

The Church

This lesson will demonstrate God's plan for community through the local church.

Complete the following discipleship lesson using a pen and a Bible. Look up the verses below in Scripture and fill in the blanks when necessary.

In the very beginning of the Bible, we learn that everything God created was good, except for one thing: That man was 'alone'. This Scripture, along with many others, shows us that we are designed to live in community.

Genesis 2:18

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone..."

The Church is the Family of God

Community is part of God's plan. When you accepted Christ, you joined the community that Jesus created called "the church."

Ephesians 2:19

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his

Christians are part of the "household," or family of God. The Bible calls God our Father and us His sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18). We are brothers and sisters in Christ (Matthew 12:49-50, 1 Timothy 5:1). God's people are a family.

When you accepted Christ, you became part of His family. You are not alone. God wants to bring people into your life to walk with you in your journey of faith. He "sets the lonely in families" (Psalm 68:6).

Just as no family is perfect, no church is perfect. The church is designed by God to be a place of love and acceptance where people can experience authentic relationships and genuine transformation.

Discussion: What does it mean to you to be part of God's family? Where do you need encouragement and support as a member of the "household of God?"

The Church is the Body of Christ

God's people are also described in the Bible as the "Body of Christ." As members of Christ's "body" it is clear that the church is called to represent Jesus to the world.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the _____ of Christ, and each one of you is part of it.

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Just as bodies are interconnected, so we as the church are interconnected. Every part of Christ's Body is important, valuable, and honorable. Churches are called to be places of diversity where people of many backgrounds and with different types of gifts can gather to unify under Jesus Christ (Revelation 7:9, 1 Corinthians 12:12).

Discussion: How could you be more connected to the body of Christ? Why do you think God created a diverse church rather than a more uniform group?

The Church Gathering

Biblically, we see the church gathering three ways throughout the Bible for the purposes of fellowship and worship:

1. Large Group Worship
2. Small Group Fellowship
3. Individual Discipleship

Large Group Worship

Throughout the Old and New Testament, the people of God set aside a day of the week as a "Sabbath" to cease from work and to gather together for the purposes of worship and reading the Scriptures.

Exodus 20:8

Remember the _____ (sabbath) _____ day and keep it _____ (holy) _____.

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus had the custom of visiting the temple on the Sabbath to worship (Luke 4:16). When Jesus established the Church (Matthew 16:18), His disciples continued the practice of gathering the believers to worship and read the Scriptures weekly (Revelation 1:10, Acts 20:7, 1 Timothy 4:13).

Today, Christians continue in the practice of gathering together as the people of God to worship corporately each week.

Small Group Fellowship

The Church does not just gather in large groups but also in small groups in homes throughout the city.

Acts 20:20

You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you _____ and from _____ to _____.

Small Groups are the best setting for sharing one's needs, the development of spiritual gifts, and building friendship between believers. The following verses describe how the early church met from house to house.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the

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temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Questions for Discussion: How does the above passage from Acts 2:42-47 inspire you? What would attract you to this type of community?

Individual Discipleship

Jesus's primary method of ministry was intentional investment in a few close friends for their spiritual growth and development. Just as Jesus made disciples that transformed the world around them, He calls us to do the same.

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Discipleship is investing in others in order to help them grow in their relationship with God. Discipleship consists of 'looking up' (prayer and worship), 'looking in' (accountability and personal transformation), and 'looking out' (evangelism). Sharing these lessons are a great way to begin discipling someone. Discipleship can happen one-on-one or in groups of two or three.

Your Journey into Community

Where are you on your journey into community? Check a box below and commit to your next step:

Discipling Others.

I need to begin multiplying my life to influence and serve others.

Sunday Worship.

I need to begin worshipping each Sunday with a local church for encouragement and

Small Groups.

I need to connect to a small group where I can grow in fellowship and discover my

Being Discipled.

I need to someone to show me the practicals of walking with Jesus.