

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 8: THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity and how to live out our faith within our Church community.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 8: THE CHURCH

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

What is a church? And what does it mean to be a part of one? This lesson explores the significance of meeting together with other followers of Jesus.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Are there beautiful church buildings in your city? Perhaps you have seen a famous cathedral in pictures. We sometimes refer to a building where believers meet as 'a church', but the Church is really the people - not the walls and roof! You might attend a church of thousands, or perhaps meet with just a few other believers in someone's home. Both of these are considered church. There are two senses in which the word 'church' can be used. First, the Church refers to the universal body of all believers worldwide. It also refers to a local gathering of believers, regardless of how big or small the group is. This lesson will explain in more detail what the church is all about.

GETTING STARTED

1. What is the responsibility of the Church? What is it in the world for?

2. What is your local church like? How do the members of your church love and serve one another?



STUDY

❖ **WHAT IS THE CHURCH?** You may look in the dictionary and find that the word 'church' is defined as a building for public worship. However, the word actually came from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is defined as a gathering of people who have come together for a particular purpose.

- In the Bible, the Greek word *ekklesia* is used 115 times and although most translations use the word 'church' in its place, it would be more accurate to use the word 'assembly'.
- In the Bible, *ekklesia* denotes an assembly of believers called together into the family of God.
- **One body, many parts:** The church is described in the Bible as 'the body of Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:27). It has many 'members' or parts that are interconnected to one another, just as our physical body is made up of many parts. Every believer is a member of the Church – the body of Christ. The essential meaning of 'church' is that we are all one. That unity in Christ should *not* be hindered by:
 - Denominations
 - Discrimination among believers
 - Distinction based on country or region
- **The Location of the Church:** The Church is not a building or room where believers gather. It is the assembly of believers – anywhere. Read what the Bible says about where we should worship God. Does God need an ornate building for us to worship Him in?

Read John 4:19-24, Acts 17:24, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

- **The Significance of the Church:** The above verses tell us that the Church is to be a unified group of people in whom God dwells, but for what purpose do they gather? What is the significance of meeting together? Look carefully at the verses below and write down what you learn about church.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13	
Ephesians 4:1-4	
Ephesians 1:21-23	



Ephesians 5:25-27	
Matthew 18:20	

❖ **HOW THE CHURCH BEGAN:** In the Old Testament we read that God’s people were set apart for Himself. They were called the Nation of Israel (Jews) and they were a special people to God. After Christ came, God included the Gentiles as part of His family. (Gentiles are those not born Jews.) The Church now includes all believers from every nation.

- Read Acts 2 for a picture of what the early church looked like. What do you learn?

Peter spoke to many who had gathered from various nations and who had travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended upon the 120 believers who had gathered and were waiting as Jesus had commanded. Filled with the Holy Spirit they began to speak in tongues. The people were shocked to hear about the works of God, each in his own language.

- Before Pentecost, these people may have been devout Jews, or from other religions. But when they chose to put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, they became the church.

❖ **THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH:** The church in the beginning operated like a family that cared for one another rather than a business or school.

- Read Acts 2:42-47 and list some of the things that the early Church did for one another:

God did not design us to be alone and to accomplish the mission He gave us with our own two hands. Christians need each other - helping, teaching, and providing for needs. Together we can serve our community better.

❖ **THE CHURCH TODAY:** Meeting together is still as necessary and relevant as it was in the early days of Christianity. Each of the above activities can still be done in the Church today!



Colossians 3:16	
Hebrews 10:25	
1 Thessalonians 5:11	
Matthew 16:18	
James 5:14	
Ephesians 5:19	

The beauty of the Church was that everyone who believed in Jesus gathered as a family despite differences of status and backgrounds. The Church’s mission was to share Christ’s Gospel and make new disciples.

The Church is not a building or location, but it is a group of people with one common belief and one common mission. The community of believers working together accomplishes its mission, and benefits each member as well as the community.

As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, we are able to live alongside and love one another. The Spirit helps us to accomplish the purpose of the Church in the world. As part of the church, we have unique opportunities to care for one another, support one another as we battle sin, and become the people God wants us to be.

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ The Church is an assembly of people who follow Jesus. It is not the building where His followers meet.
- ❖ The significance of the Church is to be unified, to love one another, support and provide for one another, and to serve those around them.
- ❖ The Church began after Jesus ascended to Heaven from earth, and His followers gathered together for mutual support and to teach others.
- ❖ The early Church devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching, prayer, fellowship, and serving their community.
- ❖ The Church today must still meet together for these purposes in order to make disciples, and then help them grow in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can you work together with other believers to make a difference in the community around you? Why is it important that the church serve its members as well as those outside the church?

2. In what ways does the present Church differ from the early Church? What would need to change in your church to make it more like the early Church?