

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

LESSON 2: MEETING TOGETHER: WHY AND HOW

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled The Church and Worship. This series of lessons examines what the Bible teaches concerning the purpose of the Church and how it came into being. Church leaders need to be grounded in their understanding of why Jesus Christ established the Church to function as His Body (His ambassadors in the world) after He ascended into heaven. The Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, has been instructed to spread the Gospel around the world and to serve in its local community. It also meets regularly to worship God, be instructed in His Word, and to support and encourage one another.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is emerging leaders who are preparing for specific ministry within the Church.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

LESSON 2: MEETING TOGETHER: WHY AND HOW

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the identity of the Church, the Biblical purposes of meeting together, and why we should belong to a local church.

LEADER'S NOTE

Consumerism and persecution are two barriers hindering people from belonging to a church. Consumerism, the culture of getting what we want in the form we want and whenever we want it, is so at odds with belonging to a church that many people find church experiences difficult; they could even demand that church conform to their needs. They may have been hurt by people in the past, or feel afraid of being accountable to other believers; as a result, they attempt to live their Christian life alone rather than in community. Secondly, in some areas persecution has made it dangerous for believers to meet with one another in large groups, and churches are reduced to only a few believers meeting under cover. In this case it is important to explore ways of connecting with the universal Church to which all Christians belong. Your participants may or may not face these barriers, but they still need to understand the blessings of being a part of God's Church. Help them appreciate the purposes of the Church, so they can help make it stronger as well as serve and worship God through it.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Other than Church, what are some structures or institutions that give people identity and a sense of belonging?
- ❖ What are some commands of Jesus that require us to relate to people (*e.g. love one another*)?
- ❖ What are some reasons people might be reluctant to meet together with other believers?
- ❖ What are some of the benefits of meeting together with other believers?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **Belonging to and Being the Church:** If we live in a place where there are many Christian churches, we might make a statement like “I belong to this church”, or “I attend that church”. The Bible does not use the word ‘church’ like that – it is never referred to as a building. Instead, the Church is people who are born again Christians. We don’t attend church – we are the Church!
 - **You Are a Member of the Universal Church:** When we become Christians (that is, when we believe, repent and receive salvation), we join the worldwide, invisible, living Church. There is no such thing as a Christian who is not part of the Church! At Pentecost, all who believed and were baptized were automatically added to the Church (Acts 2:41).
 - **You Belong to your Local Church:** Being part of a local assembly of believers is exactly where God wants you to be and to serve. You also belong to the Church that consists of the combined church assemblies in your city or region. Look at how believers were addressed in the New Testament epistles:
 - o 1 Corinthians 1:1-3
 - o 2 Corinthians 1:1-2
 - o Galatians 1:1-5
 - o Romans 1:7
 - o Philippians 1:1-2
 - o Revelations 1:4, 11
- ❖ **The Blessings of the Church:** God’s intention for His people was that they would come together and be unified. He did not want them to isolate themselves and try to follow Him on their own! In fact, most of His commands involve how we relate to others. It is impossible to obey these if we separate ourselves from others!
 - **We Were Designed for Community:** God has always designed people to need one another. He gave Eve to Adam, as He saw it was not good for Adam to be alone. He placed us in families to care for each other, He made His people a nation, He initiated the Church which gave identity to His followers, and commanded that they care for one another. God created us to need each other, as together we rely on Him.
 - o Genesis 2:18
 - o Romans 12:3-13
 - o Ephesians 4:2-6
 - o 1 Corinthians 12:25-27
 - **We are Stronger Together:** A lone sheep is a target to predators, and a solitary Christian is vulnerable to deception (Satan's attack which can lead to sin). When we remain in community with others, we are held accountable. This helps to protect us from spiritual errors, defend us when under spiritual attack, and enriches our faith. We are stronger together than we are alone.



- o [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#)
- o [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#)
- o [Proverbs 27:17](#)

➤ **Our Work Prospers:** We are the light of the world, but our light is stronger when we shine together. The work God has given us is more fulfilling when we work together. Some tasks can be overwhelming for one because they are meant for a community to accomplish. We are only fruitful as we stay close to God and to one another.

- o [Matthew 5:14-16](#)
- o [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#)
- o [1 Peter 2:9-10](#)
- o [John 15:1-12](#)

❖ **The Purposes of the Church:** God refers to His people, the Church, as the called ones, the assembly of the redeemed, those who follow Jesus Christ. The reason churches exist is to carry out God’s plans for individual people and for all of us as a worldwide faith community. Each of the following purposes cannot be carried out alone.

TASK:

Assign one of the following purposes of the Church to individual participants or small groups of them. Have them look up the Scriptures and then present to the class the scriptural foundation for that purpose, and how it requires a community to carry it out successfully.

Purposes of the Church in Community		
Purpose	Description	Verses
<i>Proclaim the Truth</i>	Preaching, teaching and studying the Word of God, proclaiming the Gospel to all people	<i>Mark 16:15 1 Timothy 4:13 Romans 10:14 2 Timothy 3:16-17</i>
<i>Worship God Together</i>	<i>Lifting up the name of the Lord God together with other believers, and living a life of sacrifice and worship including partaking of sacraments</i>	<i>Psalms 95:6 John 4:23 Matthew 18:20 1 Peter 2:5-9</i>
<i>Grow in Holiness</i>	<i>Helping one another to become the holy people God desires us to become, encouraging, admonishing, training and leading one another</i>	<i>1 Peter 1:14-16 1 John 3:6-10 Ephesians 4:12-13 1 Corinthians 11:1</i>
<i>Serve in Love</i>	<i>Serving and loving one another and the world around us, being compassionate, full of grace and mercy</i>	<i>1 Peter 4:10 1 Corinthians 16:14 James 1:22 John 13:34-45</i>

TEACH:

❖ **Why We Should Belong to a Local Church:** While all believers belong to the worldwide Church, whenever possible we should attach ourselves to a specific local group of believers – a local



church. We need to be committed to such a group that will hold us accountable as we give our time and talents (spiritual gifts) to strengthen one another.

- **Shepherds Must Know their Flock:** Leaders and Pastors are told to be 'shepherds who care for their flock'. In order to carry out this role of caring, protecting, and guiding, the shepherds must know their sheep. Pastors or elders are not called to shepherd everyone, but rather those who have become members of their local church (1 Peter 5:1-5, Acts 20:28).
 - Even though we can come to Jesus without the mediation of another person and do not require a priest to intercede for us, God planned for Christians to have 'shepherds' (those who guide and protect). - **Leaders Keep Us Accountable:** There are many warnings in the Bible about Church members who sin and continue to sin. They should be chastised, and even removed from the assembly of believers if they do not repent. This is necessary to keep the Church holy, and free of sin.
 - Church elders and leaders are responsible to keep members accountable by showing people their errors and sins. They are not responsible for those outside the church, only those who have entered into membership (1 Corinthians 5:11-13, James 5:19-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Galatians 6:1, 2 John 1:9-10, Romans 16:17-18). - **Submit to our Leaders:** We are commanded to submit to our leaders in the Lord – that is, if our leaders are living in submission and obedience to God. They have been appointed by God for this purpose. But who are our leaders? They are those whose leadership is recognized by the local church body. They may be pastors, elders or teachers (deacons, bishops or other official 'titles' are given, depending on varying church governance structures).
 - These leaders must fit the Biblical qualifications and be recognized by the Church. Once appointed, members should submit to them and follow them. Having spiritual leaders enriches our lives and is one great benefit of being involved in a local Church (Hebrews 13:17, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:5, Acts 14:21-23, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9). - **We are Designed to be Part of the Body:** As Christians we are part of the 'body' of Christ, existing for the good of the whole. It is nonsense to imagine a hand being able to accomplish its purpose apart from the arm, or the legs apart from the body. We are only a part of the whole and need the remainder of the body to properly function (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
- ❖ **Belonging to the Universal Church:** We must always remember that we are members of the universal Church – the Church of all believers around the world. While we may not agree about certain practices or points of doctrine, we should love, uphold and pray for believers everywhere.



- **When There is No Local Church:** In some places where there is no established local church due to political oppression, isolation, or other factors, individual believers may feel alone. They must do what they can to remain connected to the worldwide Church. Some ideas include:
 - Praying for the worldwide Church.
 - Listening to Christian radio broadcasts, podcasts, online sermons.
 - Writing letters to Christian organizations to share their story and ask for prayer.
 - Studying God's Word alone until other believers are found.
 - Communicating with other believers via the Internet.
 - Praying diligently that others would come to Jesus, and that other believers would be found in their area.
 - Sharing the Gospel with anyone they can.

- **When you Yourself are Isolated:** Sometimes illness or other situations prevent an individual from attending church gatherings. Ideally, people from the Church could come to visit them in order to serve communion, encourage and pray with that person. The activities listed above may keep a person connected to the Church.

- **Where Two or Three are Gathered:** Jesus promised that where only two or three are gathered in His name, He is there with them (Matthew 18:20). The Church can be even a few people gathered to read God's Word, or to pray and worship. As you spread the good news of forgiveness in Jesus Christ, you may see the Church grow from a small group meeting in a home to a large number needing larger facilities.

- ❖ **Conclusion:** There are many reasons why Christians must gather together. We should be committed to Christ by upholding and supporting the work of our local church. While it is vital to be connected to a local body of believers, we are also a part of the worldwide Church, and must remember what we have in common with believers around the world.

A homework assignment looking into what the Bible says we should do and be for one another follows this lesson. You could assign it to individuals, or have them work in groups outside of class and complete it before your next gathering.



DISCUSSION

- ❖ Are people you know reluctant to place themselves under Church authority and commit themselves to a local church? What would you tell them about the necessity of meeting with others?
- ❖ Why do you think God designed us to need one another and work together to complete the mission of the Church?
- ❖ How does your local church carry out the mission of the worldwide Church? Do you see all of the purposes of the Church happening when you meet together? If not, how could you help your church to do more?
- ❖ Describe the membership process for your church? Are you a member of it?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Praise God for His holy Church, and believers who meet together in the name of Jesus around the world. Pray that the Church would be one, just as Jesus and the Father are one. Pray that they will be unified in spirit and truth, and that they would remain faithful to God's Word, the proclamation of the Gospel and the fellowship of believers. Pray for your local churches that they would be strengthened by God's Spirit in order to complete the mission they have been given.

HOMEWORK

The Bible has many commands about how we should act towards 'one another'. These 'one another' statements also reinforce who the Church is, and how believers should behave towards one another. You'll notice these statements are not about sitting quietly beside one another in a seat, listening to a sermon! They are active, and require fellowship and the use of time and energy. For each verse, write down what we are supposed to do, or be, for one another. They do not all refer to people within the Church only – but if we are to treat all people this way, how much more should we love our fellow believers?



How We Treat One Another		
1	<i>Romans 12:10</i>	
2	<i>Romans 12:16</i>	
3	<i>Romans 14:1</i>	
4	<i>Romans 14:5</i>	
5	<i>Romans 15:7</i>	
6	<i>Romans 15:14</i>	
7	<i>Galatians 5:13</i>	
8	<i>Galatians 6:2</i>	
9	<i>Ephesians 4:2</i>	
10	<i>Ephesians 4:32</i>	
11	<i>Ephesians 4:25</i>	
12	<i>Ephesians 5:21</i>	
13	<i>Colossians 3:12</i>	
14	<i>Colossians 3:13</i>	
15	<i>Colossians 3:16</i>	
16	<i>1 Thessalonians 4:18</i>	
17	<i>1 Thessalonians 5:11</i>	
18	<i>1 Thessalonians 5:13</i>	
19	<i>1 Thessalonians 5:15</i>	
20	<i>Hebrews 3:13</i>	
21	<i>Hebrews 10:24</i>	
22	<i>Hebrews 10:25</i>	
23	<i>James 5:16</i>	
24	<i>James 5:16</i>	
25	<i>1 Peter 4:8</i>	
26	<i>1 Peter 4:9</i>	
27	<i>1 Peter 4:10</i>	
28	<i>1 Peter 5:5</i>	
29	<i>1 John 3:16-17</i>	
30	<i>1 John 3:18</i>	