

Church Life



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Syllabus for CHUR201 - Church Life Certificate Level

Course objectives

To equip believers in newly responsive areas with a better understanding of the Church and their place in it, in order to make them more effective leaders and followers for the growth of the God's kingdom.

Course description

This course reviews the centrality of the Church Universal in God's plans for reaching and transforming the world. It not only examines the theological place and importance of the Church, both local and universal, but also covers how it is supposed to function and grow as a closely knit organism would. Among the subjects studied are God's covenants with mankind, both old and new, interaction among the believers, church leadership, Christ's headship of the Church, the believer's personal commitment to the group and its activities, the sacraments of communion and baptism, the place of spiritual gifting, maintaining unity, and the Church's future as the bride of Christ.

Learning Outcomes

Content: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

- To comprehend the glory, diversity and universality of the Church.
- To recognize the church as central to God's plan of salvation, and to understand the church in the New Testament as an extension of God's people in the Old Testament.
- To describe Christ's headship of the church and how the church is his body in the world.
- To recognize the place of the local church within the universal church and to understand some essential elements of church life.
- To understand the Biblical foundation and meaning of the two Protestant sacraments.

Character: By the end of the course, the student will:

- Embrace the reality of God's love and care for the church and its centrality to his plans.
- Show a desire to be part of a local church, contributing humbly to its growth and unity.
- Show understanding of Christian community: keeping the bond of unity, humility, forgiveness and forbearance, giving and receiving rebuke in love, with mutual commitment and encouragement.

Competency: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

- To participate in the sacraments in keeping with the theology & practice of one's church.
- Visualize the Church as the body of Christ, a living and active organism, whose health and growth depends on commitment to and practice of the two greatest commandments, found in Matthew 22:37-39.

Course requirements

Certificate Level

- To demonstrate knowledge of course material through
 - answering questions at the end of each section
 - completion of the final exam
- To attend 18 of 20 instructor-led sessions (27 contact hours minimum)
- To participate in discussions by listening, contributing as appropriate, and responding when asked a specific question

- To serve as apprentice to a pastor or other church leader for a period of three months starting sometime after the beginning of this course.
- To write an evaluation (from 800-1500 words) of the learning experience as apprentice, emphasizing the points where the experience illustrated or contradicted the teachings of this course.

Evaluation methodology and scale

- Student performance and mastery will be assessed according to the following scale:
 - 50% on completion of reading, of questions, and of assignments (20% on the apprenticeship as evaluated by the mentor, 10% on the student's written evaluation of the learning experience)
 - 10% on student participation and attitude in discussions
 - 10% on attendance (percentage equals number of classes attended, divided by number of classes held, times ten)
 - 30% on the final written, or oral, exam.
- The evaluation scale is as follows
 - passing grade - 70-79%
 - good grade – 80-89%
 - excellent grade – 90% and above

Course schedule

To be announced.

Credits earnable

- 2 hours of credit towards a Certificate in Christian Studies

Prerequisites

(Progressing Together BIBL201, DOCT201, and PRAC201, or equivalent)

Textbook and related materials

- Required - Progressing Together Manual for CHUR201
- Additional readings may be required at the instructor's discretion
- Recommended - any book dealing with issues related to the role and functioning of the Church, local or universal

Course methodology

The student will work inductively, reading texts, answering questions concerning knowledge, application and analysis, and drawing conclusions which will be applicable to local context. After answering the questions in each lesson, students will gather to discuss answers and practical application. When possible, the course leader will give additional talks to reinforce what the students are learning through the lessons.

Policies

- Cheating (copying another student's exam answers) and plagiarism (quoting another individual's material without acknowledging that person's work) will not be tolerated, because it is deemed contrary to Christian teaching and academic integrity.
- Absences in excess of 3 class hours will lead to a reduced grade; no student missing more than 6 class hours will receive credit for the course. Students who show little or no interest in completing course work will first be warned, then asked to leave the course if they do not change their conduct.

Bibliography

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- Dever, Mark. *What is a Healthy Church*. Good News & Crossway. 2007.
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Lesson 1: The Church at the Center of God's Plan

The Old Testament

In this first lesson, you will learn the special role of God's people throughout the Old Testament, its relationship with God, its communal life and the part it plays with other nations.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- Gain some insight into the development of God's relationship with his people throughout the Old Testament.
- Define the word "covenant" and explain the significance of the covenants with Abraham and the people of Israel in the story of the Old Testament.
- Give 3 illustrations of God's intimacy with his people from the Old Testament.
- Explain the importance of worship and communal life around the Tabernacle/Temple, and in the daily life of the people.
- Provide a few passages which testify to God's plan to bless the nations.
- Explain the role of God's people as a testimony to the nations, the consequences of its fall, and the need for a new covenant.

1. When someone says "Church", what is the first thing that comes to mind?

Read: Ephesians 5:25-27

The word "Church" is the translation of the Greek word "ek-klesia", which means, "those who are called (by God) out of." This tells us that it is speaking of people who are called out of the world to gather together and be united by common bonds.

So the Church is composed of all of the Lord's redeemed, and of everyone who has been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) following Pentecost, and until the Lord's return. (Eph. 5:27)

God's people in the Old Testament

Today, following 2000 years of history, we see the Church has always been in the center of God's plan. However, this has not always been clear throughout history. Those who lived at the time of Abraham, Moses or even the disciples, in the limitations of their perspective, did not entirely understand the concept of the Church in its fullest form. And yet, little by little, God laid the essential foundations for the establishment of his Church. And that which God revealed at each time period of history was sufficient for the people of that timeframe to gain from it. (Hebrews 11:13)

The history of God's people finds its origin approximately 4000 years ago with the call of a single man, Abraham, who came from a pagan family in the country of Our-of-Chaldeans in Mesopotamia.

2. Read Nehemiah 9:7-8. How did Abraham enter into the history of God's people? (verse 7)

3. Read Genesis 12:1. What did God ask Abraham?

4. What did God promise Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3?

These promises God gave to Abraham are what we call a “covenant”. A covenant is a kind of contract between two people in which the responsibilities of each party are defined. In the Bible, God is the initiator of covenants with his people. In some instances, the covenant requires a commitment on behalf of men; in others, God alone commits himself to do something. Regardless of the case, man remains a recipient (receiver) of God’s grace. God really did make Abraham into a nation, and from his descendance came the twelve tribes of Israel. Their captivity in Egypt during over 400 years allowed the people to increase and become a great nation. Then God freed his people from its slavery in Egypt to begin a covenant with it.

5. This idea of a people chosen and blessed by God is present throughout the Old Testament. Read the following passages and write the commitments (blessings) of God towards his people, and the commitments he expects of his people in return.

Bible references	God’s commitment	Commitment of the people
Exodus 19:5-6		
Leviticus 26:11-12		
Deuteronomy 7:6-9		

6. In Exodus 20:1-17, God gives the Ten Commandments to his people to regulate its behavior towards the Lord, towards others in the community, and towards strangers to the covenant. In the following of the Exodus narrative all the way into Deuteronomy, we read that God developed his “law” and upheld the notion of blessing for obedience, and curse for disobedience.

a. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and write a few blessings God promises when his people are obedient.

Bible references	Blessing
v 1	
v 3	

v 4	
-----	--

b. Read Deuteronomy 28:15-27 and write a few of the consequent curses to the disobedience of his people.

Verse	Curse
v 16	<i>You (his people) will be cursed in the site</i>
v 25	
v 21	

c. Why did God enforce such severity by demanding a people obedient to his law? (Lev. 11:44a)

7. God hoped to establish a personal relationship with his people, as can be seen by the fact that he chose it and blessed it. This personal relationship rested in part on God's commitment to uphold his promises, and in part on the people's obedience to God's law.

a. Israel had no king between the time God made his people enter into the promise land and Samuel's time. Why wasn't this necessary? (1 Samuel 12:12b)

b. This intimate relationship of God as king towards his people is developed in Psalm 47, as is shown in the following chart. Following this model, identify two other illustrations that demonstrate God's intimate relationship with his people in psalm 80.

Reference	Illustration used for God	Image used for his people	What this illustration teaches us
a. Ps. 47:3 -5, 8-10	<i>King</i>	<i>People of the king</i>	<i>God protects his people. He subjects the nations and gathers them around</i>
b. Ps. 80:1 -3			
c. Ps. 80:9 , d. 15- 16	<i>Winegrower (owner of the vine)</i>		

c. The truth of this relationship was confirmed by God's **presence** among his people. Read the following passages and fill-in the blanks with the most appropriate word.

From Moses' time all the way till the time of _____ – the third king of Israel (1 Kings 6:1-

2), the physical presence of God among his people was demonstrated through the manifestation of His _____ (Ex 40:34) in the _____ (Ex. 40:35) – which was a movable sanctuary in the form of a tent; the Israelites took it apart and then put it back together when they _____ (Numbers 9:15-17) Once the people stopped wandering in the desert to settle in the promise land, king _____ (2 Samuel 7:5) suggested to erect a building as a “house” for God. Finally, it is his son, King _____ who made it built. The construction lasted _____ (1 Kings 6:37-38).

8. The tabernacle, and then later the temple (stone building), was the place where the people met God in a communal fashion. In this setting, the practical living of the people’s sacrificial ministry in submission to God and his law could take place. In order for communal life to develop, God established holidays, ceremonies and practices his people had to observe and pass on to the following generations. Read the following passages and fill-in the chart following the example of the model.

Bible References	Holiday/Ceremony or Practice	<i>Purpose for the development of communal life</i>
Leviticus 19:9-10		
Leviticus 23:39-43		
Deuteronomy 12:10-14	(v 11)	
Deuteronomy 15:1-3; 7-9		
Deuteronomy 17:2-7		
Deuteronomy 31:11-13		

9. God's people in the Old Testament bore the name of Israel. In the promises God had given to Abraham and his descendents (and to others like Isaac, Jacob, etc), he always upheld this notion of blessing other nations and peoples. Read the following passages and fill in the chart by placing the reference in its correct location on the left.

Genesis 22:17-18, Deuteronomy 31:12, Psalm 22:28, Isaiah 19:21-25, Isaiah 56:6-7, Daniel 7:14.

Bible References	Who could benefit from God's blessing?
	Egypt my people, Assyria, the work of my hands
	Every people, nation and men from every tongue
	Foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord
	All the nations of the earth
	All the families of the nations
	Men, women, children and the foreigner

10. Just like the example of Abraham, God's people are to be a testimony for all the nations. In the following chart, write down what the people of God should do, and the consequences it could have on other nations.

Bible references	What the people of Israel should do	The consequences on the nations
Genesis 22:15-18	Abraham obeyed to the voice of the Lord (by offering his son, Isaac)	All the nations are blessed by this
Deuteronomy 4:5-6		
Jeremiah 4:1-2		

11. Through the grace of God, the testimony of the people of Israel, although imperfect, reached even to the distant nations. In the time of King Solomon, the queen of Sheba (Yemen) traveled all the way to Jerusalem to verify the testimonies she had heard. What had she heard from her country? (1 Kings 10:6)

12. For the most part, however, the people of Israel sought to resemble the nations surrounding it. This is why it lost its testimony and God's blessing.

Read Ezekiel 36:16-28.

a. How did God describe the behavior of the house of Israel? v17-18

b. With what action did he judge his people? v19

c. What does God promise to accomplish for his people? v24-28

d. Why will he do this? v22-23

God kept his promises towards his people. In 538, following 70 years of captivity under the authority of the Chaldeans (Babylonians), Cyrus, king of the Persians, allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel to restore their worship to the Lord. This era is called **the Restoration**. Idolatry — the worship of other gods — then lost its prevalence among the people who returned to the promise land.

But the promises concerning purification from stains and a deep change of hearts through God’s Holy Spirit had to wait for the coming of the Messiah, 400 years later. Jeremiah the prophet also mentioned this time of renewal in advance where God was going to establish **a new alliance**. (Jeremiah 31:31).

The section of the Bible which explains this new “system” is called ‘**The New Testament**.’ In lesson 2, we will study the wonders God worked in favor of his people through this covenant by his grace.

Application

13. Review: read over the objectives at the beginning of this lesson again, and make sure you understand them and are capable of expressing them.

Prepare to share the following questions with the group:

14. Comment upon God’s relationship with his people under the Old Covenant.

15. How did God reveal himself to the nations during this time?

16. Describe communal life in Israel as stipulated by the Law. Which components enrich our vision/understanding of the local church?

17. Why is disobedience so destructive for God’s people?

18. Is there anything that speaks to you or surprises you in the teaching of this lesson?

19. What have you learned?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

20. With the help of a concordance, find 5 passages in the Old Testament that develop the idea of the Lord as a Shepherd towards his people, and comment upon them. Then, to confirm and complete your research, consult a Bible dictionary on the subject. Be prepared to present a 4 or 5 minute account (summary) to the study group.

Lesson 2: The Church in the Center of God's Plan The New Testament

Introduction

In this lesson, you will learn the privileged place of the Church in the New Covenant (in contrast to the People of God in the Old one), and the universal and local aspects of it.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- Understand why Jesus came as the Messiah king to:
- -Fulfill the Old Covenant and save his people
- -Create a new covenant and a new people.
- Explain the relationship between the Jews and the nations within the Church
- Demonstrate 3 or 4 advantages of the New Covenant compared to the Old
- Appreciate the glory of the Church, its intimacy with God, its diversity and universality
- Remember at least 3 illustrations of the universal Church
- Begin to understand the role of the local church, which is to reflect the glory of Christ's universal body throughout the world.

After the message of the last prophet of the Old Testament (Malachi) followed a 400 year period of silence; then began the ministry of John the Baptist, the first prophet of the New Testament era. He preached once more the coming of the Kingdom of God but with an additional dimension: the coming of the King Messiah – Jesus, son of David. This Jesus is the seed of Abraham through which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

Jesus also announced the coming of the "Kingdom of God." He illustrated his teaching through "parables" (stories taken out of everyday life). Usually, the "Kingdom of God" is indicative of God's reign through Jesus Christ. God practices his sovereignty over the whole universe. But He is *present and at work in a special way among his people in the person of the Messiah King, Jesus Christ*. This Kingdom comes progressively in three stages:

(1) through the physical presence of the Messiah King a) among his Jewish people (*the incarnation through the Old Covenant*, Matt. 12:28); and then by his resurrection and ascension on the throne after his death, b) at the right hand of the Father (Luke 23:42-43, Rom. 1:4, Eph. 4:8-9).

(2) through the structure of his new people, the Church, by the work of the Holy Spirit, (*the reign present in the New Covenant*, Matt. 13:24-30, 38; 20:1-15; Luke 17:20-21).

(3) and finally in the *future reign*, when Jesus Christ comes back to judge the world and establish his glorious and eternal reign for his redeemed people. (Matt. 13:41-43; Matt. 20:21)

1. One of these Kingdom parables explains the overwhelming effect of his coming to his people as Messiah King. Read the parable of the winemakers in Matt. 21:33-46.

a. In the following chart, identify what the following symbols mean following the example:

Symbol in the parable	Person or group represented
The master of the house (v33)	<i>God the Father</i>
The vine (v33, 43)	


The landowner (v33, 45)	
The tenants (Matt. 21:34-35, see Matt. 23:34-35)	
The master’s son (21:37)	

b. What was supposed to happen to those who reject the Son (the corner stone)? (v 41,44)

c. To whom will the responsibility of the vine be given? (v 41,43)

d. To which definition of a “Kingdom of God” does the verse 43 point back to? Select the right answer:

- ☐ God’s reign in general
- ☐ The physical presence of the Messiah King among his people
- ☐ The structure of his new people, the Church
- ☐ The final order of the universe


Jesus was the promised Messiah (Christ). God first sent him to save his people, Israel, who were waiting for him but also to save all the nations or ‘pagans’ who were not seeking him (Isaiah 49:6). And yet he was rejected by the political and religious leaders of the Jewish people, and by the majority of the people as well who demanded his crucifixion. So God set them aside and established a new community beginning with the 12 apostles. Although at first this community was 100% Jewish, the number of conversions among the pagans became such that beginning in the 2nd century, the Church took on an international aspect, where the elect Jews only represented a minority.

2. In Ephesians 2:11-22, the apostle Paul describes a new relationship between the people of God (Israel) and the pagans (often called “Greeks”, which means “non Jews”). As you read the following verses, identify in what way (and how) this relationship has changed. An example is provided:

Verses	The change in relationship between Jews and non-Jews
v. 11-13	We have become close to God through the blood of Christ
v. 14	
v. 15-16	
v. 17	
v. 18	
v. 19	
v. 20-22	

3. In the 3rd chapter of Ephesians, the apostle Paul pursues his discussion on the new identity of God’s people. He explains that this new relationship between Jew and non Jews is a “mystery”.

- a. According to verse 6, what is the explanation of this mystery?
- b. Why was this mystery so surprising to the Jews? (Eph. 3:5; Rom 2:17; Rom 9:25; 1 Peter 2:10)
- c. Why was this mystery surprising to the angels and principalities as well – v6, 10?

8 **The unity of the international and multi-cultured Church is a glorious and surprising testimony to this world and to heaven.**

4. To summarize the transition between the two covenants accurately
 - a. Fill in the blanks in the chart, following the example.

Biblical Alliances	God's instrument	Included people
Old Testament		
New Testament		

- b. Fill in the blanks with the word which is most fitting.

i. Ephesians 3: 5-6 and 10

The mystery (or 'secret') of this new relationship between Jews and _____ (v 6) had not been _____ (v.5) to the men of former generations. But in _____ (v.6), it became possible through the medium of the _____ (v 6), and it serves as the foundation for the new community of God's people, called the _____ (v10).

ii. Genesis 12:1-3

The Church, made up of believers in Jesus Christ, is the accomplishment of the will and promise of God to bless all _____ (v. 3) of the earth through the descendance of _____ (v. 1, 3)

5. What are the new privileges of God's people under the New Covenant?

Verses	Old Covenant	Verses	New covenant
Ex. 24:8		Heb. 9:12	
Ex. 24:12		2 Cor. 3:3	
Lev. 26:12		Gal. 3:26	
Deut. 7:6		Rev. 7:9	
Gen. 17:10		Col. 2:11	
Deut. 26:18; 27:26		Matt. 5:17	

6. The previously studied passages (Eph. chap. 2 & 3) tell us about The Universal Church. This is **the invisible community which includes all the elect who believe in God from all times and from all nations**. It is “invisible” because only God really knows who all those who belong to him really are. Christ redeemed them through his precious blood and established an intimate relationship with them. The Bible uses all kinds of different illustrations to describe this relationship.

a. Discover a few of these by filling in the blanks in the chart.

Biblical passages	Image of Christ	Image of the Church
John 10:11		
John 15:1-5		
Ephesians 1:22, 23		
Ephesians 2:20-22		
1 Peter 2:4-6		

b. What do these illustrations teach us concerning the relationship between Christ and his Church?

c. Which illustration speaks most to you out of these? Why?

7. Read Rom. 10:9-10. According to this text, can you affirm with certainty that you are part of the Universal Church? Explain why.

8. The universal Church finds its expression in the local Church. This is the visible community where believers of a same town gather together under the leadership of overseers. These churches have a tendency to reflect communally the testimony of the universal and glorious Church of Jesus Christ. Answer the following questions by answering *true* or *false*.

a. Anyone actively participating in the local church is member of the universal Church.


b. Each member of the Universal Church on earth is called to belong to a local church:

c. All deceased members of the Universal Church are now beside the Lord:

d. My local church best reflects the model of the universal church:

Application Questions

9. What have you learned about the importance of the Universal Church through this lesson?
10. Can you share the different aspects which make your church a reflection of the Universal Church?
11. What have you learned on the importance of the local church through this lesson?
12. Is it hard for you to recognize that the Church is composed of Jews and of non Jews? Why?
13. What has changed in your perception of the Church?

 **“Christ loved the Church so much that he gave his life for her. Through this work, he desired to make the Church worthy of belonging to God after purifying her with water and the word; he wanted to present the Church to himself in all her beauty, pure and without fault, without stain or wrinkle, or any other imperfection.” Eph. 5:25b-27**

Lesson 3: The Local Church in the New Testament

Introduction

In this lesson you will learn how the local church was first established in Jerusalem, and how it structured its communal life.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- Describe the establishment of the church in Jerusalem; the role and authority of the first apostles.
- Describe the part the Holy Spirit played in the birth of this first Church during Pentecost, and the importance of the disciples' testimony in its expansion.
- Mention four crucial activities of communal life in the Jerusalem church.
- Explain the importance of Biblical teaching and worship.
- Understand the importance of training new leaders and the roles of elders and deacons.

In lesson 2, we saw the universal church is composed of all the elect who believe in Jesus Christ, from all nations and of all times. The book of Acts retraces the birth and development of this church through the geographical expansion of local churches. This began in Jerusalem on the day of the first Pentecost, following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

A. The Establishment of the Church

The promise

1. In Acts 1:8, Jesus had revealed before his ascension how the church was supposed to start. According to this verse,
 - a. What role were the disciples to take?
 - b. What were they supposed to receive first?
 - c. In which places was the testimony of the disciples to be established progressively?

The Crucial Role of the Apostles

In Ephesians 2:20, we learn that as members of the Church, we are “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” Jesus had officially chosen 12 companions as his “apostles”; translated by ‘sent ones’ or ‘missionaries,’ this term designates the official messengers of Jesus Christ.

2. Following the ascension of Jesus Christ, his disciples held an official meeting. Read Acts 1:12-26.
 - a. How many disciples gathered together? (v15)

- b. How many apostles were there? (v13, 26)
- c. What problem were the first disciples trying to solve? (v16-22)
- d. Why do you think it was so important to officially identify the apostles (taking into account the physical absence of Lord Jesus)?
- e. What was the necessary criterion to be qualified for the office of apostle? (v21-22)
- f. How many people were deemed adequate following these criteria? (v23)
- g. Could someone be qualified as an apostle today (with the same authority)? Why, or why not?
- h. How can we make sure our faith is in conformity to the apostolic (of the twelve apostles) teaching? (2 Peter 3:1-3,15-16; 2 Tim. 3:14-16)

B. The Birth of the Church in Jerusalem

Acts 2 relates the event defining the birth year of the Church. The disciples (the apostles with probably a few hundred of Jesus' disciples –see 1 Cor 15:6) were in the temple at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus Christ's sacrifice on Easter.

Read: Acts 2:1-41

1. Who did God send? (v4)
2. Who received it? (v1, 3)
3. What promise of Jesus Christ was fulfilled through this? (review Acts 1:8)

- 4. How did the Holy Spirit help the disciples give testimony to Christ?
- 5. Who heard their testimony? (v5, 11)
- 6. Where did they come from? (v9-11)
- 7. Verse 41 reports 3000 people were added to the community of believers. This is how the first local Church was born in Jerusalem.
 - a. What conditions had to be met in order to become a member of this community? (v37-41)
 - b. At which point did new converts add themselves to the church?

C. Church Life
Read: Acts 2:42-47

1. What activities were characteristic of the life of this first Church? (v42) In the chart below write the Church activities in column A, and for each activity provide its description in a sentence in the corresponding B column. *A few answers have been provided.*

A. Communal activity Acts 2:42	B. Description (and practical application) Acts 2:43-47
Fellowship	
	This could be referring to the sacrament (Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper), or to a communal meal (‘in the houses’ with simplicity in verse 46).
Prayer	

- 2. What does this passage teach us concerning the relationship of this first community (Acts 2:41-47; see also 4:32-35; 5:12-14)
 - a. Towards God?

b. With one another?

c. With the people of Jerusalem?

Application

3. Let us review:

a. Of the four aspects of the life of the first Church in Jerusalem, which ones are present in your community?

b. Which aspects could you develop to improve the life of your Church, and how?

Let us now examine a few of these activities:

4. The teaching of the apostles

a. To ensure the Church would remain faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the apostles left behind their written testimonies inspired by God. These writings are gathered in... *(Select the right answer)*

- The New Testament
- The Old Testament
- The confession of faith 'the Apostle's Creed'

b. They also trained faithful servants to support this teaching. Timothy was a disciple and companion of Paul.

Read 2 Tim., what part was he supposed to play in the church of Ephesus?

i. 2 Tim 4:2

ii. 2 Tim 2:2

c. Many gifts/ministries of the Church are primarily concerned with teaching God's Word. Here is a list of gifts/ministries in Eph. 4. Circle those *which are essentially concerned with biblical teaching*:

1. Prophets
2. Evangelists
3. Pastors
4. Doctors/Teachers

Systematic teaching of the Bible is the foundation of any healthy church. It is the main criterion for evaluating all other activities of the Church.

d. Here are a few ways churches employ to ensure the biblical training of their members: teaching of the children; Biblical training program; catechism; Bible study group; the worship service/the sermon

i. Under each of the following definitions, write its corresponding activity:

Systematic teaching of the foundations of the Christian faith intended for new Christians.

Lessons/Bible courses teaching the biblical stories and foundations of the faith in a way adapted to children.

A meeting whose purpose is to deepen one's knowledge of the Word of God.

Preaching during the weekly service, whose purpose is to teach the Bible and edify and encourage Christians.

Systematic and progressive teaching beginning with catechism and ending in training for ministry, like the program "Progressing Together."

ii. Which of the above-mentioned methods is your church currently using?

5. Prayer and worship

a. We find worship among one of God's main purposes for establishing the Church. According to 1 Peter 2:9, God redeemed us so that...

(Finish the sentence)

b. In John 4:23, Jesus said God seeks worshipers in A) _____ and in B) _____. This means (select the best answer):

For A):

They who worship him not only with external rituals, but also with all of their inner being: will, emotions, thoughts, and animated by the Spirit of God.

They who do not pray aloud, but who talk to God in the secrecy of their heart, their spirit.

They who worship God spontaneously without understanding what they are saying because the Spirit is speaking through them.

🕯️ **This ministry is called diaconate, from the Greek word ‘diakonos’ which means “service” or “ministry”. The servant receiving official recognition of this role is named “deacon” (see 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Depending on context, the Bible uses this word to refer to any servant of God (translated as such) (1 Cor. 3:5) or to a distinct role as in this passage. This word can also mean someone who practices ministry, or who has received a particular responsibility in a Church.**

c. What was supposed to be the main role of the apostles in the Church of Jerusalem? (v 2,4)

3. Originally, only the 12 apostles lead the Church in Jerusalem. In the following narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, we no longer find mention of the apostles as leaders of the Church in Jerusalem. They had trained other people to whom they had entrusted their responsibilities.

Read: Acts 11:30 and Acts 21:17-19.

What is the name of the group that:

a. Received the gift for the Church in Jerusalem?

b. Welcomed and advised Paul when he arrived in Jerusalem?

James was not Jesus’ disciple (who died executed by Herod in Acts 12:2), but his brother who became an eminent elder of the Church in Jerusalem and the author of the epistle which bears his name (See Galatians 1:19; 2:9; James 1:1).

4. As substitutes for the apostles, what was the main role of the elders of the Church of Jerusalem supposed to be? (Acts 6:4)

5. How do you think we can explain the fact that the apostles had entrusted the leadership of the Church in Jerusalem to the elders, while the apostles were still present?

6. According to what we learned in this lesson, how did the Church of Jerusalem train up disciples of Jesus Christ?

Application

7. What is the role of the Church and fellowship in your own discipling training?

8. How can you benefit more from it?

9. Following a time of prayer and reflection, what commitment(s) do you want to make or renew?

In lesson 4 we will see that the time has come for the Church to invest itself in its mission to become a testimony 'to the very ends of the earth'.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Application Questions

10. In Acts 2:37-41 we saw that those who accepted the Gospel, who repented and made a profession of faith through baptism were then added to the community in Jerusalem (section B3). Think about your Christian community. How does one become a member?

11. Which of these conditions seem to conform to those found in verses 37-41?

12. Does your community add any other conditions? (If such is the case, you could talk to your church leaders and ask them how they justify employing these conditions.)

Lesson 4: The Church's Mission in the New Testament

In this lesson, you will learn how the Church in Jerusalem was used by God to initiate the execution of his promise, according to which the Church was to be established throughout all the nations.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- • describe the expansion of the Church beyond Jerusalem and understand that God can use any and every situation to accomplish his work.
- • understand that with the expansion of the Church and the establishment of other communities there is a need for inter-community solidarity.
- • describe the importance of the local Church in the sending of specific people whose ministry is that of a mission of establishing new local Churches, and describe the strategies of these people.
- • describe the necessary qualifications for being a Church leader, and the responsibilities involved in the office of this ministry.
- • understand that the mission is not finished, but that each local Church has the responsibility to practice the Lord's command continually.

A. The Church Spreads and Becomes Established

1. The stages of expansion

In Acts 1:8 Jesus had told his disciples that they would be his witnesses in four regions.

Which ones?

2. Expansion in Judea and Samaria

At first, the disciples had a tendency to remain together in the Church in Jerusalem. Suddenly, many of them left Jerusalem. Read Acts 8:1-4.

- a. Who left?
- b. What motivated them to leave?
- c. Where did they go?
- d. What did they do, going from place to place?
- e. Which regions quoted in the prophecy of Acts 1:8 were evangelized?

f. Who were the first witnesses to bring the message of Jesus Christ to these regions?

🕯 God can use our difficulties and even our persecutions as Christians for the development of the Church.

🕯 The first 'missionary' evangelists were not the apostles, but 'ordinary' believers filled with the Holy Spirit. (The apostles did not come until several had already believed. See Acts 8:14). We all have the opportunity to testify to Jesus Christ, and evangelize wherever God has sent or placed us.

3. Expansion to the ends of the earth

All of the first members of Jesus Christ's Church were either of Jewish origin or non-Jews converted and circumcised to Judaism. Despite Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 and elsewhere, these believers and even the apostles could not imagine that the pagans could accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and fully benefit from his promises.

To convince them of the necessity to witness to them, God used several revelations and signs in the story of Cornelius' conversion in Acts 10 and 11:1-18 (see the section 'For further study' at the end of this lesson). Read Acts 11:19-26.

a. When the believers were being scattered to the neighboring countries, who did they usually proclaim the Gospel to? (v19)

b. Antioch in Syria was an exception. To which people group was the Gospel first proclaimed? (v20)

c. What was the effect of this? (v21)

d. What did the Church in Jerusalem do to encourage this new Church? (v22)

e. What did Barnabas do to encourage and strengthen the Church? (v23-26)

f. For the first time, a community was made up of many believers of pagan origin as well as Jewish. What new name will be attributed to this diverse population? (v26)

4. The Church of Antioch becomes prominent

In turn, the church of Antioch quickly became a pillar of influence in the history of the early church and a center for missions.

- a. What was the first ministry of the Church towards another community? (Acts 11:27-30)

🕊 This deed did more than merely respond to a real and timely material need (famine). It gave testimony to the unity and equality of both Churches (Rom. 15:27, 31) as well as their responsibility and love towards one another.

- b. What role did the Church of Antioch have in Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey? (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28)

5. The founding of local churches

- a. During his first missionary journey, Paul proclaimed the Gospel and trained disciples in several cities; he then went back with his colleague, Barnabas, in the cities previously evangelized. Read Acts 14:21-23.

- i. Why did they go back? (v22)

- ii. What kind of structure did they establish in every city that their disciples may remain and grow in their faith? (v23)

- b. Paul will still make several other missionary trips which will last several years. Those who accepted the good news were baptized and incorporated into a local church. Frequently, after evangelizing a city or region, he would continue his trip leaving a few companions behind to continue the work for a time. Read Titus 1:5-9.

- i. Why did Paul leave behind Titus in Crete? (v5)

- ii. What words are used to designate these leaders? (v5, 7)

🕊 In the New Testament, we find the words 'elders' (overseers), 'bishops' (overseers/leaders), and 'pastors' (shepherds). See 1 Peter 1:1-5. All of these words are used to refer to the same occupation.

iii. What were supposed to be the criteria/qualifications of these overseers? (Write down 2 or 3.)


iv. What were supposed to be their responsibilities? (v9) (review Acts 6:4 as well)

c. Read: 1 Th. 5:12-14.

i. Which leaders' responsibilities are mentioned in this passage?

ii. What attitude should you have towards your elders/overseers who are your leaders/guides? (see also Heb. 13:17)

 **Take a moment to examine your attitude towards your overseers, and then pray for them.**

 **Note that the word "Church" in the New Testament, when referring to a local church, is always referring to a group of believers in Jesus Christ, and not a building. In the formation of Churches, there is no mention of any building project! (See *For Further Study* exercise 3.)**

6. The Church's mission and its impact

Read: Romans 15:17-24.

By reading the following passages, fill in the blanks with the word which best fits

a. At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul, wanting to evangelize Spain, affirmed that he had already evangelized regions from _____ all the way to _____. From then on, Paul figured that he had no more _____ in these regions. Who do you think he was counting on to continue the evangelization of these regions?

b. Certainly, the testimony of Jesus Christ's disciples, put in action by the local churches and missionary teams through the power of the Holy Spirit, made its impact in the Roman empire and beyond. In Acts 17:6, even the enemies of the Gospel in Thessalonica recognized this by saying, "These men... _____ *who have caused trouble all over the world*"


B. The Church's Mission Today

Each generation of the Church has the responsibility to evangelize the whole world for Christ. Read Matt. 28:18-20.

1. What did Jesus command his disciples (to do)?

2. There is no limit to the extent of this command. Jesus uses the word “all” four times in these 3 verses. Find them:

- a. _____ has been given to Jesus Christ.
- b. We must make disciples of _____
- c. We must teach _____
- d. Jesus will be with us in this mission _____

 **Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ obtained victory over his enemies who were oppressing the human race. From now on, as Messiah King, He reigns over all His creation at the right hand of God the Father. He spreads His kingdom through the Church: through the proclamation of the gospel and the transformation it operates in people’s hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

C. Your Church, in your Region

1. Your testimony to your entourage

- a. Testimony through the proclamation of the Gospel (and of all Jesus Christ’s teaching)
 - i. Overall, how would you describe your personal commitment and that of your Church (until now) concerning the Church’s great commission (Matt. 28:18-20)? Circle the appropriate answer.

Yourself	Your Church	Level of Missionary Commitment
1	1	Neglect or complete forgetfulness
2	2	Some efforts here and there
3	3	Quite committed
4	4	Fully committed

ii. How do you proclaim the message of the Gospel?

- b. Testimony through actions. Read Matt. 5:13-16 and answer the following questions.

i. Why does Jesus compare His people to salt and a lamp?

ii. What must we do in our families and in our communities for God to be glorified?

iii. Let us not forget the importance of doing good works towards brothers and sisters in Christ. Read John 13:35. What impact does the love of believers have on the world?

- c. Usually speaking, what is the impact of the testimony of your life and/or of your Church?
2. Find out the different areas of influence of your Church's mission, according to the missionary model of the first church in Acts 1:8,
 - a. Determine the perimeter of your Church community's influence: which near neighborhoods or villages can you witness to (Your "Jerusalem")?
 - b. What other nearby villages/neighborhoods/families without Christian testimony can you reach with some effort (your "Judea")?
 - c. What other clans/tribes/peoples, even hostile ones, are located close to you or your region (your Samaria)?
 - d. What far away regions or peoples do you have a calling for, or perhaps have already established a contact with?
3. Towards maturity
 - a. What level of maturity has your (community/church/Church in your region) attained by the grace of God? Circle the most appropriate answer.
 - 0 No church whatsoever (we are unaware of the existence of other Christians in the region)
 - 1 a few Christians who live independently
 - 2 a few Christians who visit each other every now and then
 - 3 Occasional and informal gatherings
 - 4 regular gatherings to carry out the fundamental functions of the Church (Acts 2)
 - 5 Established Church, with recognized elders and a regular ministry of service and evangelism towards the members of its community
 - 6 Mature Church, able to meet its own needs and to assist those of others
 - 7 Missionary Church with regular and organized ministry towards regions and peoples where the Church is not yet established
 - b. Which level should we eventually attempt to attain, by the grace of God?
 - c. With this in mind, what is the next level to be accomplished?

d. What is your next challenge?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Application Questions

4. Relating to your church:
- a. Are you aware of a Christian community in financial need? As a church, how could you assist them exceptionally, and this by faith? (Section E4.1)

 - b. Do you know any missionaries? As a church, how can you support them in their ministry? (Section A4.2)
5. The story in Acts 10:1 – 11:18 relates how God convinced the apostles and brothers (who at this time were all of Jewish or Samaritan background), that ‘pagans’ had access to the same salvation and spiritual privileges as themselves. Read this passage, and find three revelations or signs God used to convince them of this.
6. Gathering locations of the first churches. Quite different from our times, when the biblical authors used the word ‘church’ to mean a local church, they never meant a building but rather a gathering of Christians. To discover where the different churches met, read the following texts and select the box which reflects the type of location they used.

Bible reference	LOCATIONS Private house	Public temple	Private temple (belonging to the church)	School
Acts 2:46				
Acts 19:9-10				
Rom. 16:3-5				
Col. 4:15				
Philemon 1-2				

Lesson 5: The Church in the Center of God's Plan – Illustrations

In this lesson you will learn how God reveals the glorious nature of the Church through six illustrations.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- • Know and understand the meaning of these six illustrations, and the spiritual truths they communicate.
- • Explain the intimate relationship Christ has with his Church
- • Explain the relationship of every Christian with the Church as a whole, and thereby have a new view of your brothers and sisters
- • Explain how the Church is dependent on its chief, and how established elders in the Church are to reflect his person.
- • Understand the local Church is a setting for the life of all believers living in a same place and sharing a same faith.

Read: Eph. 5:25-27

These illustrations unveil to us the intimate relationship of Christ with his Church as its chief, and the tight relationships between all of its members. The Universal Church includes all of the Lord's redeemed, all people born again and baptized by the Holy Spirit:

- Either from Pentecost until the Lord's return (Eph. 5:27)
- Or all those living at the same time on earth (1 Cor. 1:1-3)

The local assembly is the gathering of all Christians gathered in a same location (Phil. 1:1). It is a local representation of the universal Church.

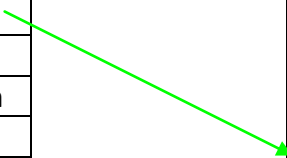
In the New Testament, the word "church" never takes on the meaning of a "church building".

During Pentecost, the Church, all of the Church was gathered in Jerusalem. As the work spread, it could not keep on gathering "all the believers" (Acts 2:44). Local gatherings were created everywhere, as we have just observed in our study of Acts (lesson 3), but each one was a manifestation of the whole, of the one body. It was the Church of God in the location; it was inseparable from "together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours", which means the Church as a whole (1 Cor. 1:2). The church of a local area encompassed all the redeemed who lived in this local area. Such was the church of God in Corinth, in Antioch, in Jerusalem, in Ephesus, and in every other place. The local church must reflect the truth of the Universal Church.

A. Accurately Discerning Biblical Illustrations

The Word of God uses many illustrations to represent the Church to us. It is extremely important that we don't confuse them or mix them up for fear of falling into far-fetched interpretations. Each illustration communicates one central idea to us about the Church.

In the following table there is a list of illustrations used in the New testament to represent the Church; the description of their meaning is also provided: which description do you think fits best? Try connecting them as in the following example.

Illustrations		Meaning
Family		Unity of a people
The Body		Affectionate unity
The Kingdom		Essential unity
A Flock		A group
Marriage		A life unit
A House		A life environment

B. The Illustration of Family (Eph 2:19)

In the family illustration, God is portrayed as the Father and the members of His Church are depicted as his children. Consequently, Christians are frequently called “brothers” and “sisters” in the New Testament (Col. 1:1-2). The Bible insists upon the relationships that must be established between the members of the Church: these are brotherly relationships, established upon the love the Father has for His children (Gal 6:10).

1. Read the following passages, and fill-in the blanks: 1 John 4:20-21

“If anyone says, ‘I _____ God,’ yet _____ his brother, he is a _____. For anyone who does _____ his _____, whom he has seen, cannot _____ God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever _____ God must also _____ his _____.”

2. When Jesus’ contemporaries talked about his family, they meant his earthly (physical) family. Read Mark 3:33-35. Who did Jesus consider to be his true family?

3. What will the people of the word notice when they observe God’s family living their faith out properly?

-John 13:34, 35

Application

4. So, who are your brothers and sisters?

5. According to your experience with Church life,

a. What do you find is similar to family life?

b. In contrast, what do you find different in Church life in comparison to a family life?

6. What can you do to help your Church accomplish its familial role?

✠ In conclusion, the Bible talks about the Church as being a family or life unit in order to underline the brotherly relationships members are expected to hold toward each other. This illustration also stresses the relationship of a Father to a child, which ties us to God.

C. The Illustration of the Body (1 Cor. 12:12)

As we noted in the previous lesson, the apostles were aiming to establish churches in every city. The local Church then is the place where believers can live out their faith as a community. The “body” is an illustration of “essential unity”; it functions with a **dependence** of each member on the other.

1. Write this out with your own words. (1 Cor. 12:12)

2. Therefore, the Bible invites us to picture the Church as a body: Christians are portrayed as members of the body, each having his own purpose. We see that complementariness and interdependence of its members are stressed here.

Read 1 Cor. 12:14-27, and take note of three kinds of behavior the members of the body are supposed to entertain or reject towards the body, the Church:

3. How much time do you think an arm could live once it had been cut off from the rest of the body?

4. How much time can the arm function once cut off from the rest of the body?

Application

5. What do we forfeit when we lack communion with the local church?

6. In your personal experience as member of the body of Christ, can you share examples of complementarity and interdependence?

D. The Kingdom Illustration (1 Peter 2:9)

The illustration of the kingdom communicates to us the unity of God's people, but also the kingship of our Lord who is the head of His people.

- Kingship: Jesus presents himself as the King (John 18:37). As the redeemed, we are a part of this kingdom.
- Unity: God desires a united and consecrated people. Jesus, while on earth, prayed to God that his children would be united (John 17:21).

It is not abnormal for people to gather with others of affinity, but this is not systematically spiritual; several dangers lurk the local church. One of the most frequent ones is "discrimination". Whether the discrimination is based upon intellectual levels, hobbies, families, races or anything else, the Bible condemns them. (James 2:8-9). The basis for discrimination is varied and the Christian must be weary of them. The illustration of the kingdom encourages us to exercise the unity of the Church.

1. Place the following verses in their appropriate box. Careful: one of the questions uses two references for its answer. 1 Cor. 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:4-5,25; Gal. 3:28a; Gal. 3:28b; Gal. 3:28c; James 2:2-4; 1 Peter 5:1-5

Title	Verses
Racial discrimination	
Sexual discrimination	
Social status discrimination	
Age group discrimination	
Discrimination of taking sides	
Discrimination of role or branch in the Church	

2. Read the following passages and fill in the blanks.

"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you _____, and that there be no _____ among you, but that you be _____ in the _____ mind and the _____ judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is _____ among you, my brothers." 1 Cor. 1:10-11

3. Read: 1 Cor. 1:10-13.

Identify the main problem that drove the apostle Paul to write his first letter to the Corinthians.

4. With the support of the previous passages, explain how the illustration of the Church as a kingdom can help address such an issue?

E. The Illustration of the Flock (John 10:16)

For a group to function cohesively, and for each member to have his own place, it is necessary to maintain a good organization under the supervision of one sole Leader, Christ. The illustration of the flock depicts the Church for us as an organized group which remains dependent upon the shepherd. Jesus establishes himself as the good shepherd in John 10: he who guides, protects, and leads the flock. As we previously saw in lesson 3, those who are responsible for a congregation are also called shepherds.

1. After reading the following passages, take note of the similarities between Jesus' attitude and the attitude of those who must lead the flock in the church. An example has been provided for you.

Jesus	Action	Church elder	Action
John 10:9			
John 10:10			
John 10:11-13			
John 10:4	<i>Walks in front</i>	1 Peter 5:3	<i>Serves as a model</i>

2. Which actions in the previous chart concern you and your role in your community (whether officially or not)?

F. The Marriage Illustration (Rev. 19:7)

In the Gospels, Jesus portrays himself as the husband (Matt. 9:15). Consequently, he has a wife: it is the Church (2 Cor. 11:2). She is called to remain ready to go out to meet the groom (Matt. 25:1-13). As we have seen earlier, there is a notion of affectionate unity in the symbolism of Christ's marriage with His Church. Christ loves the Church.

1. Read: Eph. 5:21-30.

a. To what extent has Christ loved the Church? (v25-27,29)

b. What does the Church owe Him in return? (v21, 24)

c. What do you think should be the attitude of the bride as she waits?

Application:

- 2. How are you preparing yourself for the coming of the groom?
- 3. What should be your attitude?
- 4. Affectionate unity must also be seen between the members of the body, particularly between husbands and wives.
 - a. As you read the following passages, fill in the blanks.

Eph. 5:25
“Husbands, _____ your _____, just as Christ loved _____ and gave himself up for her.”

Eph. 5:22
“Wives, _____ to your _____ as to the Lord.”
 - b. Regarding the marriage illustration, what aspect of your relationship with Christ as husband/spouse do you find most difficult to apply in your life?

G. The Illustration of the House

The house represents the Church as a building established upon Jesus Christ, but also depicts a life environment or setting for all born again believers sharing a same faith.

- 1. Read the following verses. What do they teach us concerning the house (= the Church) as a building or life environment?

Verse	Characteristic of the Church similar to a house	Applications
1 Cor. 3:9-10		
2 Cor. 6:16		
Eph. 2:20-22		
1 Tim. 3:15		
1 Peter 2:4-6		

Application

- 2. 1 Cor. 3 instructs us to “construct” or “build” upon the foundation of Jesus Christ; what are you doing to build upon this foundation?

H. A Summary of the Illustrations of the Church

The Church of Jesus Christ on earth should already express and reflect what it will look like in heaven. This is why the Bible exhorts us to practice the love which proceeds from the Lord within the Church. All of these illustrations show us that:

- believers form a body
- Christ always has preeminence.

Beware of confusing the illustrations

God used illustrations we understand to express spiritual truths. Each one is there to reveal a Biblical principal. This is why it is important to understand them, and not confuse them. Christ is not the husband of a flock of sheep.

A house can be destroyed and ruined, and yet the Church which is a house cannot be destroyed and ruined. The Church is not made up of sheep, meaning unintelligent people who follow mindlessly! **One must not extrapolate on/push illustrations too far to make them say what we want them to.**

Application

1. What have you newly learned concerning God's relationship with His Church?

2. As we review the chart presented in the beginning of the lesson, let us add practical application to it. A column has been added for you to express what these imply for your relationship with God and towards the Church.

Illustrations		Meanings	Implications
Family	→	A life unit	
The body	→	Essential unity	
The kingdom	→	Unity of a people	
The flock	→	A body (group)	
Marriage	→	Affectionate unity	
A house	→	A life environment	

FOR FURTHER STUDY

3. Note other important aspects of the relationship between the Shepherd and His flock with the help of John 10 and 1 Peter 5:1-5.
4. What boundaries must a family leader enforce to maintain balance within his family?
5. The Church of Jesus Christ on earth should already express and reflect what it will look like in heaven. This is why the Bible exhorts us to practice within the Church the love which proceeds from the Lord. Read the following references and describe the attitude or responsibility each of the Church’s members should display. An example has been provided.

Gal. 6:10	
Col. 3:13	
1 Thess. 3:12	
James 4:11	
James 5:9	

Lesson 6: Commitment in the Local Church I

In this lesson, you will learn that being a member of the body of Christ implies a certain level of commitment in the local church:

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- • understand the teaching concerning the Church in Eph 4-5
- • describe the relationship of the Church towards Christ
- • understand the importance of being committed as an active member in the local church, and the way members relate to each other
- • understand the sacraments: explain how they are observed in the life of the church, and know to whom they are destined.

A. Introduction:

The epistle to the Ephesians is the letter par excellence concerning the life of the Church. In the first three chapters, the apostle Paul expositis the spiritual principles and glorious promises tied to the Church of Jesus Christ. We have mentioned these chapters several times throughout the first five lessons of this course.

Starting in the fourth chapter, Paul applies his great teaching regarding the universal Church to the daily life of the local church. He calls Christians to commit themselves to living out these celestial realities, and making them visible towards those who are around them.

Ephesians 4 will be our foundational text for the next three lessons which will talk about our commitment in the local Church

Read: Eph. 4:1-16


1. In lesson 5, we examined a few illustrations describing the Church. Which of these illustrations does Paul use in this passage?

2. a. Who does Jesus represent in this illustration? (v15)

b. What does he do for the Church (vs. 16 and 7-11)

3. What do the members of the Church represent? (v16)

- 4. What is the purpose the Church aspires to? (v12-15)
- 5. How does the body, as well as each of its members grow toward this purpose? (vs. 16 and 11)
- 6. In lesson 5, we noted that the illustration of the body reveals the qualities of **complementarity** and **interdependence** between its members according to 1 Cor. 12. The passage in Eph. 4 underlines the primacy of Jesus as “head” of the body. Why is it so important for us to remain firmly tied to Him?

 **Jesus Christ is the origin of the life and authority of the Church. Every member of His body must submit to Him. Pastors and overseers must lead the local church under Christ’s direction. They are collaborators under the authority of the Shepherd leader to whom they owe an account (Heb. 13:17). The growth of a church is insured when every member exercises his gifts along with well-structured coordination done under Christ’s authority.**

B. Becoming a Member

A body or family may continue to function following the loss of one of its members, but there nevertheless remains a handicap. Every disconnected member will wither if he remains in this state. Even the connected members will deteriorate if they aren’t active within their church. This can be seen through the example of a leg immobilized in a cast. The muscles lose their vitality. So, the involvement of each member is essential for the well-being of the church.

The local Church expresses itself through regular gathering of its members, and through solidarity at a local level even outside of gatherings. The term “fellowship” is used to describe this association between brothers and sisters in the faith. Belonging to a local church therefore implies presence and participation. But nothing compels everyone to be present at all the programmed gatherings of his church. Sometimes, people are unfortunately unable to be present despite their desire to do so because they live in an environment hostile to their faith, or have a heavy schedule due to work or studies. Let us now observe the expression of the solidarity that any member can practice, including those who cannot regularly attend established gatherings.

1. The Christian needs the local church. The church also needs each one of its members. Everyone wants to receive, but it is also important to give. Read Philippiens 2:4; Colossians 3:11-17, and Hebrews 10:24-25. In the empty boxes on the right, write down the attitudes or actions upheld by these texts. Part of the answer in Colossians has been provided.

Text	Attitudes or actions
Phil. 2:4	

Col. 3:11-17	<i>Burning love for one another which bears and forgives</i>
Heb. 10:24-25	

2. Read Genesis 18:1-8; Job 2:11; Acts 12:12; 1 Timothy 5:9-10. How did these people put into practice the attitudes and solidarity previously mentioned without necessarily attending a “gathering”?

3. Can you think of other times where you and the other members of the church could express your solidarity to other isolated or needy members?

4. In a country hostile to the gospel, a new Christian may find it difficult to join a local church which is prudent or even suspicious of any newcomer considering its context. We easily understand this reluctance, but also understand that this could discourage the new convert. Read Acts 9:26-27.

a. Why did Paul have a hard time joining the church in Jerusalem?

b. What eased his acceptance?

c. What do you think the risks that Barnabas took were?

d. Read Galatians 1:21-24. What made Paul’s acceptance easier in the churches of these regions?

Application

5. To summarize, “becoming a member” of a local church implies: (check the correct answer(s))

- ☐ regularly participating in the gatherings as much as possible
- ☐ developing communal relationships (friendships, hospitality...)
- ☐ looking out for the well-being of the other members
- ☐ helping each other in difficult times
- ☐ welcoming new attendees

Have you taken these commitments? If not, what is stopping you from making them now?

6. The risks Barnabas took remain today.
 - a. What risks has your church taken to incorporate a new believer?
 - b. What helped you to be accepted in your local church?
 - c. What could you do to help with the arrival of a new believer in your church?
7. Read Eph. 4:11-15 again. We see in this text that God has established different ministries in the local church. In light of this, why is it so important for a Christian to strive to attend gatherings?

C. The Sacraments

The sacraments hold an important place in the life of the Church. Before leaving his disciples, Jesus established two ceremonies for the edification and blessing of the Church until his return: Baptism and Holy Communion. We call them “sacraments” or “ordinances”. They are of symbolic nature, not magical. They are signs of God’s grace and represent a spiritual reality God has accomplished in the life of him who believes in Jesus Christ.

Baptism

The idea of baptism was not an invention of the New Testament. Already in the Jewish rituals, corporal purification was practiced by passing through water, and a person indicated his consecration to God in this manner. In many world religions, water has a purification role. In the New Testament, baptism demonstrates the commitment of the believer as member of the church. The term “baptism” originated from the Greek work “baptize” which means: to plunge, immerge or submerge under water. The state of baptism is foreshadowed in two occurrences in the Old Testament. (Gen. 6; Ex. 14:22).

1. Read 1 Peter 3:20-21. What words and what aspects of these texts enrich the description of baptism provided earlier?
2. Read Rom. 6:3-5; Cor. 2:12-13. In your own words, explain what both of these texts claim the baptism is pointing towards.

✠ Baptism is the symbol of purification from sin, of the forgiveness of sins, of joining together with the death of Christ and resurrection to a new life, of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and adoption into the family of God for he who believes in Christ.

The Baptism of Water and the Baptism of the Spirit

The baptism of water testifies to and represents the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To understand the meaning of water baptism, it is important to understand the baptism of the Spirit.

3. John the Baptist started his ministry before Jesus. In Matthew 3:11 he clearly proclaims the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the evangelist also tells us of this baptism in John 1:12-13; 3:3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an internal working carried out by the Holy Spirit starting at conversion. Explain how each of the following texts confirms this truth.

Verse	The baptism of the H.S. is an internal working done once and for all
John 3:5	
1 Cor. 12:13	
Eph. 4:5	
Eph. 4:30	
1 John 3:24	

4. The fulfillment of the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.


a. In Acts 1:5, before his ascension into the sky, Jesus himself repeats the promise. Complete the following sentence: “For John baptized with water, but in a few days...

b. In Acts 2:1-4, during the celebration of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus’ ascension, the first Jewish believers in Jesus were gathered in the temple of Jerusalem. How many of them were filled with the Holy Spirit?

c. Read Acts 11:15-17. In these verses, Peter compares the events of Pentecost with the events that took place when the pagans (non-Jews) had accepted the Gospel proclaimed for the first time in Cornelius’ house (Acts 10:44). What does he conclude concerning the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

From then on all those who believed in Jesus Christ, Jews and pagans alike, were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.*

*To further study the teaching on baptism of the Holy Spirit, you may refer to course DOCT 206 [Salvation](#), lesson 7 “The baptism of the Holy Spirit”; and course PRAT 202 [New identity and new life through the Spirit](#), lesson 2 “The baptism of the Spirit” in the same Level 2 of the program “Progressing Together”. Concerning the practice of speaking in tongues today, you may look at lesson 4 “The fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts” of course PRAT 202 [New identity and new life through the Spirit](#); and the article “Study on tongues” on the www.takwin-masihi.org website (under “Other courses and resources”)

 **The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the act through which God saves, purifies and indwells a sinner by uniting him to the body of Jesus Christ, dead, resurrected and from now on made up of people from every nation and people. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is therefore an entrance into the universal Church.**

Water baptism expresses outwardly and publicly that which the baptism of the Spirit has accomplished at the inner, spiritual level. (1 Peter 3:21). Since the believer dies, he is buried and resurrected with Christ (Rom. 6:3-11; Cor. 2:12). Several evangelical churches practice water baptism by totally immersing the body of the new convert. The old flesh crucified with Jesus disappears under the water. It is a new man who rises up, dead to sin and regenerated for new life through the power of the Holy Spirit in communion with all the believers in Christ. It is the great “entry door” into the life of the local church.

Baptism: Who should get baptized?

5. We have defined the meaning of baptism; let us now consider who should get baptized.
- a. In lesson 3, we studied the birth of the Church during Pentecost. According to Acts 2:38, 41 who was supposed to be baptized? (Check the right answer.)
 - ☐ Those who repent.
 - ☐ Those who receive forgiveness for their sins.
 - ☐ Those who accept the message of the Gospel.
 - ☐ All three work.
 - b. Read the verses in the following table. In the boxes on the right, note the stages that belong to authentic repentance. The first one has been provided.

Verses	The stages of repentance
Luke 18:13	Personally recognize that we are a sinner
Romans 6:23a	
Luke 22:61-62	
1 John 1:9	
Acts 26:20	

- c. Read 1 Cor. 15:1-3. What are the essential elements of the Gospel message according to the apostle Paul?
6. Dozens of verses affirm that salvation is acquired in Jesus Christ through faith alone (examples: John 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 1:16; 10:9-11). Some verses, such as Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:21 emphasize the importance of baptism which accompanies faith (for salvation). Read both of these verses and explain for each one what enables us to affirm that baptism is not what saves?
- a. 1 Peter 3:21

b. Mark 16:16

When should one get baptized?

7. Mark 16:16 and many other passages in Acts (8:9-13; 10:46-47; 16:30-34) indicate that water baptism often followed repentance and confession of faith closely in the practice of the early Church. Today, several communities require basic biblical training called a catechism before administering baptism.

a. What are the advantages of such a practice?

b. What are the advantages of being baptized immediately after conversion?

8. Baptism is an important opportunity to testify to and proclaim one's commitment before God and the church. Could you relate your spiritual journey and your commitment very briefly here?

9. If you have not been baptized yet, what is hindering you from being baptized?

Holy Communion

Holy Communion is also known as the Last Supper. It is also called the "Lord's Supper" or "Communion"

1. The evening before he was betrayed, Jesus was celebrating the Jewish Passover with his disciples. This meal, which commemorates and celebrates the deliverance of the people from Egypt (read in Exodus 12:1-28) and is made up of lamb, bitter herbs and bread without yeast. Read Matt. 26:26-28 and 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

a. Who established this special meal during the Passover meal (Easter meal)?

b. What food elements are a part of Holy Communion?

c. What do these elements represent?

d. What is the meaning of Holy Communion? (see also 1 Cor. 10:16-17)

🕊 **We observe the importance of the aspect of vertical relationship (towards God), as well as the horizontal (towards our brothers and sisters in Christ) in the significance of Holy Communion.**

10. In Matthew 28:19-20, we read that Jesus commanded to make disciples, to baptize them and teach them to observe all he had prescribed to the apostles. So the early church Christians, eager to follow this teaching, regularly celebrated Holy Communion. When did they observe this meal?

a. in the community in Jerusalem following the first Pentecost (Acts 2:42, 46)

a. in Troas in Asia (current Turkey) 25 years later (Acts 20:7)

🕊 **The New Testament provides no guidelines concerning the frequency or when to celebrate Holy Communion. Nowadays, several communities practice the celebration of Communion during the weekly worship service, but not necessarily every week. Others associate it with a communal meal and still others associate it with a foot washing ceremony (John 13:1-17.) So, each community has the freedom to find its own way of highlighting the meaning of this celebration in light of its context, and in accordance with the church's means. However, it would be preferable not to let too much time go by between each Communion celebration.**

11. Read 1 Cor. 11:17-34. In the church of Corinth, it was their habit to eat meals together to which Communion was combined. But this practice, designed to unite Christians for a meal of fellowship, was in fact dividing them (v19.) because some were eating their own picnic without waiting for or sharing with its most destitute members. Paul the apostle calls these Christians unworthy.

a. In what way had they despised the meaning of Communion? (v 20-22, see once more 1 Cor. 10:16-17)

b. What do we learn from this text concerning the holiness of Communion, and the attitude a participant should necessarily have? (v 27-32)

c. What recommendations does Paul give to the Corinthians to restore the value of Holy Communion in the practice of their congregation? (v 28, 33-34)

d. Participation in the Holy Communion. Let us recall the warning in 1 Cor. 11:27 “Therefore, whoever...

(Complete the sentence.)

e. To which of the following categories of people does this apply? Check the right answers.

- ☐ Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.
- ☐ Those who do not understand the true meaning of the ceremony
- ☐ Those who attend another congregation.
- ☐ Those who do not respect the brothers and sisters and are not in communion with them.

f. The preparation for Holy Communion. Each is exhorted to examine himself before taking the elements (1 Cor. 11:28). The minutes prior to taking Communion are an opportunity to make sure we have dealt with all our sins towards God and towards others.

Read Matthew 5:23-24. What process should we follow when we realize that a particular brother holds something against us?

✠ It is better not to participate in Communion until we have had the opportunity to set things straight with God and with our brother. But as a general rule, we should not deprive ourselves of this communion, because the act of receiving the elements of Communion does not testify to our own justice, but rather to our need for forgiveness through the sacrifice that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

12. Read John 6:53-56. The Roman Catholic Church leans on this passage to teach that during the ceremony of mass, Christ comes down upon the altar to become incarnate in the elements. He is therefore sacrificed anew every time. According to this teaching, the participant receives the real body and real blood of Jesus through these elements. This sacrifice participates in the salvation of the participant.

With the help of Jesus’ enlightenment in John 6:60-63 and of Hebrews 10:11-14, how would you explain the real meaning of this passage and of Holy Communion to a Catholic friend?

13. Summary. Respond by ‘true’ or ‘false’

Holy Communion is the opportunity to:

- _____testify of the unity of Christ’s Church
- _____to evangelize
- _____to examine oneself before the Lord
- _____to obtain credit for salvation
- _____to commune with Christ, and our brothers and sisters in Him
- _____to be reminded of what Christ has done for us

Application

14. What aspect of Holy Communion speaks most to you?

D. Your Personal Commitment.

1. Optional question: As a disciple of Jesus Christ and a member of his Church, I commit with the help of God to,

Become a committed member (fully) of the following community

_____.

(Add in the name and/or place of the church or group of Christians in question)

Ask to be baptized and prepare myself for this (with the church leaders).

Regularly participate in Communion with the same community as much as possible.

Date _____

Signature _____

2. What have you learned through this study?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

3. Should we baptize children or not?

We do not find a straightforward and decisive answer to this question in the Bible. Very early in the history of the Church, the issue sparked debates and sometimes even quarrels with proponents on both sides. Already in the 3rd century, Tertullian, a Latin Berber theologian of the Church in North Africa protested against the practice of baptizing small children. On the other hand during the same century, Cyprian, a Berber native from Carthage advocated baptizing children because he considered baptism necessary for salvation. According to him, salvation was granted through the Church who was the only administrator of this sacrament. The practice of baptizing small children, widespread beginning in the 8th century, has made these churches out to be mass churches, in which all the members are not necessarily converted.

Today, some evangelical churches of reformed tradition practice enfant baptism (pedobaptists). They understand baptism to be the sign of the New Covenant, just like circumcision was the sign of the Old Covenant (Gen. 17). Just as Abraham believed in God for salvation and circumcised himself as a sign of his faith, he who requests baptism declares his faith in Christ for salvation; and just like Abraham circumcised his children as a testimony, the believer in Jesus baptizes the members of his family as well. In the case of Abraham, the sign of the Covenant follows faith whereas for his son Isaac, the sign precedes it (as for Ishmael, he was already a 13 year-old boy). In the same way, according to this perspective the faith of the first generation believers in Jesus precedes the practice of the symbol, whereas for their children faith comes after (Acts 2:37-38). Regardless, one must never come to think that children will be automatically saved as a result of their baptism.

Those who practice baptism solely upon confession of faith (Baptists and others) claim that that which precedes baptism is not circumcision but the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance and displayed one's need for forgiveness and one's commitment to change (Matt. 3:2, 8, 11; John 3:22; Acts 1:5). The necessity for commitment through faith on behalf of the baptized in Christ is often emphasized in the New Testament (1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

The New Testament is clear concerning the need to be baptized when it is talking about the first generation to believe in Christ (like Abraham). It is not so clear concerning their children. We must note that four times in the New Testament, it is mentioned that entire families, or that every member of a household was baptized together (see Acts 16:13-15, 29-34; 18:8). But it is not clear in these texts whether they were all believers professing faith in Christ or if it also involved little children.

Read Gen. 17; Acts 2:37-38; 8:36-38; 10:43-48; 16:13-15, 29-34; 18:8 and read section **Baptism** again.

- a. Write a paragraph defending the pedobaptist view (the view for infant baptism), and then
- b. Write a second paragraph defending baptism of professing believers (only adults having made a confession of faith).
- c. Once you have done this you may express your own personal conviction/preference.

4. The non believer must not take part in Holy Communion, but there are also warnings towards Christians whose behavior does not line up with the Christian life.

- a. In the following table, write in its corresponding box who must not take part in Communion. *An example has been provided for you.*

Text	Those who should not participate in Communion
Matt. 5:23-24	
Rom. 16:17	
1 Cor. 5:11	
1 Cor. 10:21	
2 Thess. 3:14-15	

b. Does this mean that these Christians are once and for all excluded from the table? (see 1 Cor. 11:27-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; James 5:16-20)

5. Read Matt. 26:29. For the Jews, there was nothing wrong with drinking wine. But in a society where wine is linked to drunkenness and sin, do you think it is critical for Christians to drink wine for Communion?

6. A believer who has not yet been baptized wants to participate in Holy Communion. What would you advise him? (Read Matt. 28:19-20 again, and then read Acts 2:38-42.)

Lesson 7: Commitment in the Local Church II: Love and Truth

In this lesson, you will learn the importance of establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship with God and with the members of the Church.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- • understand God's love for you better, to grow in faith and better express your love for God and for your neighbor.
- • quote several exhortations portraying relationships of fellowship.
- • demonstrate resources God has given you to better love your neighbor.
- • explain the importance of the diversity of spiritual gifts in a local church, and their commissioning for the good of the church.
- • develop a good attitude towards gifts and offerings
- • explain the importance of setting up a structure to collect gifts and offerings, and use them wisely.
- • explain why truth is important in every aspect of your life.

A. Our Relationship with God

Read: 1 John 4:7-21.

1. Complete the summary of the following text by filling in the blanks. (Try to do it from memory. You can then check your answers later by looking up the verses given after each blank.)

God is _____ (v8). This is how he showed his love towards us: He sent _____ (v10). We love God because _____ (v19). Therefore love for God implies love for one's _____ (v21.) If anyone says "I love God" yet hates his children he is called a _____ (v20). We also, we must _____ (v11).

2. The fact that God commands us to love is proof that this is an action that is never natural. No one finds it easy to love people with whom interaction is difficult or tense. Thankfully, in his Word God gives us the necessary spiritual resources to fulfill these commandments. In the following list (according to 1 John 4), check the resources which help us practice love:

- ☐ God transformed our heart when we became his children (new birth). (v7)
- ☐ The gift of Jesus Christ, his Son who gives life. (v8-9)
- ☐ Understanding the love we have undeservedly received from God. (v10-11,19)
- ☐ Fear of God's condemnation if we do not love sufficiently. (v18)
- ☐ The work of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. (v13, 16)

Read: Eph. 3:14-21.

3. Paul asks God that believers may deepen certain truths (v16-19).

- a. What were they supposed to understand?

- b. Which of the resources mentioned in the question 2 above is involved in this?

- 4. Two resources are mentioned in verse 21 through which God glorifies himself.
 - a. Which ones?

 - b. Which of the two is visible in the world today?

An intimate relationship with God characterized by obedience to Jesus, our chief, and devotion to our position in his body produces a growing knowledge in the love of God. This love contained in our being overflows; it ends up seeking ways to express itself. God gives us the twofold privilege of:

- 1) expressing love in return by directing it towards our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 2) displaying God’s glory to the world by loving one another (see also Jer. 13:35)

- 5. In your own relationship with God:
 - a. What helps you to grow in your love for God?

 - b. What is the result of this love?

 - c. How have you expressed it to your entourage?

B. Our Relationships with One Another

In Ephesians 4, 5 and 6, Paul gives many exhortations of fellowship, just as we see in other epistles. The expression “Love one another” occurs several times, as well as many other imperatives “one” must put in practice towards “another.” Let us now consider those commandments which talk about mutual love and explain how to put them into practice.

1. In the following table, read the verses on the left and find the corresponding exhortations to mutual action (“the one another’s”). Write each exhortation in the middle column. Then, read the description of love in I Cor. 13:4-7 and write a sentence or verse related to each exhortation following the example provided.

Verses	Mutual exhortation	Relation to love (in 1 Cor. 13:4-7)
Eph. 4:2	Bear one another	Love is patient 1 Cor. 13:4, 7 <i>(When we love someone, we do not reject them because of their faults.)</i>

Eph. 4:25		
Eph. 4:32		
Eph. 5:21		

In this practical section of the Ephesians epistle, we have only looked at the exhortations where we find the expression “one another.” But this is obviously the case for all exhortations: they concern our reciprocal relationships in the family of God (see 4:28-29 for example).

Among these exhortations, you have certainly noticed several address actions we are to no longer do to others. But the point is not to make for ourselves a list of things to do or not do. No, we must change our system, our way of thinking and living.

2. Read Eph. 4:17-24. In the following table, give the name of both systems that can guide our behavior; note the contrast in both ways of acting and affirm the one we are to follow.

	System Name (way of life)	Manner of Acting	What should we do?
v.21-22		To follow one’s own selfish desire which leads to destruction	

As we have previously mentioned, when we are born again through faith in Jesus Christ we receive a new nature. We must believe this is true, forsake our former motivations, and live out who we really are: children seeking to please God. This requires a radical transformation in our ‘spirit’: our way of thinking, our motivations (Eph. 4:23).

3. Read Galatians 5:13-6:2. We find more lists of exhortations that we are to put in practice in our relationships in God’s family. They are once more divided into two systems: only this time, both systems are called by a different name than those described in Ephesians 4.

a. Identify these systems by completing the following table.

Type of exhortation	System name according to Eph 4	System name according to Gal 5
Negative (no longer do)	The old man	
Positive (put into practice)		

b. In Gal 5, Paul refers to the same systems as in Eph. 4: the old man was subject to the desires of the flesh, and the new man submits to the work of the Holy Spirit who lives in him.

However, in Gal. 5 Paul emphasizes: (check the correct answer)

- ☐ Our need to live relying on the Spirit.
- ☐ Our ability to please God thanks to our new nature.

To deepen your study of the new nature, and of how to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, you may refer to the course: New identity and new life through the Spirit PRAT 202 of the program “Progressing Together”.

c. Notice that the expression of mutuality is repeated 6 times in Galatians 5:13-6:2. In the following list, check the verses addressed to Christians led by the Holy Spirit.

- ☐ to be servants of one another 5:13
- ☐ to bite and devour one another 5:15
- ☐ be destroyed by one another 5:15
- ☐ to provoke one another 5:26
- ☐ to envy one another 5:26
- ☐ to bear one another’s burdens 6:2

d. What do you think a church would look like where most of the members are fleshly, as opposed a church were most are spiritual? Distinguish both cases in this table:

A church led by a fleshly spirit	A church where the fruit of the spirit is visible

4. Read Rom. 12:9-18; Heb. 13:1-3; 1 Peter 3:8-9. Find at least 5 actions that are the fruit of love one for another. Be prepared to defend your choices before the group. Circle one or two of them you want to act out in your own life.

5. The local church is called to function as a family. However, our bodily families do not always reflect family values as God intended them to. Sometimes we need to change certain behaviors that we may love one another in our bodily family as well as in our spiritual family.

- a. Read the following list of some behaviors. Check those which hinder fellowship:
- ☐ Judging others
 - ☐ Thinking of oneself first (selfishness)
 - ☐ Entertaining feelings of anger toward others
 - ☐ Being generous toward others
 - ☐ Being jealous of others
 - ☐ Sharing with others

- ☐ Being bitter toward others
- ☐ Forgiving others
- ☐ Maintaining unhealed wounds
- ☐ Fear of being rejected and rejecting others
- ☐ Going toward others
- ☐ Participating in groups
- ☐ Maintaining feelings of inferiority
- ☐ Praying for others
- ☐ Maintaining a false notion of God as father
- ☐ Examining what the Bible says concerning brotherly love

b. Do you recognize yourself in some of these aspects? How can you correct what is not right?

c. In the preceding list, what positive behaviors would you like to carry out in the church?

6. Summary: What lessons can we learn from the use of the expression “one another” in the New Testament? Here is a list of seven principles suggested by A. Kuen* (be careful, one of them has been distorted).

Cross out the erroneous sentence in (section a), and then rewrite it correctly in the space underneath (section b).

Section a

1. Normal Christian life is lived out in a specific setting, a community.
2. The expression “one another” implies a specific setting, a community (the church).
3. The exhortations following the expression “one another” imply concrete and continuous relationships with a specific social group.
4. All these exhortations are only written for church leaders.
5. These relationships are very different
6. The commandments are either positive or negative.
7. All these various commandments are simply variations of the most frequent one: “Love one another”.

Section b

*Alfred Kuen “Les uns les autres” Ed. Emmaüs, Saint-Légier, Suisse, 1995.

C. Our Spiritual Gifts

Another way of expressing our love toward the body of Christ is to practice our spiritual gifts. **A spiritual gift is a particular ability granted by God to each believer, with the purpose of serving one another in the setting of the Body of Christ.**

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11.

1. Some elements of the following definition are found again in verse 10:

“Since each one has received a gift, put it at the service of others as good stewards of the grace so diverse of God.” (NIV)

In the following table, select the parts of the definition that are found in verse 10, and write the part of the corresponding verse. A model has been provided.

Part of the Definition		Corresponding verse in 1 Peter 4:10
A particular ability	✓	<i>Grace in its various forms</i>
Granted by God		
Each one		
In view of serving others in the setting of the body of Christ		

2. In verse 10 we are encouraged to act as “good stewards” with the gift we have received. The Greek word “oikonomos” is often used in the New Testament to illustrate our role as servants of God. (Luke 12:42-48; 16:1-8). Translated by “steward”, “administrator”, or “manager”, an oikonomos was the main servant of a prominent house. He was to manage considerable property and give an account to his master. He supervised a team of servants and made sure their needs were met. When his master was absent, he was the one who took charge of everything. (Luke 12:42-43).

- a. In what way are we similar to stewards, “serving leaders”?
- b. How can we be a good steward in this context? (see also Luke 12:42-43)

3. What gifts are mentioned in 1 Peter 4:11?

The apostle Paul lists other gifts in his letters (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 28; Eph. 4:11): i.e. mercy, discernment, tongues and their interpretation, help, governing, etc.)

Read: Eph. 4:11-16

4. Read the following biblical commentaries and write next to them the verse o which it corresponds. (Careful, the same verse may have several commentaries!)

V 11. When God established the Church, the first gift he gave was that of Apostle.

Then he gave servants through different ministries of the Word.

____.The purpose of his servants' ministry is to empower all the members of the churches and enable them to emphasize the gift(s) God gave them.

____.When all the members place their gifts at the service of the Church of Christ, it comes to unity, maturity and perfection in Christ.

____.Each Christian runs the risk of straying from the truth. There are false doctors and dangerous teachings.

____.Christ gives the necessary inspiration, guidance and strength for us to contribute our gifts to the service of the Church.

____.So, we must:

1) remain obedient and intimately tied to Christ and

2) remain in our place in his body, the Church. It is often through the other members that we receive our spiritual food given by our leader, Christ.


In verse 12 we read:

"It was he who gave some to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (NIV)

5. What illustration represents the Church in this verse?

6. What does this illustration teach us concerning spiritual gifts? (Review Lesson 5 section C and Eph. 4:11-16)

7. What is God's purpose when he gives different gifts to each member of the body?

 **So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 1 Cor. 14:12**

APPLICATION

8. What does being a member of the body of Christ mean to you?

9. Describe your role (your service in the church).ⁱ

10. How does this ministry edify the whole body of the Church?

11. How have you been edified by other believers?

12. Do all the members play an active role in your church, or do you sense that it is the leaders (or leader) who takes care of everything?

13. If the master came back today, would he find you a faithful steward, exercising your gifts for the edification of the Church? Otherwise, what do you need to change?

D. Commitment Through our Offerings

Let us now study another way of expressing the love and commitment that contributes to fellowship and edification of the local church.

1. Read Acts 2:45; Rom. 15:25-27; 2 Cor. 8:1-4. Describe this other expression of fellowship in the early church.

2. It is normal that through mutual love Christians would help each other out. What other reasons do you think exist for bringing our offerings to the church (see the examples in Matt. 10:7-10; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; Gal. 6:6).

3. In the Old Testament, the law established an offering of one tenth of one's income (tithe) which was given to the Levites, teachers of the law and ministers in the Temple (the Levites did not receive any other salary).

Read 1 Cor. 16:1-4. The apostle Paul prepares the church of Corinth to participate in a special inter-church collection for the brothers and sisters of Judea who were in need because of a famine. He provides several principles regarding Christian offering and the management of gathered funds. Respond by 'true' or 'false' following each principle here below. Be prepared to defend your answer from the text.

_____ Paul commands the Christians of Corinth to give a specific percentage of their income.

_____ The poor and destitute are exempt from participating in the offering.

_____ It is important to give regularly and intentionally.

_____ Our offering to the Lord should be a priority in our budget (the planning of our expenses and savings).

5:6-7		
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For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light Eph 5:8

Application

3. In what circumstances do you think it might be better to lie to a brother?

4. Is there a habit of lying you haven't given up yet?

F. Truth with Love

Concluding our text concerning the edification of the body of Christ in Ephesians 4 verse 15, Paul gives the best key to Church growth.

1. What is this key?

2. Explain this key with your own words, or provide an example of its application. (Have you personally benefited from an experience you could share?)

3. Truth with love? Truth without love? In the following sentences, identify every time you seen one or the other; Cross out *with love* or *without love* as you deem appropriate.

- *"Truth": with love/without love.* You are late again!! It disturbs the whole congregation. You aren't worthy of being a part of the worship team or of doing any kind of service for the Lord.
- *"Truth": avec amour/sans amour.* Latifa, you know that Amar is not converted yet. It is not a good idea to see him. It would be better to take a break in your relationship with him and let the Lord work in his heart first.
- *"Truth": avec amour/sans amour.* You talked to the strangers at Jamal's conversion. You obviously lack wisdom. You are putting everyone in danger because of your carelessness.

In the next lesson we will learn to speak the truth with love, and how crucial this is to maintaining the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For further reflection on the biblical mandate concerning our mutual relationships among Christians and its practical outworking, you may study the book of **Alfred Kuen "Les uns les autres" Ed. Emmaüs, Saint-Légier, Suisse, 1995**

Lesson 8: Commitment in the Church III: Unity in Everyday Life

In this lesson, you will learn that being a member of the body of Christ involves a commitment to maintain unity and peace in the local Church.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- describe what God has done to unite us all through the Body of Christ
- understand the importance of bearing one another in the Church
- understand the roots of potential conflicts, and discern the eventual presence of sin more accurately
- learn to see others' mistakes in light of God's amazing forgiveness towards us
- describe the peace process to follow when we have a conflict with a brother or a sister
- commit to strive to maintain the unity of the Body of Christ, even when there is a price to pay.

He who loves Christ and wants to follow him as a disciple commits to seek the unity of his Church, and make every effort to maintain it. Although the word "unity" is only found twice in the Bible, it is a crucial concept. Let us now look at the word "unity". The definition of the Webster Dictionary is: "the quality or state of being made one; a combination or ordering of parts [...] that constitutes a whole or promotes an undivided total effect". But "unity" does not mean "uniformity". God loves diversity since he created it (Gen. 1:11-25)! So, it is perfectly normal for there to be various opinions about a same subject, and a variety of preferences for one thing or another. But God also loves order (1 Cor. 14:33). Therefore, it is important that this diversity be a wellspring of riches for the church, and not the root of arguments affecting unity.

In the previous lesson, we studied several biblical exhortations articulating the love God wants us to have one for another. We are all the members of one single body, synchronized by Jesus Christ who is the head of this body. Each member contributes to the edification of the body as a whole, each one exercising his gifts and speaking the truth with love in order to grow each member.

To persevere in this sense of the word creates the necessary unity for the church to grow and be blessed. This is why Satan attacks the unity of the church, to destroy God's work. Man is not made to live alone (Gen. 2:18), but living with others often proves to be difficult: conflicts of interest, disagreements, quarrels. These things can in no way honor the shepherd, the head, the leader of the church – Jesus.

We now want to study mutual exhortations in this lesson which seek specifically to support, and when necessary, to restore this unity.

A. The Foundation of Unity

Read: Eph. 3:20 – 4:6

1. What is the glorious vocation to which we should aspire (seek to attain)? Be careful, there are several answers.

2. What is the first (reciprocal) exhortation we are to practice as a result?

This is a surprising exhortation. Why? We go from a sublime ideal down to a very concrete reality: despite everything the Lord has given us and changed in us we have a tendency to be quite intolerant in the body of Christ.

3. Why is it so important to mutually help each other? (v3)

4. We are not called to create unity among ourselves, but to **preserve** it. This means unity is already present. Our unity is rooted in what we have in common. Take note of the 7 legacies we share in common according to Eph. 4:4-6. Choose **3 or 4** of them, and write a sentence that explains how our sharing of this legacy should strengthen our unity in Christ. An example has been provided.

<i>One body</i>	<i>Belonging to one body would imply that we share the same interests.</i>

Unity will be possible as long as Christians bear one another, act one for another, and are good towards each other. There are other acts of benevolence we shall examine later.

“To bear one another”: the apostle Paul also exhorts the Colossians (Col. 3:13) to mutually bear one another. This time, “to bear one another” means “to be benevolent and accept to receive complaints, even when they are not justified”.

5. Read Eph. 4:1-3 and Col. 3:12, 14, and answer the following questions:
- a. What are the six qualities Paul uses in Eph. 4:2-3 and Col. 3:12, 14 that are the secret to being able to mutually bear one another? (Careful: four of them are present in both texts)
 - b. Which one is the link to perfection?

c. Compare this list with the one given in Galatians 5:22. You will notice a strong similarity. According to Gal. 5:22 and Eph. 4:4, who is the one who helps the Christian preserve unity?

6. Why do you think there are so many difficulties between brothers and sisters in Christ?

B. Conflict and Sin

In order to define the word “conflict”, we cite Ken Sande, the founder of Peacemaker Ministries: A *difference of opinion or intention which frustrates someone’s purposes or desires*.

According to Sande, “There are four primary causes for conflicts.”

- ❖ Some quarrels arise from a lack of understanding which originates in mediocre communication (see Joshua 22:10-34).
- ❖ Differences in values, purposes, gifts, calls, priorities, expectations, interests and opinions can also lead to conflict (1 Cor. 12:12-31).
- ❖ Competition concerning limited resources such as time or money is a frequent cause for quarrel in families, in churches or at work (see Gen. 13:1-12).
- ❖ And many conflicts come out of, or worsen are due to sinful habits or attitudes which lead to evil words or actions (see James 10:1-2)¹

1. Read: Acts 15:36-39.

a. What is the problem mentioned in this passage, and what resulted from it (39a)?

b. To which of the 4 primary causes does this problem correspond?

c. Do you think one of the brothers sinned in this case? Defend your answer.

Sin is not necessarily present in conflict. Someone may feel offended without another having committed sin, nor even intending to offend them.

2. In the case of a disagreement, what could be stained or even broken in a relationship if the problem is not solved?

Paul warns Christians to make sure this kind of offense does not lead to sin (Rom. 14:3). He also says it is important to make sure that unintentional wounds do not lead to division. What advice does he give concerning this in Eph. 4:3?

However, other offenses are sins (stealing, insults, treason, lies, despising, adultery, etc.), and are not constructive in a relationship. They oppose two beings created to love one another and shatter their relationship. These kinds of offenses affect a relationship between two people, but also with God.

3. Read Matt. 5:23; 18:21; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:4; Col. 3:13. What recurring phrase (in different forms) shows that the offense affects the relationship with the person just as much as oneself in these references?

4. Read 2 Cor. 2:1-5. Here, the context is that of a Christian who offended Paul through his bad behavior. What does Paul experience because of this sin?

5. Read 2 Cor. 2:6-11. What solution does Paul suggest in this specific situation?

There are 2 or 3 stages here:

C. Grace

🕯 Sin has tainted the thoughts of natural man, and it also is true for Christians. The Church is not spared from misconduct, quarrels and criticisms. If the Church was irreproachable, there would have been no need for Paul to write Ephesians 4! Christians must be renewed in their thoughts, grow in holiness, increase in spiritual maturity and grow in the Lord. In this way, harmony will reign throughout their relationships and God will be glorified. Let us also add that bearing one another does not exclude correcting one another (Gal 6:1)

To “give grace” means to give something that is not deserved. Read Matt. 18:23-35.

1. The king’s servant had accumulated a debt towards his master. What did he deserve from his master?

2. What was the servant’s reaction?

3. What reaction did the master have when faced with the inability of his servant to repay the debt, and his request for mercy?

4. What was the reaction of this same servant when he met a fellow servant who owed him money?

5. What was the servant's reaction before his fellow servant's request for mercy?

6. Fill in the following table

	THE KING'S SERVANT	THE FELLOW SERVANT
Owed amount		
Creditor's reaction		
Request		
Response		

Table taken from the book: Djaballah Amar, 1994, *Parables of Today*, Editions La Clairière, Québec, p249.

7. You have noticed that the king pardoned his servant even though his debt was enormous. But this same servant lacked grace toward one of his fellow servants whose debt was clearly less substantial. In light of this, comment upon Matt. 18:21-22.

8. What conclusions can you deduce concerning grace?

D. Forgiveness and Restoration

Let us remember the church is the body of Christ. Its members must therefore be well coordinated for it to function properly. (Eph. 4:16). It is therefore essential to maintain unity, or to restore it when it is lost. This demands that we resolve any conflict and deal with sin. In this section, we will consider forgiveness and the restoration of him who has sinned. The purposes of this procedure are to glorify God (Matt. 5:16), to preserve the unity of the Church (Eph. 4:3) and restore the sinner (Matt. 18:15-17).

As we said, the offense is first toward God, therefore, forgiveness is primarily a divine characteristic. Its purpose is not punishment or rejection, but restoration and reconciling. We may call this procedure “the process of peace”.

Only the offended has the right to offer forgiveness. We can only forgive offenses that personally affect us. **Making peace** is a process that may require several phases

First phase

The first step is described in Matt. 18:15. “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”

1. According to this text, when should we admonish our brother?
2. What do you think “admonish” means
3. We are encouraged to carry out this procedure one on one. Why do you think this is important?
4. What does “won your brother over” mean?

Second Phase

But if the offender does not listen, we must move on to the second step of the process. This one is described in Matt. 18:16. “But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’”

5. Jesus does not define who should be a witness. But what kind of person would be best in the best position to be a witness (see Gal. 6:1)?

The witnesses' role is to establish the facts, protect the accused and/or confirm the accusation. In this manner, a false accusation or incrimination is avoided. If the accused still refuses to listen, it would no doubt be wise to repeat this phase. Let us remind ourselves that our purpose is reconciliation, not rejection.

Third and Fourth Phases

The third and fourth steps are described in Matt. 18:17. “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

6. Think about what “tell it to the Church” means in practical terms. (the whole church or only the leaders? During a members only assembly? During the worship service when unbelievers may be present?)
7. What do you think should be the attitude of the church throughout this third step of the process?
8. If despite all of this the culprit refuses to listen, what is the forth step of the process described in Matt. 18:17?
9. What does Jesus mean by the word “pagan”?
10. Read Rom. 12:18; 14:19. What should we seek?
11. Who is blessed (happy) according to Matt.5:9?
12. Here’s a quick mathematical exercise:
Peter begins a conversation with Jesus by asking him, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” –Matt. 18:21, 22.
 - a. What was Jesus’ response?
 - b. A quick mathematical exercise:
What do you think Jesus meant? Should we forgive:
 - ☐ 7 times
 - ☐ 77 times
 - ☐ 70x7=490
 - ☐ not keep count and always forgive

“Who is Right?”

A great conflict had divided the village in two. Djeha was called upon to resolve the problem. His wife warned him the issue was difficult and that it might end up backfiring on him. But Djeha could not refuse so he decided to face the situation. He went to the market place and faced the villagers gathered into two opposed clans. The proponents of the first group provided their point of view and developed their arguments. After listening to them, he told them:

-You are right.

The proponents of the second group threatened him with their fists and laid out their point of view in order to convince them. He listened attentively to them and finally told them:

-You are also right.

His wife, who was next to him, pulled him by the sleeve and whispered in his ear: “What are you doing? They cannot both be right, it’s not possible!”

- He replied, “You are also right.”

Application

1. What is the last conflict you had in the past?

c. What was the major reason for it?

d. What was in jeopardy for me? (What did I risk losing?)

e. Do I have/did I have specific things I need(ed) to forgive? What are(were) they?

f. Was it worth persevering to correct the problem or wrong? Why?

g. What did I do to resolve the conflict?

h. Did I commit a sin in the beginning, or in my reaction towards the other person? If so, which one(s)

i. What good initiatives and actions did the others do? (Phil 4:8)

j. Did you have to have (or should you have had) a brother or sister intervene to help resolve the problem? (At what point? Why?)

k. What price did you pay to preserve or restore peace? (Col. 3:13; 1 Cor. 6:7-8)

13. What price did Jesus Christ pay so God would forgive my sins?

14. What price am I ready to pay now to preserve or restore peace in the conflict already mentioned? / in the church?

Ending note: How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! (Ps. 133:1)

Notes and References

1. Ken Sande. *L'Artisan de paix*. Global University, Springfield, Missouri, 2007, page 26.
 2. Rick Love. *Peacemaking: A study guide*. William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA, 2001, pages 4-5.
- To study the subject further and develop a biblical strategy for harmony and reconciliation on a personal level as well as in your church, you may refer to these works.

Lesson 9: The Church in the Future

In this lesson, you will learn what is the glorious hope of the Church.

At the end of this study, you will be able to:

- explain what the illustration of the Church as Christ's wife means.
- further appreciate the uncertainty of our current life and the importance of remaining in a state of alertness as we await the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Recognize signs of his return and their meaning.
- Describe God's judgment, the state of the ungodly and of the elect; reflect on the implications for your own life and testimony.

"[...]Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Eph. 5:25-27.

A. The Church in Wait

As we have seen in lesson 5, the Bible uses illustrations to teach us spiritual truths. These illustrations may concern past times, or times to come. Concerning the future meeting of Jesus Christ and his Church, the Bible uses the illustration of marriage: this occurs in Rev. 19:7 with the "wedding of the lamb." The Church has been preparing itself to meet up with Christ for two thousand years, so we are now in a time that is bringing us always closer to this day; the believer must remain in the faith concerning the prophecies on the subject. The Christian's hope lies not in his own death, but in the Lord's return; this is what he must long for.

1. Read 2 Peter 3:1-16, and answer the following questions:

- a. How will the message of Jesus' return be received in the end times (v 3-4)?
- b. Does this look like the times we live in?
- c. What are the skies and the earth of today kept for? (v7)
- d. How can we hasten (as we wait) the day of the Lord? (v9, 12-14; see also Matt. 24:14)
- e. **Read: v 9-15a again.**
 - i. What does "our Lord's patience means salvation" mean (v15a)?

ii. How can this apply to your own experience?

f. How will the day of the Lord come? (10)

g. Is this why we should possess a holy conduct? Develop your answer. (v11)

B. Christ's Return

We have said the Christian's hope lies in the Lord's (the bridegroom's) return to search for his Church (the bride). The New Testament is full of teaching concerning this subject: Christ's return is mentioned in over three hundred verses which demonstrates the importance of this subject.

1. Read: Acts 1:10-11

a. Who tells the disciples that the Lord will return?

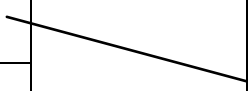
b. How will he return?


c. Why did Jesus leave? (John 14:3)

2. The signs

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." Matt. 25:13. Although we do not know the exact date of his return, we find foreshadowing signs of Christ's return in the New Testament which Jesus himself gave to his disciples. We also find a some in the epistles.

a. Link the references with the signs they describe; in the box "Accomplished/Not yet", mark whether or not you believe this sign has been accomplished or whether you think it has not occurred yet. An example has been provided

References		Signs	Accomplished/Not yet
Matt. 24:4-5		Deception of many	
Matt. 24:6-7a		Appearance of false Christs	<i>Accomplished</i>
Matt. 24:7		Famine	
Matt. 24:8-10		War	
Matt. 24:11-12		Plagues	
Matt. 24:14		Earthquakes	
Matt. 24:15-16		Israel and events	
Matt. 24:29-30		Signs in the skies	
Luke 21:11a		The persecution of Christians	
Luke 21:11b		Gospel is preached to the whole world	

 **Jesus chose signs that occur repeatedly during all times and ages; this is to maintain his Church alert and awake. But we must recognize these signs have intensified in the last few years. I.e.: Israel and events. The sign of Mat 24:14 has not quite been fulfilled yet. Indeed, the gospel has been preached to more people, but not yet to everyone.**

C. The Rapture of the Church

The Lord himself will come to get his Church as we read in 1 Thess. 4:16-17. What a joy to go to his encounter in the sky, and be transformed by his coming (1 Cor. 15:52)! All the detail in the Bible shows us that God has orchestrated all these things, and that every event is planned.

1. In the following table, write down who is concerned by the event and what will happen according to the provided text.

Verses	Whom does this concern?	What will happen?
Matt. 24:40		
Matt. 24:41		
1Cor. 15:50-52		
1Thess. 4:16-17		

D. The Wedding Times of Christ with his Church.

When Jesus first came to earth, he gave birth to his relationship with the Church. John the Baptist is the first to talk about Jesus being the Bridegroom. Indeed, John the Baptist's disciples were worried about Jesus and his disciples making more disciples than they were (John 3:26 and 4:1).

1. Read John 3:26-30. Here below is a list of phrases taken from this passage; your job is to link them to the right person by writing each of the following phrases in the table, following the example:

"Not the Christ"; "Sent ahead of him (Christ)"; "The bride belongs to the bridegroom"; "He is the bridegroom"; "The friend of the bridegroom"; "He must become greater"; "I must become less".

Jesus	John the Baptist
	Not the Christ

2. In order to celebrate a marriage, one needs a bride and a bridegroom: The bridegroom is Jesus Christ, his bride is the Church. To celebrate a marriage the couple must also be together in a specific place at a specific time. In this regard, scripture purposefully leaves us in a state of hope:

a. Do we know the hour and the day of the bridegroom's return? Read Matt. 25:13

b. Develop your answer (Matt. 24:36)

c. We do not know the day or the hour, but Jesus has left us with insight into the end times that can help us. Read Matt. 24:32-33: explain what you think Jesus meant (see also v.44).

E. The wedding Ceremony of the Lamb

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.... Then the angel said to me, 'write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.' (Rev. 19:7, 9)" The covenant of God with his people will therefore be accomplished in a conclusive manner.

1. In order to understand the wedding ceremony as John contemplated it (the author of Revelation), it is important to understand how these proceeded during his time. A contract was signed between the two families when the children were still young. Then, the young man's parents (at his request) went to find his future bride who was ready for the ceremony. Finally the ceremony took place in their future house.

a. In the following table, take note of what you learn concerning the bridegroom, the bride or both of them in the following passages:

Verses	What I learn on the Bridegroom/Bride
Eph. 5:25	
Eph. 5:27	
1 Thess. 4:7	
1 Pet. 1:8	
1 John 4:19	
Rev. 19:8	

b. Read Rev. 3:4-5. What do these white clothes represent?

c. What do you think the phrase: “was given her to wear” means (19:8)?

2. A Christian is kept in a state of faith that the unbeliever cannot understand.

Read the verses of 2 Pet. 3:3-4, and fill in the sentence with your own words:

In the last days will come _____ who will say *Where is the ‘coming’ he promised*
_____?

3. We could be crushed by the ridicule of our peers and by difficult times. But we must remember the story of Noah and his times. Read Matt. 24:37-38

a. What were the men doing?

b. What did Noah do?

Fill-in the blanks for Luke 21:28: When these things begin to take place, _____ and _____, because your _____ is drawing near.

F. The Judgment.

Although his return means joy and gladness for the children of the Lord, on another hand the fate stored up for sinners is terrible.

1. Take note of the phrases the Bible uses concerning suffering of the tied to the Day of Judgment. An example has been provided:

Matt. 25:41: *Eternal fire*

Mark 9:47:

Mark 9:48:

Rev. 19:20:

2. One facet of hell we understand best is probably that of separation from God.

Place the following references in their proper place.

Matt. 25:41; Acts 1:25; 2 Thess. 1:9; Ps. 109:17.

Man rejects God	God rejects those who reject him

3. In the book of Revelation, Jesus is described as having eyes of blazing fire: Rev. 19:12.

Check the box which you think provides the best explanation:

- ☐ 1. He will see clearly for each one of us
- ☐ 2. His gaze is pure
- ☐ 3. He tests works by fire
- ☐ 4. He will be hard to fool

4. Take note of the words or expressions which speak of suffering in the following verses:

Rev. 14:11; 20:10 Matt. 8:12; Matt. 13:42; Rev. 14:11.

Write the words or expressions which speak of suffering in the box on the right:

Matt. 8:12	
Matt. 13:42	
Rev. 14:11	
Rev. 20:10	

5. Where will the righteous go and where will the unrighteous go? Matt. 25:46

G. The Church in Eternity

Since ancient times, God declares that he will completely change the “things of the past,” and that he will do so with a new creation, a new heavens and a new earth (Is. 65:17).

1. According to the following verses, fill-in the following columns by indicating what will not exist in the kingdom of heaven (left column), and what will not enter into it (right column):

Will not exist (Rev. 21:4)	Will not enter (Rev. 21:27)

2. Still today we understand the truths of eternity rather poorly (1 Cor. 13:12). Soon we will see, understand and serve the Lord.

Read: Rev. 22:2-5, 14

- a. Where will the thrones of god and the Lamb be?
 - b. What will be written on our foreheads?
 - c. Why will there no longer be a night?
 - d. Will we reign with him? yes/no.
 - e. On what condition? 2 Ti. 2:12
 - f. For how long?
3. Read Rev. 22:2; 14 and Genesis 2:9; 3:22. In heaven man will have the right to the tree of life, which was forbidden to him in the Garden of Eden. Why do you think God closed access to this tree to Adam, but will open its access in heaven? (see also Rev. 2:7)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Church in Waiting

Obviously, the young bridegroom was full of joy and impatient to find his bride and live with her once and for all. In the same way, the bride rejoices over this appointment, and her heart desires this moment.

4. Complete the following verses:

“Let us rejoice and be _____ and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘_____ are those who are invited to the wedding _____ of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” (Rev. 19:7-9)

5. The parable of the master and of the servant or that of the 10 virgins (Mat 25:1-13) teach us that our wait of meeting him must not be in despair, even when times seem long or uncertain. Complete the following tables, taken from the parable of the servant (Mat 24:42-50):

Verse(s) 45-47	Good servant	Mission	Attitude	Action
Verse(s) 48-49	Bad servant	Mission	Attitude	Action

Master's attitude	Good Servant	V 46-47	
	Bad Servant	V 50-51	

EGLI 201: Church Life

Questions for Review

Lesson 1

1. Describe the relationship of God with his people, and the mutual relationships of the people under the Old Covenant.
2. What was the role of God's people towards the nations in the Old Testament?

L2

3. What advantages do the people of God enjoy under the New Covenant compared to the Old?
4. What differences are there in the constitution of the Church compared to the people of God under the Old Covenant?

L3

5. Describe the role of the first Apostles in the establishment of the Church following Jesus' death. Explain how they have ensured the growth of the Church and prepared their relief from responsibilities. What lessons can we draw for ourselves today?
6. Comment upon the birth of the Church in Jerusalem and the communal life in Acts 2:1-47.

L4

7. When Jesus told his first disciples, "You will be my witnesses... even to the ends of the earth," they could not comprehend the depth or range of this mission. What did they have to learn and how did God lead his disciples to enlarge their vision and participate in its fulfillment?
8. How is the church of Antioch a model for the ministry of a local church?

L5

9. Write down the five illustrations of Christ's Church.
 - a. Give a brief description (1 or 2 sentences) of each one with a key verse. Then
 - b. Develop in a paragraph what these illustrations teach us about our relationship as a Church toward God; *OR*, write a paragraph on the illustration you find most relevant to your life.
10. What do these Church illustrations teach us concerning our mutual relationships as believers in Jesus Christ?

L6

11. What does Eph. 4:1-17 teach us concerning the importance of the local church for each believer in Christ?
12. What is a sacrament? Explain concisely the meaning of each sacrament, and give a few principles that guide your personal life in observing them.

L7

13. Cite 5 biblical reciprocal (one another) commandments which regulate the communal life of believers in Christ. What do these exhortations teach us of the love that is required of us towards one another?

14. Explain what the following biblical texts teaches us concerning
- spiritual gifts given to believers in Jesus Christ: 1 Pet. 4:10-11
 - the principles we should follow in managing offerings in the church: 1 Cor. 16:1-4
 - how we are to edify the Church in our mutual relationships: Eph. 4:15

L8

15. As a committed member of a local Church, describe your personal responsibility in maintaining unity, and the specific actions you will take to accomplish this.
16. Describe “the peace process” we should follow to restore a brother/sister taken by sin.

L9

17. What do we learn of the events surrounding the return of Christ in Matt. 24?
18. Contrast the life of Jesus Christ’s Church in Eternity with the state of the unbelieving. What conclusions should be drawn from this?

Here is the answer to the first question as an example:

1. Describe the relationship of God with his people, and the mutual relationships of the people under the Old Covenant.

God established a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, a special relationship with a commitment through which God promised to bless and protect his people who owed him obedience in return. After a sojourn in Egypt, God freed the people (of Israel, descendants of Abraham) and lead them under Moses to the promise land: Canaan.

In this relationship through covenant, God regarded this people as belonging particularly to him from among all the peoples of the earth (Ex. 19:5-6). God revealed himself as a king towards his people (Ps. 47), a shepherd towards his flock and a wine grower towards his vine (Ps. 80). God permanently established his dwelling place with them through the transportable tabernacle in the desert, and later through the temple in Jerusalem (Lev. 26:11-12; 1 Kings 6).

The role of the people was to reflect the holiness and goodness of God (Lev. 11:44) toward the other nations, and to intercede for them as priests (Ex. 19:5-6). The people committed to aligning their conduct according to God’s commandments (Ex. 20) which brought them blessing and prosperity from God. (Deut. 28:1-14). On the other hand, disobedience lead to curses: plague, poor harvests, invasions, etc. (Deut. 28:15-27). Unfortunately, the heart of the people strayed from God and turned towards idols to the point where God exiled them to Babylon (Ez. 36:17-19) and promised to reestablish them with a new heart (Jer. 31:31).

By respecting God’s law, the people ensured justice and solidarity of all the members of the community. The tithes and offerings ensured the necessary resources for support, worship, priests and also to assist the poor.

Endnotes

ⁱ To discover your own particular gifts, you may refer to the course PRAT 202 New Identity: New life in the Spirit, lesson 4 “The fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts” of the Program “Progressing Together.”