

Discipleship Series Bible Study

Lesson 4

The Local Church...*How to Choose a Church*

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **Not forsaking the assembling** of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25)*

I. THE SYMBOLS OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

- The relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church is described through a number of symbols in the New Testament:

1. The Head and the Body

1 Corinthians 12:27 - Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

2. The Bridegroom and the Bride

Ephesians 5:23 - For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

3. The Vine and the Branches

John 15:5 - I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

4. The Shepherd and the Sheep

John 10:11 - I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

5. The High Priest and the Kingdom of Priests

1 Peter 2:9 - But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;

6. The Cornerstone and the Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4 - To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

1 Peter 2:6 - Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

II. THE LOCAL CHURCH

A. What is a Local Church?

- **A Body of saved people which serves the Lord in a specific area**
2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1–2; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1–2

B. What is the Mission of a Local Church?

1. The salvation of sinners *Acts 2:46–47*
2. The edification of the saints *1 Timothy 1:1–4; 1 Corinthians 1:4–5*
3. The glorification of God through the Lord Jesus Christ *Romans 15:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12; Romans 16:27; Philippians 4:20*

C. How is the Local Church Governed?

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1)

1. Bishops (or Elders) now called Pastors, Ministers, etc.
 - Given authority over congregation in *spiritual matters*. 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9
2. Deacons or lay-leaders
 - Lead the congregation by example and assist the pastors 1 Timothy 3:8–13

D. Why Should I be Involved in a Local Church?

- **Commandment of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:25)**
 1. Encouragement in the faith *Ephesians 3:19–21*
 2. Christian fellowship, family, and community *Acts 2:41; 1 Jn. 1:7; Hebrews 12:22–23*
 3. Exhortation to grow strong in the faith *1 Peter 2:2; 2 Thes. 1:3; 2 Peter 3:18*
 4. A place to minister *1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:11–12; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 1:17*
 5. A place to worship God *Psalms 45:11; Psalms 96:9; Matthew 4:10*

III. WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT CHURCH?

- Know where the church stands on the important issues of the faith
- Many modern churches have strayed far from biblical truth
- Cannot grow properly in church that has abandoned some principles of the faith
- Pray for wisdom before making a final choice on a church (James 1:5)
- Following fundamental beliefs are absolutely necessary for a church to be true to the biblical precepts given for the Church

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).

DOCTRINAL POSITIONS A PROPER CHURCH **MUST** SUBSCRIBE TO:

A. Bible is the inerrant, infallible, divinely inspired and preserved Word of God and is the final authority on all matters of faith or areas of life to which it speaks.

B. One God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

C. Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, became God manifest in the flesh, lived a sinless life on earth, died on the cross to make an eternally all-sufficient atonement for all sin, rose bodily from death and the grave, ascended to sit at the Father’s right hand, and will one day soon return in personal, bodily form to this Earth as King of kings to reign for 1000 years.

D. Man is born in moral depravity with a sin nature and must be justified and regenerated or born again to have eternal life.

E. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church which is the God ordained organization of the body of all true believers. Further, that the Church is called to observe the ordinances of Christian baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Supper for believers.

F. Final judgment by God is assured for all men resulting in the everlasting blessedness of the redeemed in heaven and the everlasting doom of the unregenerate in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels.

IV. WHAT ARE SOME OTHER CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A LOCAL CHURCH?

A. Actively involved in ministry to the local community

Luke 10:27; Galatians 5:13–14; Romans 15:1–3

B. Deeply involved in missions*Acts 13:1–3; Matthew 28:19–20***C. Regularly attempts to win others to Christ***Acts 2:47***D. Believes and teaches the Bible as the Word of God and the infallible guide for life***Acts 17:10–12; 1 Timothy 3:15–16; 2 Timothy 2:15***V. WHAT IS MY OBLIGATION TO MY CHURCH?**

- Your obligations to your church will change over time
- You must take time to truly understand what the church stands for
- You must also allow time to “prove” yourself to your church

A. Obligation to Learn and Grow as a Christian

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5–6).

1. Learn by listening - Attend as many services as possible to enhance your development as a Christian *Matthew 7:24; Romans 10:17*
2. Learn by giving - Tithes and offerings should go to your local church *Lk. 6:38; 1 Cor. 16:1–2*

B. Obligation to Participate in Ministry

1. As you begin to mature as a Christian, you should look for ministry opportunities
2. Ask the Lord to guide you into the right ministry *Matthew 4:19; James 1:22–25*

C. Obligation to Lead

- As you mature as a Christian, you should be willing to accept responsibility in the church’s ministries

VI. SOME IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**A. You will be in spiritual subjection to the pastor and his staff**

- You must consider whether these are the kind of men you can submit to *Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1–2; 5–6*

B. Are women given positions of authority over men?

- Women are not to be pastors or in positions of leadership over men *1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:2–3; 14:34–35*

C. Can you fit with the congregation comfortably?*1 Corinthians 1:10; 11:17–22; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 2:1–2***D. Is doctrine correct relating to “gifts of the Spirit” or “signs and wonders”***1 Corinthians 14:27–28; Mark 3:28–29**1 Corinthians*