushing Satan’s head connected with the establishment of the kingdom (church)? How was it connected to the “all nations” promise later made to Abraham?
3. Which inspired messengers of God spoke of the kingdom’s coming? Cite a *specific detail* that accompanied each promise about the church.
4. Show how several promises concerning the establishment of the kingdom that were made prior to its establishment were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.
5. How does the Bible demonstrate to us that the promises about the coming of the kingdom/church were realized long before the writing of the New Testament was completed?
6. What are some of the blessings men can now enjoy because God has fulfilled His promise to add us to His church?
7. **THINK about the “church personalized”** observations at the end of the lesson. Did you ever make any promises to God? Can you remember what they were? Have you kept those promises? If not, **why not?**
8. What promises about “putting off” and “putting on” do you think God expects us to make to Him?
9. How can we estimate the *value* of the kingdom/church that God promised and gave to us?
10. What should be the consequence(s) of understanding how much it meant to God to fulfill the promises He made to us concerning the church?

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## Lesson 4: “From Heaven or Men?” The Nature of the Church

### I) God’s creations are always Appropriate:

- A) God created **physical** man to live in a **physical** world.
- 1) The world was made prior to man (Genesis 1:1).
  - 2) A record of physical specifics is given in Genesis 1:3-25.
  - 3) Features noted: light (v.3); atmosphere (v.7); land & seas (v.10); fruits and grain (v.12); sun, moon, stars (vs.14-16); creatures of flesh (vs.21,25).
- B) Man created to be appropriate to the physical world (Genesis 2:7).
- 1) Living creatures require light to flourish – light was present.
  - 2) Living creatures require air to breathe – the atmosphere was ready.
  - 3) Living creatures require a suitable habitat – dry land was formed.
  - 4) Living creatures require food – flesh, fruit, and grain were made available (Genesis 1:29).
  - 5) Living creatures require exercise – work was demanded (Genesis 2:15).
  - 6) Living creatures require rest – night separated from day by varying the light.
  - 7) Man designed with mental powers for physical self-preservation (Genesis 1:26-28).
- C) God created **spiritual** man to live in a **spiritual** world.
- 1) Man has two natures (Genesis 1:27; 2:7; 2 Corinthians 4:16).
  - 2) His spirit functions in a spiritual realm.
    - a) He can have a spiritual relationship with God (James 4:8).
    - b) He can have a spiritual relationship with others (Philippians 1:27).
    - c) He can have a spiritual relationship within himself (2 Timothy 4:7).
- D) Man’s physical being and needs are *less important* than the spiritual.
- 1) Physical food is less important than spiritual food (John 6:27).
  - 2) The physical body is less vital than the spiritual body (Matthew 18:8).
  - 3) Physical life should be sacrificed for spiritual life (Philippians 1:21-23).
- E) Man’s physical role subservient to spiritual role.
- 1) Physical needs are tools for spiritual functions (Philippians 4:11-13).
  - 2) Physical things are to be used for spiritual goals (Philippians 4:17).

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### II) The Church Is a Spiritual Institution.

- A) God’s kingdom not of this world (John 18:36).
- B) Weapons used in the kingdom are spiritual in nature (2 Corinthians 10:4-6; Ephesians 6:13-18).
- C) Conquests in the kingdom are spiritual, not earthly (Ephesians 6:12).
- D) Its worship is spiritual in nature (John 4:23-24).
- E) Its works are spiritual works (Ephesians 4:12).
- F) The status of citizens is based on their spiritual service to the King (Matthew 20:25-27).

### III) The Spiritual Church is Suited to Man’s Spiritual Needs.

A comparison of man’s spiritual needs to how those needs are supplied in *the church*:

MAN’S SPIRITUAL NEEDS	SUPPLIED IN THE CHURCH
Knowledge of a Deity and duty to Him	Teach the gospel to all (2 Timothy 2:2)
Opportunity to start afresh after failure	Born again into kingdom (John 3:5) as newborn babes (2 Corinthians 5:17)
Increasing ability to provide useful service to others	Mutual growth by sharing work and responsibilities (Ephesians 4:16)
Dependence on a Higher Power for guidance (Jeremiah 10:23)	Christ guides and decides for members as Head of church (Colossians 1:18)
Worship and praise to a Higher Power	Public and private worship of God (Hebrews 2:12)
Fulfill worthwhile purpose in life	Service to God and man (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 7:12)
Recognition/reward for faithful service	Eternal life (Titus 1:2) in a <u>spiritual</u> place (1 Corinthians 15:44,50) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not <i>this</i> world as Jehovah’s Witnesses believe</li> <li>• Not <i>another</i> world <i>like</i> this one as Mormons believe</li> </ul>

- B) Physical aspects of the church are subservient to spiritual activities.
  - 1) The *place* of worship is less important than the worship (John 4:21).
  - 2) *Words* are *tools* for preaching, but *the* message of preaching must be the focus (2 Corinthians 11:6).

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- 3) Meat and drink are important only as their use promotes righteousness, peace, and spiritual joy (Romans 14:17-18).

### IV) The Nature of the Church Personalized:

- A) If the church is basically a spiritual institution, why should I not expect a spiritual rather than a physical experience in it?
- B) If the spiritual nature of the church appeals to the spiritual man (Romans 8:7), don't I bear the responsibility when/if my sense of satisfaction as a Christian is more dependent on physical rather than spiritual appeals?
- C) What basis does my religion rest on, if I only value it to the extent that it causes me to: **“feel good,” “enjoy,” “feel important,” “be pleased,” “know it’s right, regardless of...”??**

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH—*Personalized*

### Lesson Four— Questions

1. Show how God made preparations in the physical creation of the earth for the physical nature of the man He planned to make.
2. What facet of man's nature other than the physical did God also provide for? What are some of the relationships that spiritual man can enjoy in the spiritual realm?
3. Cite one or more Bible verses that teach us that the spiritual nature and needs of man are of greater importance than his physical nature and needs.
4. Is the Lord's church identified primarily within the physical or spiritual realm of the world? List some of the facts and verses that furnish a clear answer to that question.
5. Study the chart illustrating man's spiritual needs and their fulfillment in the church. Select two or three of the points made in the chart and discuss as fully as you can how spiritual man can have his needs satisfied in and through the church as God made it.
6. Can you think of scriptures other than the ones supplied that will also show how man's spiritual needs are met in the Lord's church? Add them to your chart.
7. Notice that man's reward for faithful *spiritual* service to Christ will be rewarded by eternal life in a *spiritual* place. What are two prominent religious groups that promise that man's reward will be realized in a *physical* place? If you can, give some of the details of such promises as they make to their followers.
8. If we accept the fundamental proposition that the physical aspects of man's existence in this world are less important than the spiritual aspects, then what should be the relationship between the physical and spiritual aspects of the Lord's church?
9. **THINK about the "church personalized"** observations at the end of the lesson. Can you apply any of these questions to real-life situations/expectations among church members today?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 5: “The Fulness of Christ” What the Church Means to Me

### I) Introduction: A study of values

- A) We place values on people and things that we base on:
- 1) Their ability to secure another valued thing (One man paid \$1 Million for a baseball hit for home run record).
  - 2) Their intrinsic value – personal fulfillment and satisfaction (e.g., friendship).
- B) The “Church” has both kinds of value to various people:
- 1) Some use it as a social entity, to further business, to fill void in life, etc.
  - 2) The church is really important to others as a part of the Lord’s plan for people to attain to eternal salvation.
- C) What does the New Testament Church mean to you?
- 1) We will answer according to our likes and dislikes, or,
  - 2) Our estimate will be based on the Bible’s revelation of the church’s character: “the estimate put upon a person or thing; reputation or repute” (Webster).
  - 3) Descriptive figures are often used to express values. God’s figures suggest the worth God attaches to His church.
    - (a) E.g., “jewel”; “rock;” “dynamo;” “phony as a 3 dollar bill;” “witch;” etc.
    - (b) God’s comparisons justify the great price paid for the church (Acts 20:28).
    - (c) The church is indeed “the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 2:9).
      - Jesus possesses all that belongs to each member of the Godhead; the church encompasses everyone who belongs to Jesus.
      - Jesus can bestow on men everything the Godhead offers; the church is the depository of all that Jesus has to offer to man.

### II) The Church Is the Body of Christ (Hebrews 10:1 [literal]; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:18,24 [figurative])

- A) “Body” – literal functions and relationships of a physical body are transferred to a figurative body – “a number of men closely united into one society, or family as it were; a social, ethical, mystical (spiritual) body” (Thayer – Gr., *soma*).
- B) What the “body” means to us:
- 1) Singularity (Ephesians 4:4-5) – as singular as the other “ones” listed.
    - (a) Many members, but/yet one body (1 Corinthians 12:20).

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- (b) All reconciled in **one** body – no accommodating or encouraging of differences (as denominations do regularly and as brethren do sometimes) (Ephesians 2:16); we do not need “churches within a church.”
- 2) Subjection (Ephesians 1:22-23). The Head controls the body in all things.
  - (a) The head guides body into desirable growth (Ephesians 4:15-16).
- 3) Unity. Fulfills prayer of (Jesus 17:20-21) This is primary goal of body (Matthew 12:25) There are too many agendas in the church!. We must be devoted to:
  - (a) Unity of *action* – Romans 12:4-8. Each does his part to reach the common goal – what is it?
  - (b) Unity of *purpose* – 1 Corinthians 10:17, 21. Our goal is to serve the Lord’s purpose: **save souls!**
  - (c) Unity of *concern* – 1 Corinthians 12:25-27. When problems occur that would deter us from unity, “...do unto others as you would have them do unto you...”

### III) The Church is the House (Family) of God. (Acts 10:2; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6)

- A) In it we maintain family relationships:
  - 1) God is the **Father** (Matthew 23:9; 6:9).
  - 2) Christ is the **Son** in charge of everything (Hebrews 3:6).
  - 3) All members are the **children** of God (the Father) (1 John 3:2,10).
- B) In it we enjoy family blessings:
  - 1) From our **Father**:
    - (a) Good gifts (Matthew 7:11; James 1:17).
    - (b) An eternal inheritance (Romans 8:16, 17).
  - 2) From the **Son** (our “big brother”):
    - (a) He is our advocate (“pleads another’s cause” – Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words) to the Father (1 John 2:1).
    - (b) He is our mediator (“view toward producing peace” – Vine, *ibid.*) to God (1 Timothy 2:5).
    - (c) Both functions are available to us through prayer – Forgiveness (through our mediator) and all other needs (through our advocate).
  - 3) From other **children** in the family:
    - (a) Love from others in family (1 John 4:7).
    - (b) Preferential treatment by other children (Romans 12:10).
- B) In it we embrace family responsibilities (Ephesians 5:1). This is our basic duty. God’s steps are big steps to follow (as little boy following daddy through the snow). There are **FOUR** “**house rules**” that we must follow to walk with God:
  - 1) Walk in love (Ephesians 5:2).
  - 2) Walk in purity (Ephesians 5:3ff).
  - 3) Walk in light (truth) (Ephesians 5:8).
  - 4) Walk in wisdom (Ephesians 5:15).

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### IV) The Church Is the Bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7; John 3:29)

- A) Jewish custom recognized betrothal as a binding marriage; groom came later and took bride to his home to live with him.
- B) Marriage to Christ involves:
  - 1) His great love for us (Ephesians 5:25; 2 Corinthians 5:14). This assures: (a) Protection from harm (John 10:28); (b) Provision for all our needs (John 14:14).
  - 2) Our subjection to Him (Ephesians 5:24; Hebrews 5:8,9).
    - a) Based not on fear (1 John 4:18) but our “first love” for Him (Revelation 2:4).
  - 3) Our loyalty to Him.
    - (a) A lifelong commitment from us to Him (Romans 7:2; Luke 9:62).
    - (b) A helper (Genesis 2:18) in His agenda, not our own (social motives, etc.)
  - 4) Expanding the family of God (Genesis 1:28).
    - (a) We are saved to save others (Matthew 9:37,38).
  - 5) Suffering a penalty for violating marriage vows.
    - (a) By spiritual divorce from Jesus (Matthew 1:19).
    - (b) By spiritual death (Deuteronomy 22:21).

### V) The Church Is the Vineyard of the Lord.

- A) Two parables portray this aspect of the church (Matthew 20:1ff; Luke 13:6-9).
  - 1) Church members are:
    - (a) Workers in the vineyard.
    - (b) The vineyard (trees) itself.
- B) The vineyard is a place for workers, not idlers (Matthew 20:6).
  - 1) The day of opportunity soon will be gone (John 9:4).
- C) The vineyard is a place for fruit-bearing (Luke 13:6,7).
  - 1) In the lives of others (Romans 1:13).
  - 2) In our own lives (Galatians 5:22,23).
- D) The vineyard is a place of accountability (Matthew 20:8).
  - 1) Our deeds determine the status of our account (2 Corinthians 5:10).
- E) The vineyard is a place of great reward. The same treatment is given only to those who do their best at their first opportunity.

### VI) Other Figures that Display the Great Value of the Church to Us:

- A) The Temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). Worship and service are offered here.

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- B) The Kingdom of God (Matthew 16:18,19). Deliverance from the kingdom of darkness is effected for us (Colossians 1:13).
- C) The Pillar and Ground of the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Much depends on us!

### VII) The Value of the Church Personalized:

- A) When conflicts arise in my life between duty in the church and other things, what values do my choices reflect? (attendance – use of Lord’s day and participation in gospel meetings and special services/classes; giving – the ratio between personal spending and contributions; moral behavior – handling peer pressure, unobserved conduct, etc.)
- B) What value do I **really** place on the church when I freely share other things – weather, sports, politics, health, etc. – with other people but seldom if ever tell anyone else of God’s blessings to me in His church?
- C) The church is the body of Christ, whether in the universal or local sense. It is also the family of God. We must always be mindful of how much others in the body depend on us to make the body and family (local) function as God desires. We must be dependable to the body and family even in “small” things – cutting the grass, cleaning the building, etc. All must share in the positive image we should project to the world and to one another (Matthew 5:16).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH—*Personalized*

### Lesson Five— Questions

1. What two kinds of value are possessed by different things? How does the church provide both kinds of value to different people?
2. What are some descriptive terms that suggest something of the character or value that we attribute to certain people and things?
3. What is the significance of the fact that Jesus possesses “the fulness of the Godhead bodily”? How does the same significance attach to the church as the “fulness of Christ”?
4. What are the **three** obvious characteristics of the church in its role as the “body of Christ”?
5. Compare the relationships enjoyed in the church as “the house of God” and the relationships inherent in a physical (earthly) family.
6. In what blessings and advantages do family members in God’s “house” share?
7. Family responsibilities as well as blessings fall upon God’s children. What are some of them?
8. List some things involved in our relationship to Christ as His “bride” ?
9. At least **four** peculiarities of an earthly vineyard also apply to the church as the “vineyard of the Lord.” Cite and discuss those qualities.
10. **Three** additional figures also depict blessings/responsibilities that come to us as a result of our membership in the church. What are they, and what are the blessings/responsibilities?
11. **THINK about the “church personalized”** questions at the end of the lesson. Make a candid assessment of how you would honestly answer these and similar questions. What do your answers tell you about what the church really means to you?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 6: “Church Salvation or Salvation in the Church?” Footsteps For Me to Follow

### I) Introduction.

- A) Many people disassociate the church and salvation.
  - 1) The sinner can be saved, never be in any church.
  - 2) The church can be helpful but isn't necessary to going to heaven.
  - 3) “The church doesn't save anyone – church salvation is not taught in the Bible.”
- B) Many think that if church doesn't save, then it has no part in salvation at all.
  - 1) What does the Bible teach about church salvation?
  - 2) Is it church salvation or salvation in the church?

### II) “Church Salvation” would have certain requisites:

- A) The “church” must be a visible, organized entity based upon unique and exclusive characteristics.
- B) The “church” must be in exclusive possession of something unique which enables salvation for the lost.
- C) The “church” must dispense and control this exclusive doctrine and practice which enables salvation for the lost.
- D) The “church” must be the final authority in all matters pertaining to salvation.
- E) The “church” must have divine sanction to make secure the salvation of the members while they maintain an acceptable standing with the “church”.

### III) Two Examples of “Church Salvation”:

- A) *The Roman Catholic Church*. Quotes from The Question Box, official publication of the church:
  - 1) “The true follower of Christ, therefore, is the man living in the faith and love of Christ Jesus, which is infallibly guaranteed and given to him by the visible Church established by the Son of God” (page 73).

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- 2) “It is evident from these words of the Savior that the gospel is not to be limited to a book, but learned from living teachers whose doctrine and government are identical with His, authoritative, infallible, and divine” (page 75).
  - 3) “Nothing is plainer, therefore, in the Scriptures than the appointment by Jesus Christ of a divine, infallible teaching body which was to preach His entire gospel to the world. There is never a word commanding His doctrine to be written; His gospel is to be preached by the Apostles, and hearkened to by the faithful, as if He Himself were speaking” (page 77).
  - 4) “Was this divine economy to end with the death of the Apostles? No; Jesus Christ plainly tells us that His gospel should be taught until the end by a perpetual series of successors of the Apostolic teaching body” (page 77).
  - 5) “Thus we see clearly that the only certain way for all men to learn the gospel of Christ is from the living voice of an infallible Church...” (page 78).
- B) *The Mormon Church*. Quotes from Doctrine and Covenants, “containing revelations given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet” (title page).
- 1) “And now I speak unto you, the Twelve – Behold my grace is sufficient for you; you must walk uprightly before me and sin not. And behold, you are they who are ordained of me to ordain priests and teachers; to declare my gospel, according to the power of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and according to the callings and gifts of God unto men. And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it.” (Sect. 18: vs. 31-33).
  - 2) “Wherefore, I command you to repent, and keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., in my name...” (Sect. 19, vs.13).
  - 3) “And again I command thee that thou shalt not covet their own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God – which is my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and look not for a Messiah to come who has already come” (Sect. 19: vs 26 & 27).
  - 4) “--An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize; and to ordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons; ...and to confirm...to teach...to conduct the meetings... The priest’s duty is to preach...to visit the house of each member...to take the lead of meetings where there is no elder present... The teacher’s duty is to watch over the church always...and see that there is no iniquity in the church...and see that the church meet together often... The several elders composing this church of Christ are to meet in conference once in three months...” etc. (Sect. 20, vs. 38-67).
- C) God did not exclusivize the gospel and the church (Acts 10:35; John 7:17).
- 1) No church, including the Lord’s, ever stood between God and man’s obedience (Acts 10:47).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

### IV) What Saves Us:

- A) Many things are said to “save us”.
  - 1) God (2 Timothy 1:8,9).
  - 2) Christ (1 John 4:14).
  - 3) The Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
  - 4) The Word of God (1 Peter 1:23).
  - 5) Grace (Ephesians 2:8).
  - 6) Faith (Romans 5:1).
  - 7) Repentance (Acts 11:18).
  - 8) Confession (Romans 10:10).
  - 9) Baptism (1 Peter 3:21).
  - 10) The Blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19).
  - 11) Hope (Romans 8:28).
  - 12) The Gospel (Romans 1:16,17).
  - 13) And other things.
  
- B) The “Church” is never said to save men from sin.
  - 1) The church is *people* – people cannot save one another!

### V) Salvation is a relationship with Christ: “In Christ,” “In the Lord” (Romans 16:7-12).

- A) Advantages of this relationship – “In Christ”:
  - 1) Redemption, forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13,14).
  - 2) Salvation (2 Timothy 2:10).
  - 3) Eternal life (1 John 5:11).
  - 4) Sonship (Galatians 3:26).
  - 5) **All** spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).
  
- B) These blessings also are enjoyed in the church / kingdom:
  - 1) Redemption (Colossians 1:13,14).
  - 2) Salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:1,13).
  - 3) Eternal Life (Galatians 6:8, 1:2).
  - 4) Sonship (1 Timothy 3:15).
  - 5) **All** spiritual blessings (Revelation 21:2,7; Ephesians 5:32,33).
  
- C) Some other relationships involving the church:
  - 1) The new birth (John 3:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:13).
  - 2) Enrollment in heaven (Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 20:15).
  - 3) Fulfilling God’s plan for peace (Ephesians 3:4,6; 2:16,17; 1:22,23).
  
- D) **All** the saved are in the church:
  - 1) The church is the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 1:23).

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- 2) The church is the blood-purchased body (Acts 20:28; 1 John 1:7).
- 3) The church is the depository of all the saved (Acts 2:47).
  
- E) Not **all** “in the church” are saved.
  - 1) Continued salvation depends upon continued obedience (Hebrews 3:6).
  - 2) Some members in the early church failed to obey (Acts 5:1-11; 8:13,19-23; 1 Timothy 1:19,20).
  - 3) We are warned against trust in “church salvation” (1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 5:4).
  
- F) Salvation is not by the church, but in the church!!

### **VI) How First Century sinners acquired salvation in the church:**

- A) In Jerusalem (Acts 2:36-41).
  - 1) Requirements: Faith in Christ (vs.36); Repentance (vs.38); Baptism (vs.38)
  - 2) Church membership: (vs.47) – God added all the saved (See Acts 8:1).
  
- B) In Samaria (Acts 8).
  - 1) Requirements: Believed (vs.12); Baptized (vs.12); The eunuch Confessed his faith in Jesus as Lord (vs.37).
  - 2) Church membership: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47.
  - 3) This was “good news” about the kingdom – it had not been postponed!
  
- C) Near Damascus – Saul (Paul) (Acts 9:3-6,17,18).
  - 1) Requirements: Faith (vs.5,6); Repentance (vs.6); Baptism (vs.18; 22:16).
  - 2) Church membership: spent days with the disciples (vs.19); joined the disciples (vs.26-28); accepted as a church member (Galatians 1:22,23).
  
- D) At Caesarea – Cornelius (Acts 10:1,42,43,45-48).
  - 1) Requirements: Faith (vs.43); Repentance (Acts 11:18); Baptism (vs.47,48).
  - 2) Church membership: (Mark 16:16; Acts 10:14; 2:47).
  
- E) At Philippi – the Jailor (Acts 16:30-34).
  - 1) Requirements: Belief (vs.31); Repentance (vs.33); Baptism (vs.33).
  - 2) Church membership (Philippians 4:15).
  
- F) At Corinth (Acts 18:8).
  - 1) Requirements: Belief (vs.8); Baptism (vs.8).
  - 2) Church membership (Acts 18:10; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED

### VII) The New Testament Church Personalized:

- A) My name on a “church roll” (membership directory) is not a guarantee of anything. Only my faithfulness to God measures the reality of my salvation.
- B) Only God had a part in adding me to His church. Only God can erase my name from the heavenly enrollment (Hebrews 12:23). Men added me to a local church (only) and men can separate me from that local church (only) (2 Thessalonians 3:6).
- C) If I really believe that salvation is in God’s church, then I should stop wondering what He will do with those not in His church and get busy trying to teach and convert the lost. Then I can be sure of their standing with the Lord. (See Romans 10:1-3).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– *Personalized*

### Lesson Six– Questions

1. What serious and fundamental mistake do people make about the church and salvation?
2. Discuss the meaning and implications of the **five** points suggested about “church salvation.”
3. From the quotations given, tell how the Catholic Church is a proponent of “church salvation.”
4. From the quotations given, tell how the Mormon Church advocates “church salvation.”
5. What is basically characteristic of *all* the things cited in the New Testament as being involved in our salvation? (Hint: To whom and how are these available?)
6. If salvation is a relationship with Christ, what are some spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3) that we derive from that relationship? Which of these blessings are also said to come to people in the kingdom/church of Christ?
7. From the Scriptures, how can we be sure that all the saved are **in** the church? How can we be sure that not all who are “in the church” are saved?
8. From the examples of conversion drawn from New Testament history, show how salvation was not *by the church* but *in the church*.
9. **THINK about the “church personalized”** statements at the end of the lesson. What should be **your** attitude about the significance of **your personal** conviction that you are a church member “in good standing”?
10. Should **you** rely on other people’s validation of **your** church membership when assessing **your** spiritual relationship with God?
11. What should be **your** attitude about whether or not other people will be saved if they are not in the Lord’s church?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 7: “How Firm a Foundation”: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

### I) Introduction.

A) Hope is a religious motivator. Without the hope of some sort of reward, religion is meaningless. For this reason, hope is given a prominent role in Jesus’ religion:

- 1) It “abides” with faith and love (1 Corinthians 13:13);
- 2) It is one of the seven “unities” (Ephesians 4:4);
- 3) It is the focal point of the gospel (Colossians 1:27);
- 4) It is a prominent part of the Christian’s armor (1 Thessalonians 5:8);
- 5) It is the anchor of our souls (Hebrews 6:19);
- 6) By hope we are saved (Romans 8:24 [KJV])!

B) My hope is based on what I believe to be true, even if it isn’t.

- 1) Truth is determined by many standards: family, conscience, personal preference, church creed, preachers, “later revelations” (Joseph Smith; Mary Baker Eddy; Catholic Pope; Mormon President; “continuing” revelations).
- 2) The Bible warns us against false hope (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

### II) A Valid Hope Must Rest on the Right Foundation– Truth. BUT– What Is Truth? (John 18:37,38) This must be a personal question and answer for us.

A) Truth is what **God** has said (Psalms 119:160).

- 1) All things (involving salvation) are of God (2 Corinthians 5:18).
- 2) He has spoken (Hebrews 1:1,2); His word is truth (John 17:17).
- 3) He has spoken in the past by prophets (Nehemiah 9:30).
- 4) His word was law to the nation of Israel (Exodus 20:1-17).  
(a) These were not the “Ten Suggestions” but the ten commandments.
- 5) His law was steadfast in every respect (Hebrews 2:2).  
(a) Adam – died as warned; (b) Abraham – all three promises fulfilled; (c) the Jews – carried into captivity as foretold.
- 6) There was to be a change in God’s law (word) following the Jews’ failure to keep the law given through Moses (Hebrews 7:12).

B) Truth is what **Jesus** said (Hebrews 1:2; 2:3).

- 1) Jesus was given all authority to speak the law of God (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 1:2).
- 2) His teaching was given to Him by the Father (John 7:16,17).

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- 3) His word will judge us on judgment day (John 12:48-50).
  - 4) His word establishes a new covenant with man (Hebrews 8:7-13).
    - (a) Christ's law is in man's mind & heart through His word (John 6:44, 45).
    - (b) The new law replaced the old at His death (Hebrews 9:15-17).
  - 5) Christ's new law (the gospel) is the present truth (2 Peter 1:12).
- C) Truth is what the **apostles** said (Matthew 16:18,19).
- 1) They were given the Spirit to ensure the accuracy of truth (John 16:13).
  - 2) They *spoke* as the Spirit directed them (Acts 2:4; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
  - 3) They *wrote* the truth to men (Ephesians 3:3,4; Jude 3).
    - (a) The written word is as authoritative as the spoken (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
  - 4) This faith in written form was delivered to the saints – you and me!
    - (a) How precious should the Bible be to us since it holds all truth?

### III) How Do We Find the Truth in Our Bibles?

- A) Not in Old Testament scriptures (Romans 15:4; Colossians 2:14).
- B) By the written words of the New Testament apostles (In the New Testament of Jesus; not in writings of Mormon “apostles” or other such sources).
- C) How do these writings in the New Testament teach us the truth?
- 1) By precepts – direct statements or commands (Colossians 4:2).
  - 2) By approved examples – events having the apostles' approval (Acts 6:3).
  - 3) By necessary inference (Acts 22:7– Saul persecuted Jesus' church, not the person of Jesus).
  - 4) All three ways of teaching are illustrated in the Lord's Supper:
    - (a) Precept – “This do in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:25). *What?*
    - (b) Approved example – “Upon the first day of week” (Acts 20:7). *When?*
    - (c) Necessary inference – every first day (Exodus 20:8 and Acts 20:7 use the same language to show frequency – both to be understood the same way).  
*How often?*
- D) Some teaching is general; some is specific:
- 1) General – **includes** the necessary specifics that may not be expressed:
    - (a) Matthew 28:18 –
      - “Go” (expressed) – How? – walk? ride? fly? sail? by mail? (not expressed, but *some way* is necessary to “going” – included in “go.”)
      - “Teach”(expressed) – How? preach? teach a class? use a tract? (not expressed, but each *method* of teaching included in “teach.”)
    - (b) Hebrews 10:25– “assembling” is necessary to obey command; *where* is not – in a home? in a building,? in a tent? in some other kind of place?

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- 2) Specific – **excludes** everything not included in the specific kind or thing.
  - (a) Genesis 6:14– Noah restricted to gopher wood only – it is the only kind included; other kinds are excluded.
  - (b) Ephesians 5:19– Christians are restricted to vocal music (singing) only, because any other kind of music changes the specific *kind* named.

### IV) The Foundation of Truth Personalized:

- A) “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness” as I am counseled by the God’s word that it must be (Romans 1:17). Hope based on any other foundation is not hope but “*wishful thinking.*”
- B) I am guided to know the truth today by the Holy Spirit just as surely as were the apostles, only in a different way (they by inspiration of the *person*; I by the inspiration of the *scriptures*). I cannot afford to resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51; 1 Thessalonians 5:19) any more than people of Bible times could. Let me be as receptive to the written word as they were to the spoken word.
- C) Since only the word of God is the foundation on which my hope of heaven is built, I must be certain from my own study of that word exactly what God wants me to receive as the truth. I must listen to **no other** voice!
- D) Tradition can color **my** perception of the truth as readily as someone else’s. I must be sure that I am not too loose or too strict about what I accept as truth. I must be sure that the New Testament *really* teaches (in one of the three ways – and either generally or specifically [see details above]) what I *think* it teaches me.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– *Personalized*

### Lesson Seven– Questions

1. Cite some of the Scriptures that emphasize the importance of hope in Jesus' religion.
2. What are some of the things/people upon which many base their religious hope?
3. Upon what must a valid hope *always* be based?
4. What are the **three** avenues of the truth that are revealed to us in the Bible? Which one is the *ultimate source* of all truth?
5. Give some examples from the Old Testament that prove the steadfastness of God's law.
6. Distinguish between the *past* truth and the present truth.
7. Trace the transmission of truth from Jesus to **you**.
8. In what large division of the Bible do we look today to discover divine truth for *our* obedience?
9. In what **three** ways does the Bible now teach us the truth? Illustrate each way using the Lord's Supper.
10. Why is it important to know the difference between *general* and *specific* Bible truth?
11. **THINK about the “church personalized”** statements at the end of the lesson. Can you think of some ways in which **you** might be guilty of “resisting the Holy Spirit of truth”?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 8: “In the Image of Christ:” A Better Person in a Better Church

### I) Introduction.

- A) A basic Bible principle: Greater blessings bring greater responsibilities.
  - 1) Sending of the twelve apostles; “Freely receive, freely give”(Matthew 10:5-8).
  - 2) Teaching about faithful and unfaithful servants: “much given, much required” (Luke 12:47,48).
  - 3) Warning to unbelievers: “greater opportunities, worse punishment” (Hebrews 10:28,29).
  
- B) This principle of responsibility applies to the New Testament Church.
  - 1) A new kingdom has been given to the disciples of Jesus (Luke 22:29).
  - 2) This kingdom/church is greater and more perfect than the old(Hebrews 9:11).
  - 3) Enjoyment of this perfection greatly challenges members of the church.

### II) The New Testament Church Is Better Than All Others:

- A) It is better than churches established and sustained by men (Matthew 15:13,14).
  - 1) This includes all others, regardless of age or respectability.
  
- B) It is **better** than God’s “church” in the Old Testament (Acts 7:38 [KJV]).
  - 1) The New Testament church is part of a **better covenant** (Hebrews 8:6).
  - 2) It is established on **better promises** (Hebrews 8:6, e.g.,salvation [9:15]).
  - 3) It relies on a **better sacrifice** ( Hebrews 10:4,11,12).
  - 4) It imparts a **better hope** to its members (Hebrews 7:19).
  - 5) It looks toward a **better resurrection** (Hebrews 11:35).
  - 6) It allows enjoyment of a **better possession** (Hebrews 10:34; 3:17-19; 4:8,9).

### III) New Testament Church Membership Entails Lofty Standards of Conduct:

- A) Higher than the conduct of non-Christians (Matthew 5:20).
  - 1) A new law requires new attitudes: Matthew 5:21,22 (murder/anger); 5:27,28 (adultery/lust); 5:38,39 (revenge/forgiveness); 5:43,44 (hate/love).
  
- B) Higher than our own former conduct (2 Corinthians 5:17).
  - 1) We must walk “in newness of life” (Romans 6:4,6,7).

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- 2) “Deceitful lusts” must be put away – the old man/new man change must be made (Ephesians 4:22-32).
  - 3) Earthly traits are to be exchanged for heavenly traits (Colossians 3:1-17).
- C) The Christian is to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-30).
- 1) This is accomplished by God’s Spirit through His word (2 Corinthians 3:18).
  - 2) We are renewed in knowledge unto the image of our Maker (Colossians 3:10).

### IV) Christ’s Image Is Our Pattern of Conduct In New Testament Church

- A) He presents the image of love of the Truth (John 14:6).
- 1) Truth came by Him (John 1:17).
  - 2) He taught only the truth under all circumstances (John 8:45).
  - 3) He promised freedom through the truth (John 8:32).
  - 4) We must love truth or be deceived and be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:9-12).
    - (a) “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23).
- B) He projects the image of total obedience to the Father (John 10:38).
- 1) *God* was willing to “learn” obedience (Hebrews 5:8).
  - 2) Learning obedience is not always easy (Luke 22:42,43).
  - 3) Our *salvation* depends on our obedience to Christ (Hebrews 5:9).
  - 4) Total obedience is possible only through an attitude change in us (Romans 6:16-18).
    - (a) A familiar song stresses that change: “All of self, and none of Thee” – “none of self and all of Thee” (“None of Self and All of Thee,” Hymns for Worship, number 431).
- C) He shows us the image of love and concern for others (Acts 10:38).
- 1) For their physical needs (Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 7:11-17).
  - 2) For their spiritual needs (John 10:10; Matthew 11:28-30).
    - (a) Physical needs are secondary to spiritual needs (e.g., the rich man and Lazarus– Luke 16).
  - 3) Our main task outside of ourselves is to help to save others (1 Timothy 4:16).
    - (a) Love will prompt us to take action to teach our fellows (Ephesians 4:15).
- D) He impresses us with the image of intolerance of sin (1 John 3:8).
- 1) Man’s personal sins – “sin no more” (John 8:11).
  - 2) Man’s religious sins – he cleansed the temple from the profane (Matthew 21:12,13).
  - 3) We must hate sin, but we must love the sinner (Jude 23).
  - 4) We cannot tolerate sin in or out of the church – sin cost Jesus’ life.
- E) He displays the image of self-sacrifice (Philippians 2:5-8).
- 1) We must “lose” our lives to save our souls (Matthew 10:39).
  - 2) Every sacrifice is generously rewarded (Mark 10:29,30).

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3) Even suffering is very worthwhile (Romans 8:18).

### **V) The Image of Christ Personalized:**

- A) People do many things and go to great expense to establish and maintain a certain image to others. No better or more worthwhile image could be projected than that of Jesus. Being like Him is the highest tribute that could be paid to our personal worth in the eyes of other people (Colossians 1:27).
  
- B) An image might be just that – an image without any substance. The image of Christ is genuine. Things are exactly as they appear, if we are sincerely following our Saviour (1 Peter 2:21,22) and others can follow our example without hesitation (1 Corinthians 11:1).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– *Personalized*

### Lesson Eight– Questions

1. What basic lesson about opportunity and responsibility is emphasized in the teaching of the New Testament?
2. What two objections did Jesus have (Matthew 15:13,14) about any doctrine or religious organization that is not based upon His truth?
3. How does the New Testament church compare with the Old Testament “church” of the Jews? Why?
4. The personal conduct of Christians today must excel that of non-Christians. Give some examples of how this should be true.
5. What changes/exchanges should be made by everyone who becomes a child of God today?
6. In conforming to the image of Christ with regard to truth, what must be the attitude of the Christian toward the Word of God? Expand upon the lesson material if you can.
7. How are we imitating the example left us by Jesus when we determine to be obedient to God?
8. What relationship will we maintain with other people if we truly attempt to show forth the image of Christ in our lives?
9. How does a child of God deal with sin and sinners if he wants to become the “better person” made possible through the gospel?
10. Does self-sacrifice play any part in the formation of the “image of Christ” in us?
11. THINK about the “church personalized” statements at the end of the lesson. What are some of the images that people may try to project to others? What efforts do they make to establish those images? How can we project Christ’s image to others in everyday living?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 9: “The Church and the Churches:” I’m an Udenominational Christian

### I) Introduction.

- A) The Lord established one church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4).
- 1) Members of one body (1 Corinthians 12:20) formed local churches in which to perform collective activity (Romans 16:16; Galatians 1:2).
  - 2) These churches were alike in all basic features (1 Corinthians 16:1).
- B) Many churches are now in existence – each is different from all the others.
- 1) These are **denominations** – “named from” others by *distinctive characteristics*:
    - (a) Emphasis on a form of government – “Episcopos” (bishops) = Episcopal Church; “Methods”+ episcopal = Methodist Episcopal Church; “presbuteros” (presbyters [elders]) = Presbyterian Church.
    - (b) Emphasis on certain doctrines – Baptism = Baptist church (the emphasis is on the *mode*, not the *purpose* of baptism; it is ironic that a church wears the name of something not considered fundamental to God’s will); The Sabbath and the second coming of Christ = 7th Day Adventist Church; Doctrines of Holiness and Pentecost = Penecostal and Holiness churches.
    - (c) Emphasis on church leaders – Martin Luther = Lutheran Church; John Wesley = Wesleyan (Methodist) Church; Menno Simms (Dutch) = Mennonite Church.
    - (d) Emphasis on the character and function of members – Latter Day Saints (Mormons); Jehovah’s Witnesses; Friends (Quakers); Christian Scientists; etc.
  - 2) Denominationalism is a system of **religious division**.
    - (a) It is claimed to be “unity in diversity” – only “basic” items of faith and practice are required for fellowship; all else is “unimportant.”
    - (b) But – who decides where unity and diversity part company (John 17:20,21)?
    - (c) The basic thrust of denominations is really diversity, not unity.
  - 3) Division is everywhere condemned in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 1:10; Matthew 12:25, etc.).

### II) How Did “Church” Come To Be “Churches” (Denominations)?

- A) The simplicity of 1<sup>st</sup> century religion was corrupted by various influences of the world and human wisdom; the more worldly wisdom , the more churches!
- B) Church history provides an insight into the rise of denominationalism:
- 1) **The Catholic Church** emerged gradually from changes made in:

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- (a) Church government – elders > bishops > priesthood > cardinals > Pope.
  - (b) Doctrine – Mariolatry (exaltation of Mary); sprinkling; purgatory; mass; infallibility of the Church through the Pope, etc.
  - 2) **Protestant churches:**
    - (a) Some split from the Catholic Church: Lutheran and Church of England; Calvinist (no church as such, but the doctrine gave great impetus to the establishment of many churches: Presbyterian and Baptists Churches).
    - (b) Some split from other Protestant Churches: Methodist (Church of England); Church of the Nazarene (Methodist); The Salvation Army (Methodist), etc.
  - 3) Other churches originated from charismatic leaders who promoted a peculiar doctrinal emphasis: Mormons (Joseph Smith); Jehovah’s Witnesses (Charles Russell); Seventh Day Adventist (Ellen G. White); Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy); etc.
- C) Bible history records the origin and propagation of the New Testament church (Acts 2:42,47; Luke 8:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13,14).
- D) Many religious people are unaware of their “roots”. Catholics are embarrassed when confronted by facts of the Inquisition, corrupt popes, etc., in trying to link themselves to the apostolic church. Baptists, seeking church succession from John the Baptist or the apostles, go through many groups very different from their present church – groups that taught baptism as essential; sprinkling; infant baptism; apostasy, etc.
- E) Members of the New Testament Church have an easy task in identifying how we came to be as we are: there is no need for a succession of organized groups; no need to explain away changes in basic structures and doctrines; no need to try to defend ungodly or unscriptural practices, etc. We are simply Christians added by God to His Church (Acts 2:47) upon obedience to gospel commands (Acts 2:38). We are trying our best to conform to every instruction given in the New Testament for church members to follow individually (1 John 2:4) and collectively in local churches (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

### III) The New Testament Church Is Undenominational.

- A) Two terms are often applied to the church: “Undenominational” and “non-denominational.” The former term is more condemning of denominationalism; the latter implies that one church is not favored over any other.
- B) The Lord’s church is denominational both in the universal and in the local sense:
  - 1) The *universal church* cannot be denominational since **all** the saved are in it. God puts **all** the saved into the same church. He does not separate His people by placing them in different churches (Acts 2:47)!
  - 2) The *local church* will not be denominational if it strives to be like all the New Testament churches that served Christ according to the New Testament pattern of work and worship (Ephesians 4:3,4).

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### IV) Great Benefits are Enjoyed by Members of an Udenominational Local Church:

- A) A real search for truth is possible.
  - 1) No human creed predetermines our faith (Acts 5:29).
  - 2) The Scriptures are respected for their perfection (2 Timothy 3:16,17). No humans have a perfect knowledge of the truth in and of themselves.
  - 3) Spiritual growth is nurtured through patience in learning (Philippians 3:14-16).
    - (a) Truth-seeking is the ultimate test of fellowship; we make our own decisions about who will be given our fellowship.
  
- B) Decisions are made on the local level.
  - 1) Elders are not lords over their flock, but examples (1 Peter 5:3).
  - 2) They enforce (by judgment) the “traditions” of the apostles (2 Thessalonians 3:6).
    - (a) Only after efforts at correction have been made (Galatians 6:1).
  - 3) Many decisions are made on an individual basis:
    - (a) Concerning attendance – how many services are necessary (a matter of attitude!)? (Hebrews 10:25).
    - (b) Concerning prayer – how much and how often? (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
    - (c) Concerning giving – how generous? (2 Corinthians 9:7).
    - (d) Concerning teaching – how many / how much time devoted? (Mark 16:15-16).
  - 4) Decision-making is centralized in many denominations (through their central organizations):
    - (a) Catholics – masses at Christmas and Easter are made mandatory.
    - (b) Mormons – 18 months to 2 years are required in missions or special service to the church.
    - (c) Jehovah’s Witnesses – 90 hours a month are required in special service of teaching, literature distribution, etc.
    - (d) Others – medical treatment, birth control, foods, etc. are strictly regulated.
  
- C) Each Christian stands for himself before his Lord (Romans 14:10,12).
  - 1) Ultimate judgment belongs to the Lord (Romans 14:4).
    - (a) Fellowship in a local church doesn’t assure acceptability with the Lord (Revelation 2:5).
  - 2) Immediate judgment is in the hands of local churches via the decisions made by the elders of those churches (1 Corinthians 5:4-6).
    - (a) Withdrawal does not necessarily condemn a soul; mistakes can be made.
    - (b) Decisions about going too far or not far enough in discipline are difficult. All must be based on human judgment about the attitudes and efforts of people.
  - 3) Individual decision-making carries great opportunities and great responsibilities. If mistakes are made, one can blame only himself! Thoughtful people usually prefer this to suffering for the mistakes made for them by others:
    - (a) The Methodist Church decided for its members in the 1910 Conference that their former belief about original sin was wrong.

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- (b) The Mormon Church decided for its members that certain doctrines should be changed. For example...  
Polygamy for male members was first encouraged, then discouraged.  
Segregation within the church membership was relaxed; this was the result of “progressive revelation.”
- (c) We must study and hold our faith in all things – “I don’t know” is often a sign of weakness in study and thought (but not always – 2 Peter 3:16; Hebrews 5:13,14).
- (d) We cannot lay the blame on others for our own errors in our faith and practice.

### V) Udenominational Christianity Personalized:

- A) Do I really cherish my freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1) so that I constantly study the Bible in a search for truth, or do I prefer to let others make my decisions of faith *for* me? Most of us would reject decisions made by popes, conferences, associations, etc. But what about decisions adopted from preachers, elders, papers, relatives, etc.?
- B) Am I eager to share the truth I have found with others, or do I tend to feel that it should be “every man for himself”? Do I often think that it isn’t all that important for others to “see things like I do”?
- C) Does the frequent display of denominational zeal around us give us a defeatist attitude toward spreading the gospel, or does it cause us to renew our determination to do more in the struggle against the powers of evil in the world (Ephesians 6:12)?
- D) Am I aware of the ever-present danger that members of the New Testament church may become denominational in (1) our blind adherence to tradition; (2) in our uncontrolled zeal for unauthorized “progress”; or, (3) in our unbridled desire to become more “like all the nations” (churches) around us (1 Samuel 8:5)?

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### Lesson Nine— Questions

1. Explain how some of the leading denominations acquired the distinctive names by which they are known and distinguished from other groups?
2. Give examples of departures in (1) organization and (2) doctrine that ultimately resulted in the appearance of the Catholic Church upon the religious scene. Details found in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia would be helpful in tracing these departures.
3. From what sources did many of the leading Protestant churches originate?
4. Why are some churches “embarrassed” when confronted with the need to identify their present entities with the church of the New Testament? Why is this identification no problem for a member of the church of Christ?
5. Which term, “undenominational” or “non-denominational,” better represents the attitude of the Christian toward denominationalism in today’s world? Why?
6. Why is it not possible for the New Testament church in the universal sense to be a denomination? The New Testament church in the local sense?
7. Why is the search for truth really possible in the Lord’s church but not in others? How important is this to sincere people?
8. Contrast decision-making in an undenominational church and in some of the large and popular denominations of our time?
9. Who must bear the ultimate responsibility for decisions and judgments made by members of an undenominational church? Show how this is both a *great opportunity* and a *great responsibility*.
10. **THINK about the “church personalized”** questions at the end of the lesson. Can you think of some specific ways in which Christians may be guilty of “denominationalizing” the church?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 10: “In Spirit and in Truth:” I Worship God in Singing, The Lord’s Supper, Giving, Prayer, and Hearing the Word

### I) Introduction.

- A) What is worship? Thayer: “Proskuneo” – “to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence ... hence, among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence ... hence, in the New Testament, by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication. It is used (a) of homage to men of superior rank ... (b) of homage rendered to God and the ascended Christ, to heavenly beings, and to demons ...” A more simple definition might be: “the expression of the adoration of one’s heart.”
- B) The Bible addresses several kinds of worship:
- 1) **Vain worship** (Matthew 15:9). Deliberately teaching error negates worship (Luke 6:45).
  - 2) **Ignorant worship** (John 4:22; Acts 17:23). Man must know what pleases God when he worships (Jeremiah 3:23).
  - 3) **Will worship** (Colossians 2:23). Man’s will must always be subject to God’s will regarding his worship (Matthew 7:21).
  - 4) **True Worship** (John 4:23). True worship is acceptable worship. This must always be our aim as we worship God.
- C) Worship is a universal and pervasive need in man’s nature (Acts 17:22,23).
- D) God provided private and public worship for New Testament Church members:
- 1) Worship prompts the emulation by worshippers of their object of worship (both public and private worship).
  - 2) Worship reinforces the relationship between worshippers and the person or object worshipped (both public and private worship).
  - 3) Worship strengthens relationships among the worshippers (public worship).
  - 4) Worship proclaims to others the relationships that exist among worshippers and between them and the object(s) of their worship (public worship).
- E) All acceptable worship is regulated by **three** requirements (John 4:24 – “Must”).
- 1) The right *object* – God. (Paul’s discourse at Athens is a study of the importance of whom or what we worship (Acts 17:24-31). See the [chart](#).)

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- 2) The right *motive* – in spirit. God wants our hearts! (Matthew 22:37).
  - 3) The right *practice* – according to the truth (God’s word) (John 17:17).
- F) Such worship was taught and practiced by the New Testament Church in the “assembly” of the saints:
- 1) They “came together” to edify one another (1 Corinthians 14:26).
  - 2) They taught one another and those outside the fellowship of saints (1 Corinthians 14:19).
  - 3) They prayed together (1 Corinthians 14:15).
  - 4) They sang to teach and admonish one another (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19).
  - 5) They ate the Lord’s Supper as one body (1 Corinthians 11:20; Acts 20:7).
  - 6) They contributed financially to fund their mutual work (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

### II) The Lord’s Church Worshipped On The Lord’s Day (Both belong to the Lord)

- A) Worship was at a definite time as the New Testament was being written:
- 1) One could “forsake” the assembly. This is possible only if one is aware of when he should be present for the assembly (Hebrews 10:25).
  - 2) The first day of the week was the time set for the Lord’s Supper and for contributions to be made (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2).
  - 3) The historical background for that particular time: Jesus arose (Mark 16:9); He met with the disciples (John 20:1,19); the church was established (Acts 2:1; Leviticus 23:15,16); the gospel was first preached on that day (Acts 2).
- B) Worship was at a definite time following the New Testament’s completion:
- 1) Justin Martyr (100 –165 AD) wrote of first-day meetings.
  - 2) Constantine recognized the first day in 321 A.D. by restricting courts and military activities on that day.
    - (a) This did not “change the Sabbath to Sunday” as the Adventists claim.

### III) The Practice Of New Testament Church Worship:

- A) SINGING** – Does the church have “music” in worship? Music is “sounds having rhythm and melody” (Webster). Do we? We should! There are two kinds of sounds: vocal and instrumental. We are *authorized* to use vocal music (singing) in worship and we must practice only what is authorized (Acts 15:24)!
- 1) Passages about singing in the worship of God:
    - (a) The disciples sang after the Lord’s Supper was given (before the church was established) (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).
    - (b) Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison (Acts 16:25).
    - (c) Bible passages about singing in the public worship of the church:
      - Paul quoted David about Gentiles singing in the church (Romans 15:9; see also Psalms 18:49).

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- Instructions about church worship at Corinth included singing (1Corinthians 14:15).
  - Further teaching about public worship at Ephesus specified singing to one another (Ephesians 5:19).
  - Similar directions about public worship to the Colossian church mandated singing (Colossians 3:16).
  - New Testament singing by “brethren” was prophesied by David long before the church existed (Hebrews 2:12)
  - The private (individual) use of singing was encouraged (James 5:13).
- 2) Every passage dealing with public or private worship specifies singing, not playing.
  - 3) Important elements of New Testament singing in worship are stressed:
    - (a) Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are the kinds to be sung.
    - (b) Singing is to be with the spirit (heart) and understanding (there must be communication with one another – teaching and admonishing).
    - (c) Praise to God is an essential quality of our singing.
  - 4) Unimportant elements of singing become important only as they enhance the essential elements:
    - (a) Perfect pitch;
    - (b) Tempo;
    - (c) Harmony;
    - (d) Quality of sounds;
    - (e) Skilled leaders, books, and other details.
  - 5) Why “we” don’t play on mechanical instruments of music in our worship:
    - (a) Playing is not authorized for worship. God alone knows what pleases Him (1 Corinthians 2:11-13).
    - (b) Playing is not included in “sing”. If it were, each one would have to play his personal instrument (piano, horn, etc.) (Colossians 3:16).
    - (c) Playing is not an “aid” to singing – it is another kind of music. It cannot aid communication among people.
    - (d) Playing is not an “expedient” (advantage; suitable; good way to do something). It does not enable conformity to God’s will (Romans 12:2).
    - (e) Playing is not authorized by Old Testament typical(foreshadowing) worship or by worship in heaven (e.g., Revelation 5:8; 14:2; 15:2). Such permission would also allow much more: animal sacrifices, a temple; white robes; palm branches; bowls, etc.
  - 6) **Personalizing our singing:**
    - (a) Be aware of the words we sing. Make their truths our truths. Sing with sincerity. Discuss examples of questionable words in some songs.
    - (b) Don’t be too insistent about the technical features of singing.

### **B) THE LORD’S SUPPER**

- 1) It was first introduced to the apostles before the crucifixion at the Passover supper (Leviticus 23:6; Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

- 2) It had been foretold as a practice in the kingdom (Matthew 26:29).
    - (a) Note – If the church is a substitute, we can't drink the cup until the kingdom comes.
  - 3) It was observed by the early church in Troas (Acts 20:7). Paul's seven-day wait (verse 6) shows the regularity of the observance.
  - 4) It was part of the regular worship at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
  - 5) Paul used it to teach a lesson about idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:16,21).
  - 6) Particulars relating to the Lord's Supper in New Testament worship (church or individual):
    - (a) Its purpose:
      - A remembrance of Christ's death (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).
      - A communion (sharing) in Christ's death (1 Corinthians 10:16).
      - A proclamation of Christ's death and coming again (1 Corinthians 11:26).
    - (b) The manner of observance:
      - In a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27,29). Not by a "worthy" person.
      - "Discerning" the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29). We must perceive what is represented in the Supper (as individuals).
    - (c) What can the church do toward acceptable partaking? Provide *us* the opportunity for acceptable partaking:
      - Provide the elements – bread (unleavened) and fruit of the vine. How many loaves, how many containers will be determined by the elders for the congregation (1 Corinthians 10:17).
      - Someone appointed to express our thanks – for what? The leader should use good judgment (1 Corinthians 11:24,25; 10:16).
      - Elements distributed to the disciples – how? According to judgment.
  - 7) **Personalizing the Lord's Supper:**
    - (a) The proper observance of the Supper is vital (1 Corinthians 11:29), but the same could be said for all activities in the worship. God speaks to us in the Supper (it is a reminder through the emblems) as He does through His word. Our minds must not wander!
    - (b) We are insistent that someone else is wrong if his church does not observe the Lord's Supper "on the first day" (every one). What about the member of the Lord's church who does not observe the Lord's Supper "on the first day" (every one)? What is the difference? One has the opportunity, the other doesn't – which is more guilty?
- C) **GIVING** – How does it qualify as "worship"? (see the definition of worship above.)
- 1) The congregational practice of collecting is mechanical (1 Corinthians 16:1,2): members lay aside on the first day of the week, use a bank account (or not), utilize the services of a treasurer, etc.
    - (a) These arrangements depend on human judgment and convenience.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

- 2) The individual participation in giving comes from the heart of the giver. This is an act of worship only if it satisfies the requirements of “worship”:
    - (a) “As he may prosper” (a decision is made about the ability to give) (1 Corinthians 16:2).
    - (b) “As he purposes in his heart” (a decision is made about the exact amount to give through deliberate soul-searching) (2 Corinthians 9:6).
    - (c) “Not grudgingly or of necessity” (an attitude of “want to” and not “have to” guides the deliberation about giving) (2 Corinthians 9:7).
    - (d) “The cheerful giver” who gives out of deep gratitude is the giver who is able to “worship” as he gives (2 Corinthians 9:7; John 4:23).
  - 3) Giving and collecting as a church activity allows the body (local) to function in its work of:
    - (a) Evangelism (Philippians 4:15,16; 2 Corinthians 11:7,8).
    - (b) Edification (1 Corinthians 14:26 – worship, Bible study, and other activities that “build us up” involve financial expenses).
    - (c) Benevolence (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).
  - 4) Personalizing our giving as New Testament worship:
    - (a) The physical body as a unit depends on every part to supply its needs. Similarly, the spiritual body (congregation) depends on each member to make budgeted (planned) work possible. This requires a flow of consistent (amount) and regular (weekly) contributions to meet its obligations. This suggests that members should bring back (or leave) their contributions when they are away or absent. Individuals should not decrease their commitment to the budget of the local church unless unavoidable circumstances make that absolutely necessary.
    - (b) Each local member has the right to expect that contributions will be used only for scriptural activities and that reasonably good human judgment will be followed in the spending practices of the local church.
- D) PRAYER** – Perhaps the most emphasized of all Christian activity.
- 1) Jesus set the example of praying often and long (Luke 6:12).
    - (a) His prayers in Gethsemane and on the cross are especially memorable.
    - (b) He taught His disciples to pray (Luke 11:1-4); they felt the **need** to pray, but also felt an inadequacy in knowing **how** to pray.
    - (c) We can correctly expect much to be said about prayer in the New Testament church (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
      - The private prayers of church members are often mentioned.
      - The public prayers of the assembled church are frequently discussed.
  - 2) Public prayer was engaged in by the New Testament Church:
    - (a) Soon after its establishment (Acts 2:42).
    - (b) When Peter and John were being persecuted (Acts 4:23-31).
    - (c) Prayer was offered for Peter by the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:5).
    - (d) The Antioch church prayed when Paul and Barnabas were sent out to do the Lord’s work (Acts 13:1,3).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

- (e) The disciples (church) at Tyre prayed with Paul (Acts 21:4,5).
  - (f) Instructions were given for public prayer at Ephesus under the guidance of Timothy (1 Timothy 2:1,2,8).
  - (g) Regulations for Spirit-guided prayers at Corinth were specified by Paul (1 Corinthians 14:14,15).
- 3) Basic lessons are needed about prayer in public worship:
- (a) Prayers should be made for all men (1 Timothy 2:1).
  - (b) Prayers should be made for all authorities that Christians may be able to lead lives of quietness, peace, godliness and reverence (1 Timothy 2:2).
  - (c) Men should be *taught* to pray acceptable prayers (Luke 11:1).
  - (d) Men who lead prayers should have “holy hands” (1 Timothy 2:8).
  - (e) Men who lead prayers should speak so as to be heard and understood by all others in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:15). In some buildings, the use of a microphone is indicated. If so, *use it!*
  - (f) Those who “follow” the prayer leader must concentrate on the prayer so as to be able to supply the “Amen” at the end (1 Corinthians 14:16,17).
- E) **TEACHING** – Perhaps classified by some as edification, not worship. However, teaching can clearly satisfy the definition of “worship” if the *attitude* of the hearer is right. The total relationship of the church to God depends on our *learning* His will for us and doing it (Matthew 7:21).
- 1) Teaching provides completeness for the church individually and collectively (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
    - (a) The early church continued in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:20).
    - (b) Paul taught (exhorted) churches in order to strengthen them (Acts 14:21,22).
    - (c) Paul preached until midnight at Troas to teach what was needed by the saints there (Acts 20:7).
    - (d) Teaching in the assembly was regulated at Corinth so that it might be as effective as possible (1 Corinthians 14:26,31).
    - (e) Teaching as worship is primarily intended for the ears of the church (1 Corinthians 14:26,31).
      - A secondary opportunity exists to teach and influence unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:23-25).
      - We should create other opportunities to teach unbelievers – meetings, special lectures, etc. Personal teaching is especially important to the conversion of the lost.
    - (f) Teaching in the assembly is restricted to men only (1 Corinthians 14:34,35).

#### IV) Personalizing the Worship of the New Testament church:

- A) Nothing is more vital to my spiritual growth and closeness to God than the personalization of the public worship. If worship isn’t a personal and highly focused activity for me, I miss its purposes and benefits for my Christian life.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

- B) There should be no church-member *spectators* during any part of the public worship service. The Lord only approves of the presence of *participants*!
- C) The benefits of public worship are available to me through my own efforts, not those of anyone else. Deficiencies on the part of the song leader, the preacher or teacher, the other worshippers, etc. should not be allowed to prevent me from worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.”
- D) If I truly understand God’s purposes in providing for public worship, and if I really am convinced that public worship will draw me closer to God and to my brethren, I will never allow petty “reasons” to keep me away from the worship services. Every opportunity to prepare for my “final exams” will be an opportunity that I will cherish.
- E) Suggestions and discussion by the class members about personalizing the public worship of the local congregation.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– *Personalized*

### Lesson Ten– Questions

1. What are the four kinds of worship cited in the lesson? Tell something about each one and give illustrations from modern life if you can.
2. Why is it said that man's nature makes man's worship necessary? Can you provide some examples of *how* men worship that validate this idea?
3. There are at least three essentials for worship to be acceptable to God. What are they, and what knowledge and/or behaviors do they impose on us?
4. List the five acts of worship practiced by the New Testament church when it "came together." Give at least one scripture reference for each act.
5. The New Testament day of worship was the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. What are the historical (Biblical) foundations upon which that day was chosen, and what is some historical evidence that this day was accepted as the appropriate time for church worship?
6. What is one thing that all passages in the New Testament that deal with church music have in common?
7. Discuss essential and unessential elements of a scriptural song service in church worship.
8. In what ways does the Lord's Supper relate a partaker to the Lord's death? *How* must the Christian partake of the Supper?
9. Give the four things specified in scripture to regulate the giving of church members.
10. Several "basic lessons" are suggested in the lesson about prayer in public worship. Be prepared to discuss some of these suggestions and make some comments about each one.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED

11. **THINK about the “church personalized”** observations at the end of the lesson. Try to add other thoughts that will “personalize” church worship. Try especially to “personalize” with specific suggestions some or all of the five activities of church worship.

<p><b>THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED</b></p>
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**PAUL’S GOD AND THEIR GODS (ACTS 17:24-31)**

<b>Verse (s)</b>	<b><u>Paul’s God</u></b>	<b><u>Their gods</u></b>
24	One God	Many gods
24	Maker of all things	Most created; none eternal
24	Controls all things	Each over part of world
24	Not confined by earthly temples	Dwelled in earthly temples in specific places
25	Not dependent on men	Dependent on men
25	The Giver to men	Takers from men
26	Made men of common ancestry	Men’s existence not from gods; many and diverse ancestors
26	Rules all equally and completely	Each “ruled” differently; only partial control of men
27,28	Desires to bless His worshipers	Desired to be blessed by worshipers
29	Men are His offspring	Gods were made by men
29	Not represented by physical things	Represented and dependent on physical things
30,31	Desires righteousness	Responsible for evil
31	Plans a final judgment of men	Only immediate and superficial rewards, punishments

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 11: “Serving Christ in the Church”: I Teach the Gospel, Help the Needy, and Cooperate with Other Saints

### I) Introduction:

- A) This lesson concerns work that all Christians must do as members of the New Testament Church. We often call this “church work,” but let us think of it as work that **we** perform as **our** service to Christ. Though a Christian should be the servant of his brethren (Galatians 5:13), and thus to the church, all his service should be motivated by a desire to please Christ (Colossians 3:23,24). Even our good deeds for the unfortunate are counted by the Lord as service to Him and any failure in serving others is a failure in our duty to Christ (Matthew 25:34-46).
- B) The Christian functions in his service to Christ in two capacities: 1) As an individual in the universal church, and 2) as a member of a local congregation. He must discharge his duties in both relationships in keeping with instructions in the New Testament.

### II) New Testament Emphasis On Service.

- A) Christ a servant (Matthew 20:28)
  - 1) He was a servant to Jews and Gentiles alike (Romans 15:8,9)
  - 2) He sacrificed Himself to take the form of a servant (Philippians 2:5-8)
- B) Service is mandated for His followers.
  - 1) Service is the door to “greatness” in the kingdom (Matthew 20:26,27)
  - 2) Conversion (turning) must be followed by service (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10)
  - 3) Our service to Jesus is “reasonable” (Romans 12:1)
- C) Scriptural service is essential (Matthew 7:21-23), but we must not allow the emphasis on service to be what we *cannot* do as a church instead of what we *must* do as a congregation of Christ’s servants! The same applies to individuals.

### III) Similarities and Differences Exist Between a Christian’s Work as an Individual and His Work as Part of a Local Church (See Chart #1).

- A) **Similarities:** individual saints and the local church perform the same activities in all three areas of Christ’s work.
- B) **Differences:**
  - 1) Expedients of collective service are determined by the elders of the local church.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

- 2) Expedients of individual service are determined by the individual himself (see chart #2).
- 3) The Christian has responsibilities in some areas in which local church has **no** responsibility or involvement.
  - (a) Family duties – the church is not responsible for recreation, etc (It needs no Family Life Center, etc).
  - (b) Civic duties – the church does not engage in politics. (It must not participate in “The Christian Coalition” or other such organizations that seek to influence the outcome of elections by “church” action.)
  - (c) Social duties – the church does not focus on social activities. (One church sign advertised: “Friends, Family, Faith” – in that order.)
  - (d) Economic duties – the church does not engage in business enterprises (The Mormon Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and many mainstream denominations operate numerous businesses – many are tax exempt).
  - (e) All Church activity must be determined by the authority of God’s pattern for the church in its work as well as in other characteristics (name, organization, entrance terms, music, etc.). (Hebrews 8:5; Acts 15:24).

#### **IV) Most Problems Arise about the Collective Work of Local Churches.**

Perhaps this is because more restrictions are placed on churches than on individuals in their authority to act.

- A) Some contend for churches doing all that individuals can do; thus, social, political, economic, and family responsibilities are assumed by churches.
  - 1) The church cannot support a widow who is not a “widow indeed” (1 Timothy 5:16).
  - 2) The church cannot operate a business for gain (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).
  - 3) The church cannot determine family relationships (Ephesians 6:1,4).
  - 4) The church cannot buy a piano (Ephesians 5:19) or anything else that does not help in doing what the church *is* authorized to do.
- B) Some advocate the local churches should work through another churches or organizations:
  - 1) In evangelism – sponsoring churches for supporting preachers, radio or TV programs, and other such activities.
  - 2) In benevolence – orphan homes, retirement homes, general benevolence to the world.
  - 3) BUT – Local churches always maintained control of their own funds and work. (See chart #3). No church ever surrendered that control to another church or organization.
  - 4) A church can purchase the services of an institution to accomplish it’s own evangelistic and benevolent work. It cannot scripturally donate to a general work of a plurality of churches (e.g., a hospital or home to care for the sick, orphans, or widows; a radio station or program or a publishing house to spread gospel).

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- C) Some misunderstand the concept of **cooperation** in New Testament.
  - (a) It was always **concurrent** action by local churches.
  - (b) It was never **joint** action by congregations to do a common work. Funds were never pooling or sharing through one church or through an institution.

### V) Personalizing the Work of the New Testament Church:

- A) Other than collective worship, much of the activity by saints in the New Testament was by individuals, not churches. Therefore, I should be conscious of the great responsibility placed upon me to serve Christ as an individual.
- B) I must never allow myself to believe that Christ will be adequately served only by collective (congregational) action. I must teach others and help others and in every way do all I can to serve the Lord – if I don't do my part, some of God's work won't be done.
- C) Congregational as well as individual work is very important. I must be a *full* participant in all the work planned and executed by the local church. I must not leave the church's work to be done by others. "You serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED</b></p>
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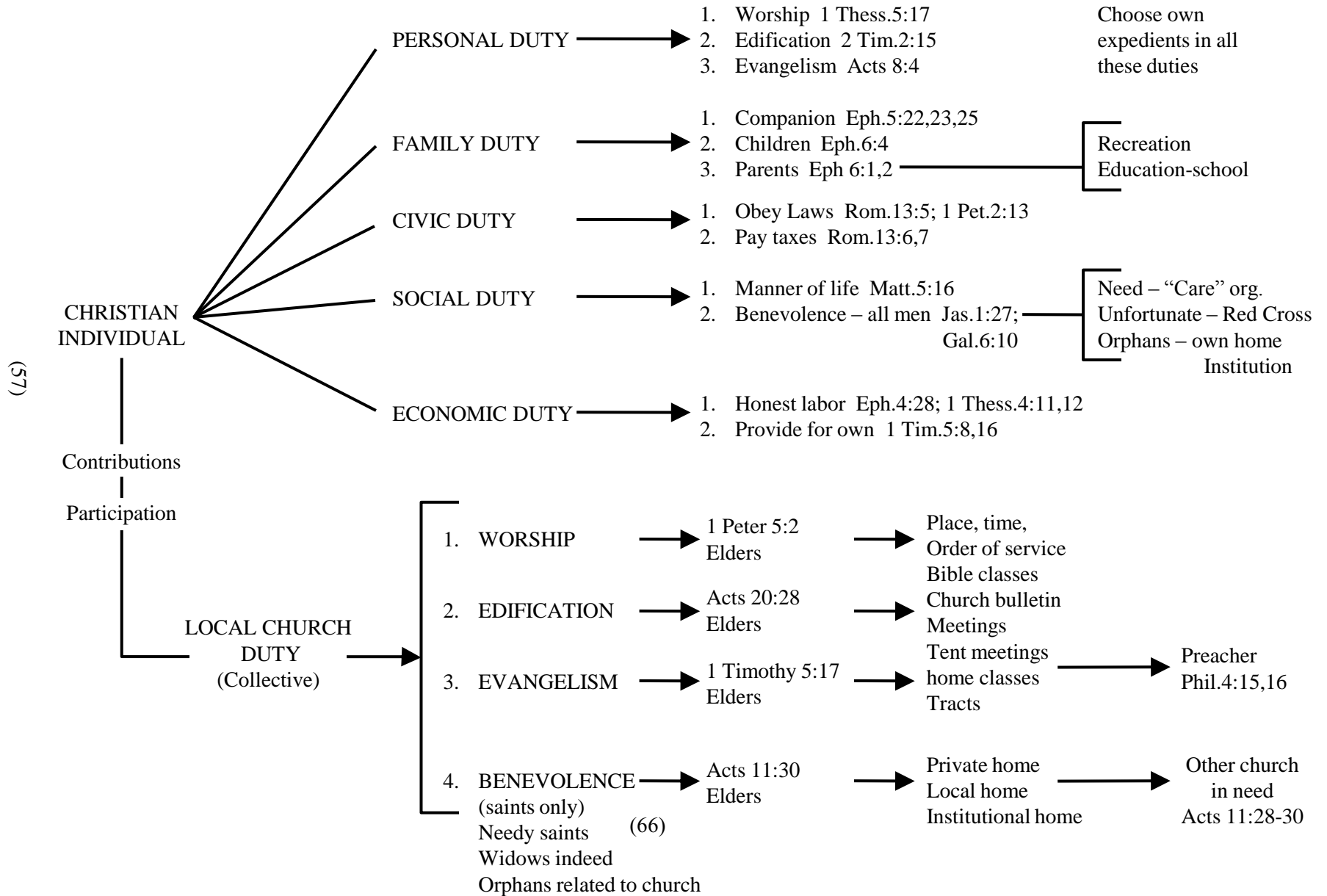
Chart #1

**THE WORK OF THE CHURCH == COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL**

<b>COLLECTIVE</b>	<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>
Service to God: Collective worship	Service to God: Individual worship
Service to others: Collective evangelism Collective benevolence	Service to others: Individual evangelism Individual benevolence
Service to Self: Collective edification	Service to Self: Individual edification

Chart #2

## THE CHRISTIAN'S WORK – INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY



**THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH—  
PERSONALIZED**

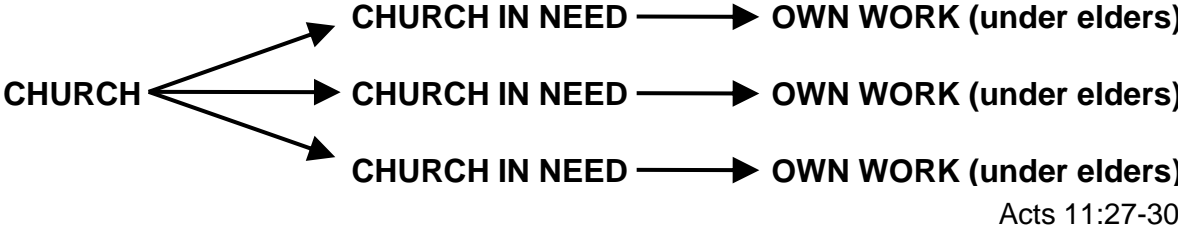
Chart #3

**HOW NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES COOPERATED**

**PREACHING THE GOSPEL**



**RELIEVING THE NEEDY (BENEVOLENCE)**



OR



## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH—*Personalized*

### Lesson Eleven— Questions

1. In what **two** fundamental capacities does a Christian discharge his responsibilities to God?
2. Study Chart # 1 that accompanies the lesson. What are the **similarities** in the work one does as an individual Christian and the work he does as part of a local church?
3. Study Chart # 2 that also accompanies this lesson. What duties does a person have as an individual that are *not* directly related to his duties in the local congregation? Who decides questions about these individual responsibilities? What are some details to be decided?
4. What are the collective duties borne by an individual member of the church over which he has *no* jurisdiction as to details of the activities? Who decides the details of those activities?
5. Can you name some things that an **individual** Christian *can* do that a **local congregation** of Christians *cannot* do? Why this difference?
6. Give some examples of ways in which local churches might seek to do their work, but which would constitute **unscriptural** activity by the churches.
7. *One basic principle* governing local church work in the New Testament prohibits activities such as those referred to in question 6 (above). What is that principle?
8. What is the difference between a church donating to another church/ institution so that the second church/institution may do some work in which both churches/institutions are interested, and a church purchasing the services of another church/institution to accomplish its own work?
9. Study Chart # 3, which illustrates the *concurrent* action of several local churches in New Testament days. What is the difference between **joint action of churches** and **concurrent action** by those same churches? Use a dictionary to clarify terms, if necessary. In which of these two kinds of action did New Testament churches *cooperate*?
10. **THINK about the “church personalized”** statements at the end of the lesson. Do **you** have a good attitude about working both individually and as part of a local church?

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

## Lesson 12: “Tending the Flock:” How Elders and Deacons Help Me to Grow

### I) Introduction: Christians are obligated to grow spiritually, both as individuals and collectively as local churches.

#### A) Three words necessitate our growth:

- 1) “Grow”–
  - (a) 1 Peter 2:1,2 and 2 Peter 3:17,18 stress individual growth.
  - (b) Ephesians 2:19-22 and 4:11-16 speak of church growth.
- 2) “Increase”–
  - (a) 2 Corinthians 9:10 urges local churches to increase their fruitfulness.
  - (b) 1 Thessalonians 3:12 focuses on individuals increasing in love to all.
- 3) “Abound”–
  - (a) 1 Thessalonians 4:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:58 tell individuals to abound.
  - (b) 2 Corinthians 8:7 points a church toward abounding in generosity.

#### B) Everyone needs help to grow.

- 1) Physically, we need a physical family: parents and an extended family.
- 2) Spiritually, we need a spiritual family: the local church.
  - (a) This family provides care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25).
  - (b) This family expresses love toward one another (1 John 4:11).
  - (c) This family prays for one another (James 5:16).
  - (d) This family exhorts and encourages one another (Hebrews 3:13;10:25).

#### C) Elders are intended to serve as “fathers” (father-figures) in the local church family to enhance the spiritual growth of all the members.

- 1) Their function is not just to decide the color of walls, times of services, etc.

### II) **FATHERS** are responsible for growth in physical families by providing the things necessary for physical growth:

#### A) **FOOD**– and whatever is involved to provide it (1 Timothy 5:8).

#### B) **EXERCISE**– activity that will develop the whole physical person. A balance among physical, mental and recreational activities is best. E.g., not all TV, no outdoor play.

#### C) **PROTECTION** from harm– growth is stunted or stopped if the child is exposed to harmful elements (e.g., smoking and alcohol; non-use of seat belts, etc.).

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**D) GUIDANCE**– into acceptable social behavior. Manners, sharing, honesty, self-control, doing chores, etc., equip children for later social conduct.

**III) ELDERS are responsible for providing opportunities for spiritual growth in the local church family by providing things necessary for such growth (Hebrews 13:17). Elders will “give account” for meeting this responsibility:**

**A) FOOD**– (Acts 20:28)

- 1) Spiritual food is essential for spiritual growth (1 Corinthians 10:3,4,6).
- 2) The word of God is our spiritual food (1 Peter 2:1-3; Acts 20:32).
- 3) Elders should feed the church a diet of solid food. Too many “sweets” (entertainment and ‘inspirational’ teachers with exotic subjects) will not nourish us and make us strong in the faith (Acts 20:32).
- 4) Regular and consistent Bible preaching, Bible classes with Bible content, gospel meetings, special needs classes, home studies, church bulletins, etc., will stimulate spiritual improvement in us.
- 5) Many do not choose to eat at the family table where nourishing food is served but prefer instead to live on “junk food” (worldly pursuits).

**B) EXERCISE**– spiritual activity that makes us stronger in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

- 1) Modern life is filled with useless or harmful activities that retard spiritual growth (Matthew 12:43-45).
- 2) Spiritual activity will promote spiritual health (1 Timothy 4:8).
  - (a) Physical bodies are temporary, but spiritual bodies are eternal.
- 3) Elders must be planners. The spiritual growth of the local church does not just happen!
  - (a) They must plan to keep the church active. As “shepherds” they lead the flock toward its destination of heaven (1 Peter 5:2).
  - (b) They must plan to keep the church focused on its goals. Our activities must contribute to accomplishing our goals. (See the seven goals of one local congregation at the end of this lesson).
  - (c) They must be persistent in planning worthwhile activities for the local church. Elders are bishops who “oversee” these activities.
  - (d) Members must be faithful to cooperate with the plans elders make for the spiritual health of the congregation (Hebrews 13:1).

**C) PROTECTION**– Hebrews 13:17 urges elders to “watch out for your souls.”

- 1) Elders must not rule through a desire for power. They are not “lords” (1 Peter 5:3), but “servants” working to save souls.
- 2) Danger lurks in many forms and places for individuals and churches (1 Peter 5:8).
  - (a) False religion can entangle us in error. Elders help convict (expose) false teachers and doctrines (Titus 1:9).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED

- (b) Moral sins will destroy us. Elders help to “cover” the sins of guilty members (James 5:19, 20).
  - (c) Indifference and neglect are “silent killers” of souls. Elders must be aware of these problems and respond in a timely and appropriate manner (Hebrews 10:25; 13:17– “watch”).
  - (d) Discouragement from sickness and other problems can sink our hopes of going to heaven. Elders can assist us in a recovery from these obstacles in our pathway (James 5:13,14).
  - (e) Discord within the church family must be quieted. Elders are logically the “wise among us” to decide any disputes that arise (1 Corinthians 6:5).
  - (f) Members should allow their elders help them in these situations!
- 3) Elders are obligated to keep the local church pure.
- (a) They must make decisions about potential members (1 Corinthians 5:6).
  - (b) They must make decisions about the discipline of those who are members of the local congregation (1 Corinthians 5:4,5).

**D) GUIDANCE**– into “acceptable” conduct based on Bible principles.

- 1) They should give us an example to follow (1 Peter 5:3). The only *effective* leadership is leadership by example:
  - (a) In daily living in the world; qualifications (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1) enable them to be role models. Elders must heed themselves first (Acts 20:28).
  - (b) In responsibility and effort. Elders have “desired” their work, and should be willing to sacrifice their time and tranquillity for their flock. They set the tone for other saints by responding to needs in the kingdom and by doing the best they can to use their talents (1 Timothy 3:1; Romans 14:12).
- 2) They should teach us to walk as we should (2 Timothy 2:2).
  - (a) They provide positive instruction and negative correction for us.
- 3) They encourage us to do our best in the church.
  - (a) Elders must be “cheer leaders” for the congregation. It is not always easy to be upbeat in the presence of others.
  - (b) Most people respond to praise better than to criticism. Some members may require both eventually.
  - (c) Encouragement from elders must be genuine, not pretended (3 John 4).

**IV) We should have deep respect for our elders “for their work’s sake”** (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

- A) Regard them as what they are – fathers in our spiritual family. Treat them so.
- B) Pray for them; they are fallible men and no men are perfect.
  - 1) If the apostles needed prayer, elders surely do! (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH— PERSONALIZED

- C) Obey them (Hebrews 13:17). Be submissive to elders in the same way that wives are to be submissive to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22).
- 1) Let them rule with “joy and not with grief.” They cannot do their best without full cooperation from the flock. The distractions of rebellion and disobedience hinder them from giving attention to the positive work of the church.

### V) DEACONS also help me to grow.

- A) They were recognized as important to the early churches (Philemon 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- B) Deacons “serve tables” in each local church (Acts 6:2).
- 1) They allow elders to serve other and more spiritual needs of the church.
  - 2) “Tables” must be “served” if members are to receive the benefits of the elders’ goal-setting and planning for the church’s spiritual growth:
    - Deacons expedite the use of the building for worship.
    - Deacons facilitate the edification of the church by tending to matters of books, chairs, teaching materials, etc.
    - Deacons assure that benevolence is administered in a timely and appropriate manner. They buy groceries, clothes, and do whatever else must be done to relieve the needs of saints in distress.
- C) Deacons are often “elders in training” (1 Timothy 3:13).
- 1) “One must be a good servant before he can become a good master.”
  - 2) Our future leadership will likely come from among our present deacons.

### VI) Elders and Deacons personalized:

- A) Do I just pray for the elders and deacons of this church and thank God for them, or do I really try to *show* my gratitude for having a scriptural organization in this congregation? Do I always do my best to support and encourage elders and deacons in their work as long as their activity does not violate Scripture?
- B) Are elders really important to my spiritual life, even when their decisions and leadership are not agreeable to my own opinions about matters that involve me and the local church? Do I only support their decisions when I agree with them?
- C) Do I ever speak words of encouragement and appreciation to the deacons of my congregation for all the things they do to make worship and work possible for all of us?
- D) Do the elders of my local church **know** that they have my respect and support? Have I ever told them so, or must they just guess about how I feel about them?

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH– PERSONALIZED**

### **ADDENDUM: GOALS FOR THE CLAY (ALABAMA) CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The purpose of the elders of this church is to:

1. Foster a deeper sense of closeness and unity among all members;
2. Encourage in all members a deeper conviction about the need to participate actively in personal evangelism;
3. Develop among all members a greater awareness of the importance of supporting evangelism at home and in other places;
4. Promote in every member a greater desire for Bible study and personal spiritual growth;
5. Seek to utilize the talents of all members in the work and worship of the congregation to the fullest extent possible;
6. Provide opportunities to all members for achieving their personal goals and for meeting their personal responsibilities within the congregation;
7. Improve or provide physical facilities and tools that will enhance the spiritual activities of the congregation.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH—*Personalized*

### Lesson Twelve— Questions

1. What three words are often used in the New Testament to stress the expectation of spiritual growth by both individual Christians and local churches?
2. Church members need a spiritual family to assist them in spiritual growth. Discuss some of the ways in which the local church provides such assistance.
3. Discuss the four things that must be furnished by a father to ensure the satisfactory physical growth of his children. Add some examples of your own of these fatherly provisions.
4. Spiritual **food** must be provided to a local church by its elders. What are some of the ways in which elders make spiritual food available to the flock?
5. Spiritual **exercise** is needed by church members for growth. Point out some of the things that elders must do to facilitate a high level of activity by the members.
6. Christians must have spiritual **protection** from danger. What are some of the dangers that they encounter and from which elders may help them to be safe?
7. **Guidance** into good spiritual conduct should also be provided to the church by its elders. In what ways is such guidance given?
8. What are the responsibilities that members of a local church owe to their elders?
9. What are some of the functions of deacons in a congregation?
10. **THINK about the “church personalized”** questions at the end of the lesson. Try to make an honest evaluation of **your** relationship with and attitude toward the elders of your congregation (if it has elders). Do you make the work of elders easier or more difficult? If you were an elder, would you be encouraged or discouraged in trying to shepherd a member such as you are?