

## 8

### THE LOCAL CHURCH

*(This lesson is designed to teach us the purpose of the local church and the believer's relationship and function in the local church).*

#### The Local Church—Its Natural and Spiritual Dimensions

Matthew 16:15-19

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."



The meaning of the word 'Church':

Church (Greek) "*ekklesia*" *ek* = out of, *klesis* = a calling, to call

In its literal sense, the word 'Church' simply refers to a gathering together of those who have been called out, for a definite purpose.

#### Important truths about the Church—the Body of Christ

- The Church is Christ's Body

Colossians 1:18,24

**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

Ephesians 1:22,23

**And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

- The Church is eternal, because Christ, the Head is eternal.
- The Church is the instrument to execute Christ's purposes.

The Body executes what the Head commands—both here in this present age and in the millennium.

Daniel 7:18

**But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.**

- Every believer is a member of Christ's Body—the eternal Church.

I Corinthians 12:27

**Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**

**Important truths concerning the local church**

1 Timothy 3:14,15

**These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**

- The local church is called “the household of God.”  
The local church in a certain place is the family of God in that place.  
Family is about relationships.  
There is mutual love, care, concern and support.  
People are in different stages of growth and maturity.
- The local church is the physical expression of the spiritual Body of Christ in a certain geographical area.
- The local church in a certain area is Christ’s instrument in that area to execute Christ’s purposes.

*We're Sisters in Christ*



**Why should you be a committed part of a local church?**

It is within a local church that you and I live out in daily life our membership in Christ’s spiritual Body—the Church.

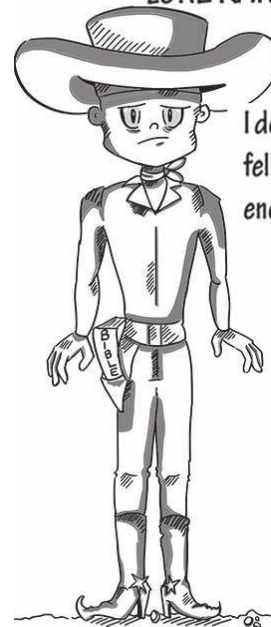
Romans 12:4-8

**For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence;**

**he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

- You are able to serve others and receive through others.
- There is strength, support and encouragement.
- We can do a whole lot more together.
- There are things that happen in a ‘cluster’ which an individual grape cannot produce.

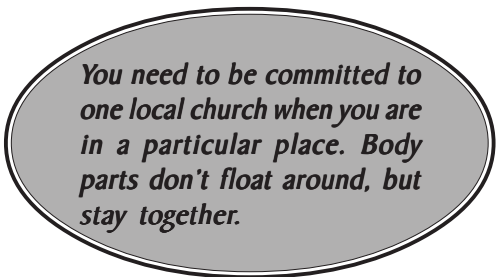
**LONE RANGER CHRISTIAN**



*I don't need Christian fellowship, God is enough for me.*

Isaiah 65:8

**Thus says the Lord: “As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it, ‘so will I do for My servants’ sake, that I may not destroy them all.**



## The Mission of the Local Church

Making disciples involves training and mentoring new believers.

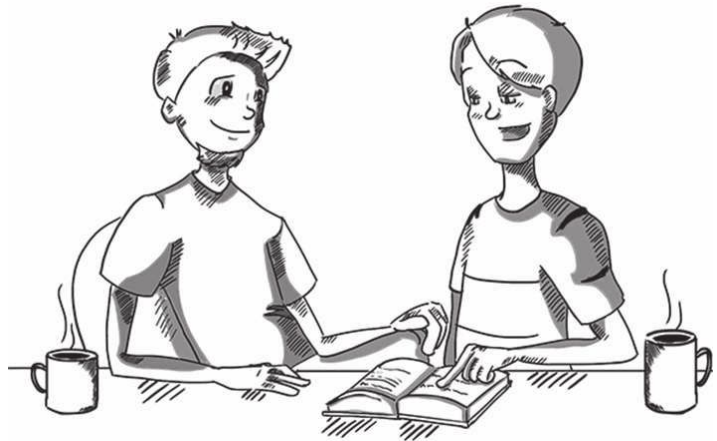
The mission of the local church can be categorized into five main areas:

### Evangelism and Missions:

Reaching people with the Gospel and fulfilling the Great Commission.

### Discipleship:

A disciple is one who has been trained to be Christ-like in character, conduct and service.



### Prayer and Worship

- Through prayer and worship we change the spiritual atmosphere over our city.
- Prayer and worship creates an atmosphere for spiritual ministry as we gather together.
- God speaks in the midst of a worshipping and praying congregation.

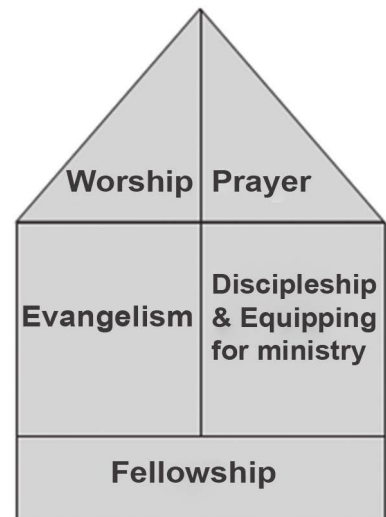
### Fellowship

Living as the family (household) of God.

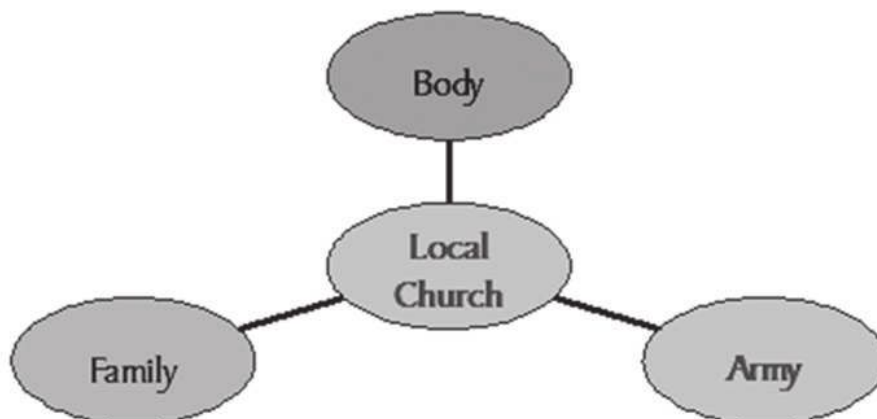
### Ministry

Equipping of the saints for ministry

- Every member is fully equipped, activated and released to fulfill their calling.
- Believers discover and exercise their gifts for the edifying of the Body.
- Impacting the world around us.
- Sending ministers out and reproducing itself.



A well-formed local church will have all these five dimensions in proper balance and emphasis.



## Local Church

### The Local Church—A Body

The church is a “body” analogous to the human body. The human body has various systems—a total of nine. Paying attention to all the systems is essential to health, strength and productivity. We can draw an interesting parallel:

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

**For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**

Ephesians 4:16

**From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

- Circulatory System: ensuring every individual receives care and nurture.
- Skeletal System: ensuring structure, shape and support by having proper leadership, organization and administration in place.
- Muscular System: ensuring strength, movement and mobility by ensuring that every believer becomes a minister.
- Digestive System: ensuring a strong, anointed and timely ministry of the Word so that people receive, digest and absorb solid spiritual nourishment.
- Respiratory System: ensuring a continuous, fresh, breath, inspiration and work of the Spirit.
- Nervous System: ensuring keen sensitivity and perception to what is happening in the local body and providing a timely response.
- Endocrine System: ensuring spiritual activities as prayer, faith, love, servanthood and maintaining core values and culture of the church, such as creativity, being contemporary, empowering people, spiritual mentoring and so on. Although present in small measures, these act as the “chemical control system” stimulating growth, health and balance.
- Excretory System: ensuring that the church effectively eliminates unhealthy things—individually and corporately.
- Reproductive System: ensuring that individuals and the local church are reproducing—winning souls, discipling and planting churches.

## The Local Church—A Family

The house of God—a spiritual house

Galatians 6:10

**Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

Ephesians 2:19-22

**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

1 Timothy 3:15

**But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**

(“house” in Greek *“oikos”* = a dwelling, by implication a family)

Applies to both the corporate Body of Christ and to the local church.

Jesus—the Master of the house

Matthew 10:25

**It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub] how much more will they call those of his household!**

“Master of the house” in Greek *“oikodespotes”* = the head of a family: - goodman (of the house), householder.

We are to live as the family of God—caring, supporting and encouraging one another.

## The Local Church—An Army

Matthew 16:15-19

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2 Timothy 2:3,4

**You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.**

There is rank, order and discipline in the army.

God has set leaders amongst us—to lead us forward.





**Military Mindset**

We need to be on “high alert” since we are in battle. There is no de-militarized zone as long as we are here in this life.

**Military Lifestyle**

We live as soldiers—while we discharge our earthly duties, we must keep ourselves from being entangled with the affairs of this life.

**Military Discipline**

We keep our entire being—spirit, soul and body under discipline.

*Understand the importance of every 'member' in the Body.*

***YOU ARE IMPORTANT**—whatever your place and function may be.*

*Understand that in a 'Family' there will be individuals in different stages of growth and development (fathers, mothers, young adults, teens, children).*

*So we must be understanding of one another in the local church, as we all keep growing and maturing in the Lord.*

**KEY MEMORY VERSES**

Romans 12:4-8

**For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

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## APPLICATION

1. Briefly outline the mission of the local church.

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2. Am I a committed member in a local church, if not what is keeping me from being a functioning member of a local body?

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3. What is my place and function in the local church, at present? How can I be a meaningful 'member' of the local church body—fulfilling Christ's purpose for me?

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*(If you are not a member of a local church, we encourage you to please consider becoming a committed member. Signing the membership form is an expression of your commitment. Please pick up the membership information packet from the Information Desk and review the booklet).*