

WATER Lesson 1: The Church



Q: Look at Act 2:42-45. The Bible conveys the message that we need each other. What do we need each other for? Why is this important? Can't we have a healthy relationship with God without having to be connected to a church? Perhaps we can have a healthy relationship with God, but unless we are engaged with other people then we will never be able to accomplish His will. God loves people and He desires that they would come to Him for life. He uses us to reach into their lives. Being involved in a church is how we stay strong in our faith and focused on our mission.

Q: If the Church is made up of the people, then why do we even need a building? We don't need a building, but a building allows us to come together as one corporate body of believers to worship and celebrate and encourage. A building can also be a tool to outreach into the world by inviting them into the presence of God or to minister to anyone with a need. Many churches were constructed as a visible testimony of the greatness of God, adorning splendor and majesty. A building is a visible expression of the presence of the church and has been adopted by our culture as a place where we can go to meet with God. Yes, God is omnipresent, but a church reminds people of the presence of God. It may be something physical that they can see that reminds them of something that they are spiritually blind to in their heart.

Q: In what ways has the Church today preserved the practices of the Early Church? In what ways has the Church today changed how "church" is done? We still practice communion (the breaking of bread). We still value prayer and fellowship. We still seek to support one another in times of need. We still desire to grow and spread the good news. Even so, much has changed with the culture and times. The message and the expression of love never change, but what it looks like will adjust to the needs of the day. We still sing songs of worship, but now the accompanying instruments are different. We still gather, but we don't have any temple or synagogues for meeting. We still recognize church leadership, but now we have a full-time paid staff. Much has changed, but the core values will always remain the same. If that changes, then we lose our influence for God's kingdom purposes.

Q: How did you go about finding a church to attend? What should we look for in a good, healthy church? What are some of the bad reasons people might pick a church? To find a church, you might look online or talk to friends. Some people just visit churches to explore the opportunities. A good church will be biblically sound, gospel focused, and genuine in their love. No church is perfect, and a good church home is a blessing. Bad reasons to choose a church might be because you like the building, the location, the coffee, the music, the emotional experience, etc. Though these may be added blessings, the message is the core value of the church and it should ring loud and clear.

Q: If the Church is the kingdom of God upon the earth, what does that indicate about the authority of believers? How should this affect the way that we interact with the world? Jesus has delegated authority to His disciples to go and share the good news with others by sharing His love and His teaching to those in whom the Spirit is at work. We have authority in prayer, authority to teach and preach, and to carry His love to the world. We should not be ashamed of the Gospel, but grateful that He has reached into our lives with the truth. We are to be bold and confident, diligent and faithful, and ready to share our testimony of God's goodness with others.

Q: How would you describe your family growing up? Was it a good environment? How has this affected the way that you view how your church family should interact? The answer to this question may be an indicator as to how much a person will be able to trust the people around them. If their family was dysfunctional and unloving, they may have a harder time trusting others. Regardless, your group will be able to overcome this hurdle with unconditional love and time, coupled with authentic and transparent friendship. Allow people to take the time they need to open up, but keep encouraging them to take steps of faith to grow in their spiritual journey!

Q: Consider Hebrews 2:10-11. In what ways have you observed our church acting like a family to one another? Sometimes we talk about one another as "brothers and sisters". We genuinely care for our church family and take care of one another's needs. We are loving and gracious and forgiving. We show compassion. We celebrate victories. We grieve together in loss. We share with one another what is going on in our lives. We hold one another accountable because we want the best for one another. We check in on one another when we haven't seen one another in a while...

Class Assignment: Start thinking about how you can connect to an individual or a couple of people who will encourage you to grow in your faith. Pray that God would lead you to a person or people who will be willing to tell you what you need to hear. The intent of this assignment is to either identify a permanent small group or an accountability group that goes beyond surface level conversation. Some small groups do that, but please don't assume that because you get together every week that you have deep and meaningful relationships. Do you know everyone's name in your group? Do you know how many kids they have? If not, then perhaps you need to be more intentional about building relationships.

Memory Verse:

1 Corinthians 12:25-27 - *"there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."*

PRAYER REQUESTS: