

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Lesson Six

Memory Verse: *Hebrews 10:25*

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"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

I. Introduction. God established **three** foundational institutions on this earth: the family, civil government, and the group of Bible believing Christians that He calls "the church." Each group has a specific design, and is no less important than the other. Our focus in this lesson is on the local church which has been commissioned by God to carry out His commands of reaching the lost, and maturing the saved. Therefore, God's plan for a Christian's life will always be connected with a local body of believers called ***the church***. The purpose of this lesson is to show the disciple the role which their church will play in their everyday life. Without a good understanding of what Christ's church is all about, religions have been able to abuse, confuse, and turn so many people away from living the Gospel!

II. The New Testament Kind of Church

A. What It Is, and What It Is Not

1. According to *Hebrews 10:25* a church is referred to as the " of ourselves together".
 - a. It is the gathering of Christians together as often as possible to encourage, and minister to each other as we grow, and reach the surrounding area with the Gospel.
 - b. It assembles those Christians together into one unit, one body, as a team of believers, who live as Jesus lived and taught us to. It's like a writing pen has many parts that, when assembled, works just fine.
2. The church is something that Himself started, builds, and develops as a visible testimony to the world of His grace upon repentant sinners (*Matt 16:18*).
3. This "group" of believers is called the "*body of* " in *1Cor 12:27*. That means two things:
 - a. It represents His "body" (His physical presence) on earth today (like ambassadors, *2Cor 5:20*), and it operates ***like a human body*** in the following ways (*1Cor 12:12,13,17-27*):
 - 1) Each member (part) of the body of believers has a different function - each ministering to each other's needs as a whole.
 - 2) No one member can function alone - we need each other! When a Christian is not committed to others, especially to other believers, then they are hindering Christ's work in the world today.
 - 3) Each member's contribution is vitaly important to the well-being of the entire body of believers - we can't go it alone!
 - 4) A properly functioning body operates as a single unit - a team.



- b. All this shows that the church that Jesus started is a *living organism* constantly growing, and maturing under the never changing, and always perfect Head, Jesus Christ (Eph 5:23).
4. A church is more than just a group or a fellowship - it is a body of **committed** believers, seeking to worship and serve Christ **together**. It's called a "_____ of saints" (Ps 149:1, see also Eph 1:1; Col 1:1,2).
 5. A New Testament church therefore is *not* a building at all. If you are looking for a temple to worship in, the Bible says "*your _____ is the temple of ... God*" (1Cor 6:19,20). Think about that! Your place of worship is in your heart!
 6. A church is *not* a denomination, or religious organization run by a central headquarters. It is local, and run under the authority and instructions of the word of God through its pastor, and for its own people (Titus 1:5-9). *It also is not a social club - i.e., just for fun and pleasure!*
7. In short, a church is a group of people who **faithfully assemble together** (that means every week) because they are saved, baptized, and purposed in their hearts to "**observe ___ things**" Christ commanded them to do in the Bible (Mt 28:19,20).

- B. The local church is also called "*the _____ of God*" (Eph 2:19), or in other words, the "family" of God (as His children). As part of His family, Christians **MUST** be able to get along (John 13:35) under the authority of the _____ (Acts 2:41-47; 20:32).
- C. Remember that all members of God's family must be _____ into His family by the new birth (John 3:3; John 1:12,13) or else they are only spectators – not members.

D. Truths About the Church

1. Every local Bible-believing church is Christ's Church, where He is Head!
2. A true church is subject unto God's word in everything - we can't pick and choose.
3. Christ's church is family-oriented - not self oriented.
4. We love to give of ourselves so others get the Gospel.
5. A true church is evangelistic - on the go for souls!
6. Every Christian must be a committed part of a local church! We are not loners!

III. The Purpose of the Local Church

- A. The three-fold purpose of the church is found in Mt 28:19,20 where all Christians are to be active in:
 1. **GOING** - The world is not commanded to go to church, but the church is commanded to go into the world (see also Acts 1:8) with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and compelling them to come to "_____" (Mt 11:28-30). Every Christian needs to be involved in going to people everywhere, telling them how to flee from the wrath to come!
 2. _____ - The world needs to be **taught** about Jesus through Bible preaching, discipleship, and clear, Biblical teaching (Mt 28:19,20; Acts 20:25-27).
 3. _____ - People need to turn away from their *birth-religion*, and begin following Jesus Christ according to the Bible only, and that starts when a person is **baptized** (Mt 28:19), publicly testifying that you follow Jesus now!
- B. These are the **core** reasons for the existence of any church. If there is a fault in churches, it is because they have priorities that are more important than these!

IV. What a Church Does

- A. **Believes the Bible.** They will believe the Bible - *not criticise it* (2Tim 3:15-17; Act 24:14; Lk 24:25)
- B. **Feeds the flock.** The church is to be a place for _____ and teaching the doctrine (truth) about Jesus Christ, and the Christian life (1Cor 1:17; 2:1-5)!
- C. **Cherishes Doctrine** - They will pay careful attention to _____ – making sure it is right, and only from the Bible (Titus 1:9; 2 John 1:9,10).
- D. **Discipleship** - They will be involved in discipling new Christians, preparing them to serve God, and not be babies or selfish anymore (2Tim 2:1-3)!
- E. **Live Separated from the wicked cultures of the world around it** - They will be *different* from the world (1John 2:15; Tit 2:11-14; 2Cor 6:14-17). Not only just in beliefs, but in LIVES (clean and separated).
- F. **Corporate Prayer.** The church must focus on praying with one heart about the needs of its own people, and also of the lost around them (Acts 2:42) - Christians should pray together about everything – it keeps our hearts united!
- G. **Spiritual Warfare** - They use _____ weapons (not fists or guns) to fight temptation, sin and the devil (2Cor 10:3-5)!
- H. **Baptize new believers by Immersion** - They *immerse* - not sprinkle - when they baptize new believers (Acts 8:36-38).
- I. **Provide Christian Fellowship** - They ALL meet together every Lord's day, and as often as possible throughout the week (Acts 5:42; Heb 10:25)!
1. The church is to provide Christians with _____ with other believers (Acts 2:42) – you can't find this at the local pub or disco!
 2. The church makes it possible for people to minister to each other's needs (Acts 2:44,45). Your greatest ministry will always be one word – OTHERS! Especially widows and _____ (James 1:27)
 3. It encourages, and enables Christians to love and enjoy God (Acts 2:46,47).
 4. It edifies (builds up, strengthens) the saints (which is *all of us*, Eph 4:11-16).
- J. **Ordinances.** The church meeting is a time to remember the three main " _____ " (1Cor 11:2), which are not “sacraments,” but *commandments* that the Lord left specifically for the church to remember Him by. These ordinances are:
1. **Baptism** (Acts 2:41) - Baptism is vital to mark the commitment of a new believer to Christ, and to living separated from the old life and religions of their past.
 2. The **Lord's supper** (“*the breaking of _____*,” Acts 2:42; 1Cor 11:23-26) is meant to remind us of the high price Jesus had to pay for our forgiveness! A church can remember this event as often as they want, but usually it happens about every one or two months.
 3. **Loving _____** (Jn 15:12,17). This may sound a bit unusual, but Christ *commanded* the people of a church to love the people of that church as much as Jesus loves them. By doing this, God keeps us humble, and godly as a people!
- K. **Evangelism.** A Biblical Church will be involved in _____ to the lost (Acts 1:8). The church is to openly, publicly and consistently testify of God's grace and power to the world - it is NOT a secretive society that locks its doors! A true church will boldly evangelize a lost world to Jesus Christ!
- L. **Reproducing Itself.** All the above focuses a Biblical Church on reproducing itself throughout the world through soul-winning, baptizing, training, and then repeating (Acts 1:8)! A true New Testament church is not what it ought to be until it has *reproduced itself* somewhere else.
- M. **How can you tell if the church to which you belong (or wish to join) is a true New Testament type of church?** It will match the pattern found in the list above!

V. Each Person's Function in a Local Church

- A. During your Christian life, you should grow in three general stages:
1. **Observe and learn** - Your first priority should be to submit to the teaching of the word of God to learn how to be the man or woman that God designed you to be (**Matt 11:28-30**). Be teachable. Discipleship is the beginning of this stage. *The key is not to stagnate!*
 2. **Participate** - In time, you will naturally grow to the point where you can begin to serve and take on basic functions through the ministries of your church (**Matt 4:19; James 1:22-25**).
 3. **Lead** - As your growth continues, you should reach the point where you can begin to minister to others in the same way that you have been ministered to (**2Tim 2:2; 1Pet 3:15**).
- B. These three stages can be roughly compared to the stages of your growth physically: as a child, then youth, and then mature adult.
- C. Be patient! Growth takes time. If you work hard as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will watch yourself grow!

VI. The Organisation of the New Testament, Local Church. All believers are to be _____ (**John 8:31**) – that means, be students and followers of Jesus Christ, committed to living just like He would if He were in your shoes.

- A. The **guide and final authority** of a church is always the _____ (**Acts 20:32; John 17:17**). In Christ's church, the final authority is never in people, pastors, or princes, but in the living and pure words of God! As disciples, we must follow the Bible's design for Christianity, and not try and improve on it, or adjust it – just live it!
- B. There have been five positions of authority in churches throughout history, all under the Word of God (**Eph 4:11**) (and none of them included Popes, priests, or canons):
1. **Apostles:** Each were "*someone specially chosen and sent out by Jesus.*" Only TWELVE apostles were chosen by Jesus personally (**Mt 10:1,2**) who would be the first ***to establish Christianity throughout the world*** - they laid the foundation by writing and preaching the New Testament. The twelve were made apostles by the supernatural empowerment of Jesus Christ. Their powers were specific only to themselves, and not to all of Christianity (**2Cor 12:12**). Once the apostles died, their powers died with them!
 2. **Prophets:** They were a special class of people used by God to speak His word until the completion of the Bible (**1Cor 13:8-10**). Note that the Apostles were also prophets, but most prophets were not apostles, like _____ (**Acts 11:27,28; 21:10**).
 - a. Remember, the Old Testament was written by _____ (**Rom 16:25,26**)
 - b. The New Testament was written by ***prophets and apostles***.
 - c. Now that the Bible is completed, the role of prophets and apostles has **ceased** (see again **1Cor 13:8-10**).
- C. Well, if Apostles and Prophets are no longer around, what other leaders are there? (see again **Eph 4:11**).
1. **Evangelists:** These are Church-starters (like the Apostle Paul was), who *evangelize* the lost to a surrendered faith in Jesus Christ, and then assemble those believers into a local church fellowship (a flock), who are dedicated as a group to obeying and living by all the commands of the Lord Jesus under their own pastor (**Mt**

28:19,20). As each church obtains its own permanent pastor, the evangelist moves on and starts more churches somewhere else (2Cor 10:16).

2. **Pastors:** These are Shepherds, the Bishops, the Overseers of the “flock” of Christians that seek to serve Christ. They have the primary job of feeding the flock with the truths of the Bible, leading the flock of Christians to serve God, and protecting that flock from spiritual dangers. They are “coaches”, training Christians to shine as lights in this dark world!
3. **Teachers:** These people labour together teaching the word along-side pastors. No pastor can do all the work to keep a church going, so God gives additional people a heart to minister *WITH* the pastor, so that the Gospel can go further!
4. Of the five leadership groups listed above, only *the last three* are in operation today (Eph 2:19-22). The first two groups (Apostles and Prophets), by their examples laid the foundation of every church (until the Bible was finished), with Christ being the cornerstone of everything. The remaining three groups (Evangelists, Pastors and teachers) simply build upon that **finished** foundation (1Corinthians 3:10,11).

D. The Work and Authority of the PASTOR.

1. The primary leadership in a church is provided by its _____ (Eph 4:11; 1Tim 3:1-5; see also Titus 1:5-9). He is the BISHOP.
 - a. A bishop is a *shepherd* over a “flock” (1Pet 2:25; 5:1-4). That is what “pastor” means. **Pastor, bishop** and **shepherd** are all the same thing. He is to minister, preach, care for, instruct, and equip the believers.
 - b. By the way: a Biblical bishop is *different from modern bishops*.
2. Every church is designed to be led by a pastor. If a church has no pastor, then its main goal should be to pray, and get one, and then follow him as he follows Christ.
3. A pastor/shepherd does the following (Acts 20:28-31):
 - a. He _____ his flock with the word of God (Bible teaching).
 - b. He _____ his flock – knows them; cares for their needs. He keeps them in line with the Bible, and keeps them in motion, always serving the Lord.
 - c. He warns them - that is what preaching and teaching is for! He has a responsibility not just to the “flock” but to the Great Shepherd who called him to preach (Ezek 3:17-19; Col 1:28)!
 - d. Therefore, a pastor is to **oversee** and spiritually care for those to whom he ministers (by living like them, among them, and for them)! He is not to dominate their lives, but **guide**, love, protect them, and if need be, give his life for them as Christ did!
 - e. The pastor is not to be a _____ (1Tim 3:1,6), but an _____ (1Tim 5:17) - He should be **mature** in the Lord, and should be respected, and followed (2Tim 2:2; Jam 1:22). All pastors *first* are elders (mature Christians), but all elders are not pastors.
 - 1) Every young as well as older man in a church needs to be surrendered to the Lord’s will if He should call them to be a pastor.
 - 2) If a man is called of God to preach, then his local church is his training ground to prepare him to pastor someday!
 - f. Christians are to _____ the instruction of a godly pastor, knowing he watches for your _____, and will give an account to God for how you lived your life (Heb 13:7,17). God has given him the responsibility to instruct you as

you grow, and to rebuke you when you don't grow (1Tim 4:12). Every Christian needs a godly pastor to follow and learn from.

- g. One of the jobs of pastors is to train more pastors (2Tim 2:2). Pastors come from within a flock. That is how God supplies men to go and reach the world with the gospel – through godly men training faithful men!

E. **The Work of Teachers.** These are people God calls to work along with a Pastor to train and mature believers in a church (Eph 4:11-12).

1. Teachers of the Bible need to know the Bible themselves! They need first to be disciplined, so that they can later disciple others!
2. Everyone needs to be available should God need them to teach a Sunday School class, help with a Bible Club, or disciple a new Christian!

F. **The Office of Deacons.** This is not a leadership role, but it is an official role. Deacons are paid servants/helpers in a church (1Tim 3:8).

1. Even though there are several “official” positions of leadership, God refers to all Christians as _____ (Mt 20:25-28; 25:21), committed as a team of servants to obey our Lord's command to serve each other, and reach this world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
2. Some servants are official servants, known as **Deacons**. A deacon is a Bible word for a God-called servant, who gives their life to take care of the needs of folks like widows, children, and the poor, so that the pastor can continue to labour in the study and teaching of the word of God (Acts 6:1-4).
3. Ordained Deacons are paid by the church to be able to serve full time like their pastor does (Acts 6:5,6)! They serve along-side the pastor, taking some of the ministry work load off him, so that he can minister without being crushed by it.
4. A deacon must see his role as very important, and be committed to serving - not being served, even though being paid!

G. Notice what is NOT in a church: priests, gurus, canons, altar boys, Monsignors, Prelates, Primate, clergy, popes, cardinals, nuns, etc! Every religion has to “add” to God's clearly defined standard – but these additions are only destructive.

VII. What is a Baptist Church?

- A. Baptists are a group of believers that base every belief and every aspect of Christianity solely on the Bible – to the exclusion of all traditions and cultural norms.
- B. Bible believers have always assembled themselves together to:
 1. Preach and teach all the Bible
 2. To live the Bible's commands without fear of man or king,
 3. And to encourage each other.
- C. The groups who believed only the Bible, were labelled “Baptists” and “**ana-baptists**” (which means *re*-baptizers) by the Catholic Church during the great persecutions of the Dark Ages because we require people who had been baptized as babies to get re-baptized once they repent and are truly born again the Bible way. Baptists are not Catholic, nor Protestant – just Bible-believing followers of the Lord Jesus! Baptists down through history were tortured and burnt at the stake by the tens of thousands during the dark ages – all because they would not submit to a pope or king who required people to either worship himself, or follow an unbiblical belief.
- D. Please realise that the freedoms we take for granted today, were totally against the law just a few hundred years ago – like the right to own a Bible; the right of free assembly; innocent until proven guilty; and the right of disagreement with the government.

- E. Simply put, a Baptist Church is a local group of people who firmly believe and practice the following things as presented in the Bible alone:
- B** – Biblical Authority Only (2Tim 3:16,17). The only source for absolute truth about God, and what is right and wrong is the written word of God. All questions are settled according to “*Thus saith the Lord.*”
 - A** – Autonomy of the local church – this means a local church is fully able to make its own decisions, and govern itself (Acts 5:29). There is no hierarchy over a Bible believing church.
 - P** – Priesthood of believers (1Peter 2:9; Gal 3:26; Mt 23:8). Every Christian can go directly to God because Jesus Christ as their High Priest has made it possible.
 - T** – Three ordinances given by Jesus for the Church to obey: To regularly have the Lord’s Supper, Baptize, and Love one another.
 - I** – Individual Soul Liberty. A Christian answers only to God concerning his or her faith (John 12:48; Gal 5:13)! We have the freedom to believe what we want to believe. No human has power over your faith. But all people will answer to God according to whether they lived by the Bible, or by their own will.
 - S** – Saved and Secure Membership (Acts 2:47). Only born again believers are able to be members of a church, and all believers are eternally secure in Christ.
 - T** – Three Church Offices: Evangelist (Church Starter), Pastor, and Deacon.
 - S** – Separation of Church and State (Mt 22:21). Baptists believe the church is under the control of the word of God, not a government. We obey the laws of the land – but when those laws go against the Bible, a Christian ignores those laws!

VIII. The Financing of a Local Church (More about this in *Lesson Fifteen*)

- A. The giving of our *tithes* (1/10th of our income), and *offerings* to our local church is God's way of supporting your local church and its ministries. Faithful stewardship (the responsible handling) of our possessions involves giving the “*firstfruits of our increase*” to _____ (Pr 3:9,10)! Not because He needs our money (Ps 24:1), but rather, out of faithful obedience to His word.
- B. According to Malachi 3:8-10, the Lord is very serious about the Christian making sure money does not become a “god” in his or her life (1Timothy 6:10). He helps by requiring us to keep *Him* in first place with our finances. This is called *the tithe*. If a person does not tithe, no matter how hard it may be, *he or she is _____ God*, and are worse off by keeping their money, than by giving it to Him!
- C. Giving our money to the Lord is like the giving of our time, and our love - *it always costs us something* - and it should!
- D. Giving demonstrates the proof of our love for _____ (1 John 3:18; John 14:15). If a person has a problem with giving, then it is because they do not love Jesus Christ supremely, or they are not willing to follow the word of God by faith.
- E. So, why give regularly to my local church (1Cor 16:1,2)?
 1. To obey God (Prov 3:9,10) - do it first out of *obedience*!
 2. So that your church can be self-sufficient (not dependent upon the government, bazaars, or bake sales, but upon the very people who assemble together there).
 3. So that God’s man (the pastor) can be paid for full-time ministry serving people and the Lord, and reaching the lost, instead of having to work both a job, and do the ministry (1Tim 5:17,18)!
 4. And also, so that God can bless YOU, knowing that you seek _____ to bless and honour Him (Matt 6:33).

IX. So, How Does A Person JOIN a Local Church? Every Christian is to be a dedicated member of a local Bible believing church ([Heb 10:25](#)).

- A. **Fulfil God's requirements.** There are only two requirements to be added to a church: _____ (salvation) and _____ ([Acts 2:41](#)).
- B. **Know whether it is God's will** to join that church ([Acts 2:47](#)). Every Christian is supposed to be a member of a local Bible believing Baptist church, and committed with that church to getting the Gospel out to everyone in their area. Ask the Lord where you should commit YOURSELF, and your family, and then join it!
- C. **Request membership.** Don't expect to be a part just by attending your church. You have to **ask to be a member**.
- D. **Be accepted.** *The local New Testament church is exclusionary* (that means, it does NOT have to accept everyone as members – see [Acts 9:22-29](#)). You will only be accepted if you have a clear testimony of your salvation, been Scripturally baptized, and are in agreement with the doctrines of the church you wish to join yourself to. Ask the pastor for the doctrinal statement of the church for you and your family to review.
- E. **Once you have been accepted, Make the church, YOUR church!** Be there for every meeting, pray for your pastor, and for the other people there, and ask God where He needs YOU to work so that souls get saved, and young Christians grow!

Are you an accepted member of a church that believes the Bible and *practices* it? If so, where? _____. If not, is there anything keeping you from joining with your Discipler's church? **Yes**, or **No**?

X. Finding a Place to Serve the Lord in Your Local Church ([Acts 13:1,2](#)).

- A. When the Lord places you in a Bible believing Baptist church, dedicate your life, efforts, and talents in service to God so that souls get saved, and Christians are matured.
- B. Look around you and see where the pastor, or someone needs help. Take a look at the following list and circle SOMETHING that you might could do at church:
 1. Helping Teach a children's or teen Sunday School Class.
 2. Going out soul-winning regularly with other believers.
 3. Helping the pastor with secretarial tasks like sending out birthday cards.
 4. Correspond with missionaries to encourage them and pray for them.
 5. Start up a Bible study at your workplace during lunch. You could even use this *First Principles Discipleship Course* as the study materials!
 6. Singing special music, or even joining the choir.
 7. Playing a musical instrument.
 8. Having Bible Clubs in your home and back-garden.
 9. Going with the pastor on visitation calls to people's homes.
 10. Visiting people who are sick and in the hospital.
 11. Helping in a puppet ministry.
 12. Picking up people who need a ride to church.
 13. Making tea and coffee for people who come early to church.
 14. Ministering to older folks by mowing their grass, or repairing their homes.
 15. Hosting a Ladies' Coffee Morning in your home for Christian women to fellowship and give testimony so that other lost women can hear the gospel!
- C. And the list goes on... Just add your own ideas, and get started – right away!

XI. Discerning and Using Your Spiritual Gifts

- A. Every believer has been given the GIFT of the Person of the Holy Spirit in their lives ([Heb 2:4](#)). HE is the source of all good and abilities in your life now!

- B. The Holy Spirit has given every believer at least one gift/ability that enables them to “_____” the church (1Cor 14:12) – that means *to encourage and build up*.
- C. Spiritual Gifts are a divine enablement that was lacking in a person's life prior to salvation, but are given to be used to serve God by your life through your church. These gifts enable you to do what you could NOT do before getting saved.
- D. Talents are what you seem to already be good at, or enjoy doing:
1. Some people play the piano – that is a talent
 2. Some people can sing – that is a talent
 3. But a spiritual gift is something you could NOT do until you got saved
- E. Spiritual Gifts are not earned. They are not dependent upon superior intelligence, physical power, spiritual maturity, moral character, or the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- F. These are gifts of God's _____ (1Peter 4:10). Received without any merit.
- G. At the time of Christ, 12 men, called Apostles had very special gifts (Mt 10:1-3):
1. They had power over demonic spirits
 2. They had the ability to heal every disease and sickness! No limits!
 3. They could speak in multitudes of foreign languages (tongues).
 4. They could even RAISE the DEAD! Like it was just as easy to turn on a light bulb!
- H. But, these specific gifts have all passed away (1Cor 13:8-10), and are in hibernation until the time of the Tribulation and the Millennium (*more about this in Lesson 20*).
- I. The gifts that ARE available to believers today are found in Romans 12:6-8...
1. **Prophecy** – (1Cor 14:3) the ability to speak up for God / preach, when you used to be terrified of speaking in front of anybody!
 2. **Ministry / Helps** – that's serving, and making sure everyone is taken care of ahead of yourself, when before, you used to only think about yourself. It picks up the weaker brethren, the defeated, the discouraged, the empty (Gal 6:1).
 3. _____ – (2Cor 3:12) the God-given ability to explain the truths of the Bible and spiritual things, when you used to not be able to explain anything spiritually!
 4. **Exhorting** – being an encourager / a motivator – where you used to be so critical and discouraging to others (Heb 3:13; 10:25).
 5. **Giving** – (Mt 14:15-17) Sharing what you have with others. It is the drive to give things and money away without fear or regard of your lack, out of a deep sense of appreciation towards God!
 6. He that **ruleth** (Rom 12:8) – this is the gift of people management, helping manage people and events and Gospel outreaches, like a helmsman steers a ship according to the commands of the captain/governor (James 3:4).
 7. He that **sheweth** _____ (Mt 9:12,13) – is the person who goes out of their way to meet the needs of the weak and infirm, and sick and poor – never condemning them, but showing mercy on them.
- J. Some suggestions on how you discover your gifts:
1. Clear away any habitual sin in your life and get victory over anything that is blocking the work of the Spirit of God in your life (Heb 12:1; Eph 4:14-32).
 2. Look for just ONE gift – ask God to show you what main gift He has given you.
 3. Concentrate on meeting the needs of others ahead of your needs (Eph 4:8-12). Only as we begin to sacrificially serve others will we be able to sense and confirm the gifts we have been given, and we will start to supernaturally meet the needs of the church body as a whole.
- K. Be careful not to misuse your gifts, or fake a gift in you (Prov 25:14).

XII. Why Are There So Many Churches?

- A. The Bible warns that not only does God have *His* church (Matt 16:18), but so does _____ (2Cor 11:13-15). Satan's churches are full of:
1. False _____ (Matt 7:15)
 2. False believers (Matt 7:21)
 3. Traditions (Col 2:8)
 4. And false doctrines – heresies (Jude 3,4)
- B. So, when comparing "Religion" with *Christianity*, it is important to find out whether it is founded upon what God said (the Bible), or what **man** said (*tradition*, Mk 7:1-9).
- C. There are many different churches today. They all claim to be churches but are they?
1. Baptist Churches – should be strictly living by and obeying the Bible only
 2. Roman Catholic Churches – allegiance to Rome and tradition and not just Bible
 3. Presbyterian Churches – protestant, and baby sprinklers
 4. Methodist Churches – believe a Christian can lose their salvation
 5. Lutheran Churches – protestants that follow the teachings of Martin Luther
 6. Church of England, Church of Ireland – just barely different than Catholic
 7. Pentecostal Churches – emphasis mainly on miracles and experiences
 8. Non-denominational Churches – no strong doctrinal stand at all
- D. Then there are other religious groups – which are clearly **cults**:
1. Mormons – all of them are working at becoming gods (Gen 3:4,5)
 2. Jehovah's Witnesses – working their way to God without the new birth (Jn 3:3)
 3. Seventh day Adventists – keeping the Sabbath (Rom 10:4)
 4. Churches of Christ – believe God requires baptism and good works to obtain remission of sins (Eph 2:8,9)
- E. Never mind the fact that there are lots of different **religions** all over the world
1. **Buddhism** – China – belief in the eight-fold path to nothingness
 2. **Islam** – Middle East – believe in Allah and his prophet Mohammed
 3. **Hinduism** – India - believe in about 2 million gods
 4. **Shintoism** – Japanese – believe in dead ancestors
 5. **Judaism** – Israel – believe in God of the Bible, but not Messiah
 6. **Evolutionism** – fools – the belief in almighty dirt!
 7. **Atheism** – fools – believe only in almighty SELF!
- F. But in spite of all the above confusion, there are only two kinds of religions:
1. Either salvation is already and completely DONE by Christ...
 2. Or it is that we must DO, DO, DO good works, and then DO some more.
- G. There are so many churches today simply because people believe that there can be so many different approaches to God and the Bible, which just is not true (Rev 22:18,19; John 14:6). People must take God's word literally and completely, and come to God, only God's way - the Bible way. *Religion* has no authority other than itself, instead of the word of God. That's why, religions are constantly changing, while in Biblical Christianity, believers are always **anchored** to the unchanging words of God!

H. A brief History of “Churches,” beginning with the New Testament Church!

Early Christianity	33 AD	The Crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and His sending out His disciples into all the world to preach and establish Christianity by getting people to repent and believe!
	65	The apostle Paul says all of the then known world had heard about Jesus Christ (Col 1:23)! New Testament style churches were spread throughout the Roman empire in every major city!
	95	The apostle John finished writing Revelation, and completes the Bible - no more prophecy! Right after this, the Bible was published as one Book of 66 books in Latin.
Church and State	...	Intense persecution against Christianity by the Roman Empire for over 200 years!
	313	The Roman Emperor Constantine gives in, and organises a central state-church in Rome with him at the head. This becomes known as the ROMAN CATHOLIC Church. <u>He becomes the first POPE!</u> Before that time, all "churches" were local, independent, and <i>illegal</i> . After this time, only the “baptistic” churches were illegal.
	375	The use of " <u>images</u> " was introduced along with the <u>veneration of saints and angels</u> – the catholic church just borrowed all the images of the pagans and made them into “Christian” symbols (idols)! God forbid in Exodus 20 the veneration of ANY image or picture!
	394	“ <u>Mass</u> ” was forced as THE method for salvation. Religious leaders made the crucifixion into a ritual that had to be constantly repeated.
	593	<u>Purgatory</u> was introduced as a temporary punishment of sinners. No other religious doctrine produced as much money for the catholic coffers than the teachings about “purgatory!”
	850	<u>Holy water</u> is introduced as having special powers of healing and cleansing.
The Dark Ages	1054	The GREEK ORTHODOX church split from Rome over the issue of Papal authority. Now there were two “holy apostolic catholic” churches, neither of which follow the Bible!
	1079	<u>Celibacy</u> of the Catholic priesthood was made mandatory. Before then, most members of the clergy were married.
	1090	The <u>rosary</u> was adopted as a method of praying - it was also borrowed from the pagans. The Hindus, the Buddhists AND the Muslims also have their own kind of rosary beads.
	1190	<u>Sale of indulgences</u> (paying a priest for your sins in money) began. It allowed people to <u>pre-pay</u> for sins that otherwise would have to be paid for in purgatory.
	1215	<u>Confessions to Roman priests</u> started, and was made mandatory to all people for salvation. The gift of Salvation was just constantly being added to!
	1525	Martin Luther broke away from the Roman Catholic Church - started the Lutherans . Martin was a good monk, but wanted to get the Bible into the hands of the common people – he found he had to leave the “church” in order to live by the Bible.
The Reformation	1534	Henry VIII took the English church away from Rome & started the Church of England
	1541	The Presbyterian church was formed by Christians breaking away from Church of England. They made a big step in attempting to return to Biblical Christianity – but still carried a lot of “baggage” from Catholicism and the church of England.
	1791	The Methodist church broke away from the Church of England - by John Wesley. They for the most part went back to Biblical Christianity.
	1827	The Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints) began "their church" (with their own "Bible").
Apostasy	1850	Papal infallibility was decided
	1854	The <u>Immaculate Conception of Mary</u> (not of Jesus) was declared as doctrine.
	1870	The pope was declared to be infalible (without error) in his teachings.
	1896	The Jehovah's “Christian” Witnesses were organized (with their own "Bible").
	1900's	New religions and moralities were started like the world has never seen before
1950	The <u>Assumption</u> (ascension into heaven) of <u>Mary</u> proclaimed as doctrine.	
1980+	Even fundamental Christians no longer believe and practice the Bible (Judges 21:25)	

- I. Every year there are new “cults” and flavours of “faith” for people to choose from.
- J. But Bible believers (from the time of the apostles on) have never been a part of the religious "system" listed above, but have always been separate from it, and required anyone who believed the Bible to separate themselves from it (2Cor 6:14-18).
- K. Whenever the predominant religious system (Jewish, catholic, protestant, etc) caught a Bible believer, they side-lined, vilified, hunted and tortured them, and even burned them at the stake for their beliefs all because they would not obey the church and baptize their infants, and would not confess to priests, etc. (Acts 8:3; 9:1; 24:14).
- L. So, How can a Bible believer identify *false* churches and *false* religions?
 1. The first thing to look for is whether a church or religious organisation has another authority besides just the Bible.
 - a. Either their authority will **take the place of** the Bible (i.e., Book of Mormon, Koran), or **along-side with** the Bible (like Catholic traditions, having equal inspiration), or they will **produce their own bibles!**
 - b. In the Catholic church, their authority is found in about 135 volumes of church traditions and writings, along-side the Bible.
 - c. In other churches, their authority is based on visions, or secret revelations by their leaders. Anytime someone claims to have a vision, a dream or special revelations from God that cannot be verified (like Mohammed’s visions, Fatima, Joseph Smith, etc.) THEY are attempting to be equal with the Bible, or over-ride it. And THAT is a cult!
 - d. The Bible believer promotes an honest and clear revelation from God in the form of a Book that can be tested, and verified as authentic!
 2. Another thing to look for is whether they require blind obedience to any human leader – like a pope, or some charismatic leader, or a miracle worker.
 3. Find out if they have a history of killing or suppressing those who do not agree with them (i.e., like Islam does, and like Catholicism did in the Dark Ages).
 4. Do they emphasize obscure passages in their Bible instead of clear ones? (Like, Matt 24:13 and Acts 2:38 instead of Rom 10:13 and Eph 2:8,9).
 5. One last thing to check, is to see if they emphasize *secret* societies and groups that are not open and transparent. If secret things are going on, then they are not like Christ (Mt 26:55; Philp 2:15).

XIII. Questions

- A. According to Hebrews 10:25 a church is referred to as the “_____ of ourselves together”.
- B. A church is like the human what? _____
- C. Who started and designed the concept of a Church? _____
- D. What are the three ordinances/commandments for the church to keep?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- E. List one of the seven spiritual gifts that God gives to His people at salvation? _____
- F. What spiritual gift do you think you might have from God? _____

Date Lesson Completed _____

Discipler _____