

Impact Bible Study Series

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Impact Seven The Church

This Bible study and discipleship series is designed to take a Christian through some basic concepts taught in the Bible concerning Christians. Hopefully, you will be challenged to think about the things you have believed in the past as you carefully compare your thoughts with God's Word in this guided study. I would encourage you to reckon that God and His Word is always right and reliable. There may be times in this Bible study that you question what God's Word has to say. When that time comes, I hope that you will remember that the Bible is God's revelation of Himself, His purposes, and His plan for us. It was written a long time ago and we are assured by God that it will not change. These principles are those which lead us into the abundant life and rewarding relationship we all want to have with God.

You may find it more rewarding to go through this Bible study with one or more other people, this is Discipleship. Feel free to print as many copies of these units as you need. While this study is posted here for your use it was originally designed for use in a classroom. If something is hard to understand, please email me with your question, I will answer you and will change the study unit for future use, if required. Take your time, pray before each time of study, and let God work in your heart.

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Unit One

The Church

There are many views circulating concerning the Church of Jesus Christ. It would be time consuming and impractical to cover them all, so our goal will be to study the Biblical Revelation concerning the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Biblical Views of the Church

The word Church in the New Testament is used in three different ways but always refers to born-again Christians. These usages are in reference to:

- The Universal Church
- The Local Church
- The Historical Church

The Universal Church

1. What is revealed about the Church in Ephesians 4.4 and 1 Corinthians 12.12-13?

The Universal Church - When someone speaks of the Universal Church, they are making reference to the whole spiritual body of true Christian believers, regardless of location or time.

2. Who is a part of this one Body? (Hebrews 12:22-23)

The Church described in these verses is the Universal Church. The Phrase “. . . *and to the spirits of just men made perfect, . . .*” singles out born again believers and all of the redeemed that are a part of the body of Christ. Hence, the Universal Church is composed of born again believers from all time.

The Local Church

3. Who was Paul writing to in 2 Corinthians 1.1?

The phrase, “. . .*unto the Church which is at Corinth . . .*” is a reference to **the Local Church Assembly** in Corinth. The Local Church is a local group of professed Christian believers organized for worship, observance or ordinances. The second phrase, “. . . *with all the saints which are in all Achaia;*” is a reference to the Universal Church in the region. Hence, when the word Church is used in the New Testament, it may refer to either the Universal or to a Local Church body. The Local Church is the Church most referred to in the New Testament.

The Historical Church

4. Who is referred to in Acts 9.31 and Revelation 1.4?

These are references to the **Historical Church**. The Historical Church refers to a specific group of believers or the whole body of professed Christian believers on earth during a definite period of its history.

Nearly all of the epistles contained in the New Testament were written specifically to a local Church body, but also present universal truths valuable to all Christians or the Universal Church. Therefore, we need to understand that we are a part of the Historical Church, which is composed of all believers from all time (the Universal Church), who are called to serve God diligently in our communities (the Local Church). To neglect the local Church because we are a part of the universal Church would be to fail the historical Church.

As you read the New Testament you will discover these three views of the New Testament Church and how you fit within them in God’s purpose for His kingdom. Not only are there three views of the Church in the New Testament but there are also three pictures of the Church in the New Testament.

Three Pictures of the Church

The Church as a Building

5. Read Matthew 16.18, Ephesians 2.19-22 and 1 Corinthians 3.9-16. How is the Church described in these references?

6. Of what is a building constructed?

7. What is the revealed purpose of this picture? (1 Corinthians 6.16-20)

In these verses, the Church is described as a **Building** and this building is intended to be the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God. In thinking of a building, its structure suggests **organization with purpose**. Each part of the structure is necessary to the integrity of the structure as a whole.

The Church as a Body

8. Read Colossians 1.18 and 1 Corinthians 12.12-31. How is the Church described in these verses?

9. Who is the head of this body?

10. Of what is this body composed? (1 Corinthians 12.11-12, 25-26)

11. What does this Biblical description reveal about the Church? (Philippians 2.1-3)

In these verses, the Church is pictured as a **Body** consisting of various and differing members. This body speaks of the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ is a living organism. As in the picture of the building, a body has organization. However, this picture adds **vitality** to our understanding of the Church. The varying and differing members of this body are all likewise alive and function as

differing capacities supporting the purpose and ministry of the body as a whole. Hence, we come to understand that while the body has definite unity it does not have uniformity. Each part serves to complete and empower the body, but each part is not exactly alike nor does it serve the same purpose.

The Church as a Bride

12. How is the Church described in Ephesians 5.21-33,32 and Revelation 21.2,9-10?

13. What would be the Biblical purpose of this word picture? (Ephesians 5.25-27, Revelation 21.2)

In these verses, the Church is pictured as **a Bride**. This speaks to us of the relationship and extreme esteem that our Lord places in the Church. Our Lord loves the Church as a husband ought to love his wife. Hence, the Church and its members should adorn themselves for their wedding day, that they might be found ready and pure to enter into the wedding ceremony with their bridegroom. This picture reminds us of the **expectation and preparation** that should mark the Church and each of its members.

The Church is described as a Building, a Body, and a Bride. presents a dynamic and practical picture of the Church of Jesus Christ. you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you are a part of the living body presented in these three illustrations. think that some Christians fail to realize their position, privilege, and responsibility in respect to the Church of Jesus Christ. hope you will spend some time considering these pictures of the body of Christ and how you fit into them.

The Beginning of the Church

14. Who built the Church? (Matthew 16.18)

15. When was the Church empowered? (Acts 1.4-5; 2.1-4)

The Church was built by and belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord is the head of the body, the bridegroom that the bride is expecting and longing for, and the foundation of the building. This building may tremble upon the rock of her foundation, but her foundation will never tremble under her. As long as she is founded upon the rock of ages, this Church will not fall.

The Membership of the Church

16. What is to be common to all believers? (1 Corinthians 12.13)

17. When is one baptized into this body? (1 Corinthians 12.13-14; Ephesians 1.13)

Every born-again believer received the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation. This clearly indicates that the Church of Jesus Christ can only consist of redeemed individuals. should be the goal of every local Church Body. we are not God and cannot see into the heart of any person, there is the possibility for the unredeemed to join our local Churches. they may join our

Church here on earth, they can never be a part of the Body of Christ without experiencing the new-birth only found in Jesus Christ.

Purpose of the Church

18. What is the Mission of the Church? (Matthew 28.19-20)

19. What does the Holy Spirit empower us to do? (Acts 1.8)

20. What is the Service of the Church? (John 15.1-5; 1 Corinthians 12.7; Acts 1.8)

21. What is the manifestation of the Church? (John 17.10; Philippians 1.20; 1 Peter 2.9)

As you consider the Scriptural Mission and Purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ, you need to consider how you fit into that mission. 's purpose for His Church today is His revealed purpose for you today and throughout your life. are redeemed to glorify God by manifesting Him to all the world. How can you help to fulfill the purpose of God has for you in His kingdom today?

Discipline of the Church

22. Read Matthew 18.15-20. What is the first thing a Christian should do with a trespassing brother in Christ?

23. What is the next step, if he will not hear him?

24. What is the next step, if he fails to respond?

Keep in mind that it should always be the goal of the Church to seek unity and to perform the ministry of reconciliation. goal of any Church discipline is reconciliation. should only exercise any Church discipline after much prayer, possibly fasting, and in the spirit of godly love.

Why Go To Church?

A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

"I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today.

Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

When you are DOWN to nothing.... God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and makes the impossible possible! Thank God for our physical and our spiritual nourishment.

What Church?

Every born-again Christian needs to attend a good Bible-believing, Bible-teaching Church. Don't be fooled. Just because the preacher is holding a Bible when he preaches does not mean he is a Bible-believing preacher.

If your Church has preachers and teachers who:

- Are not convinced that the Bible is the perfectly preserved and inerrant Word of God and an authoritative guide for all of life's matters. Your Church or denomination is not Bible-believing if it condones sinful conduct like: homosexuality, premarital sex, adultery, etc. . .
- Do not teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty God, physically resurrected from the grave, and is sitting on the right hand of God the Father today.
- Do not teach that salvation is through faith by grace alone, apart from any good works.
- Do not teach the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many will claim that Jesus is Lord, but they believe and act as though the people of the Church are the lord's of the Church. Democracy is the contemporary cry of the Church. Christians are called upon to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Romans 12.1-2) by trusting and obeying the written Word of God.

Then you need to go to another Church.

Someone might argue, “but my family and friends go to this Church and I want to influence them with the Word of God.” This seems like a noble argument, but what you really do when you attend an apostate Church is you:

- Strengthen their positions and help to spread their false doctrines.
- Cause others to stumble. Whether they are people looking for salvation or people who are saved, they look at you and think, “there is a good man. If he is going here, then it must be a good Church.” Your mere presence will lead sincere people away from God..

You need to lead people to a Church that is truly a part of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. This requires that you attend a Church that knows and teaches that Jesus Christ is Lord and King.

Now, I must make a distinction here. A legalistic Church is not necessarily a Bible-believing Church. Look for a Church that does not take the Bible and bend it to support the rules and regulations that they have endorsed for many generations. Instead, look for a Church that studies and believes the Bible for what it really says.

Finding such a Church may not be easy, but it is important for you, your family, and your community. Find the living Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, become a part of that body, and support it with your personal, sacrificial service.

Unit Two

THE PASTOR

There are only two offices in the Church of Jesus Christ, as presented in God's Word: the Pastor and the Deacons. The focus of this study will be to investigate the divine revelation concerning the Pastor.

Scriptural Names for the Pastor

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and list the various names given for a Pastor.

The word “elder” refers to the man that holds the office, while “bishop” designates the office he holds.

2. How many elders did a church have in Biblical times? (Titus 1:5; James 5.14; 1 Pet 5.1)

It is important to note that there are at least two different Greek words that are translated “elder” in the King James Bible. One word, *presbuteros* (gk), can mean in essence minister, or can mean of older age. The other word, *meizon* (gk), means of older age. The usage of the word in its context will help you identify its specific meaning.

3. Where does the term Pastor come from? (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28)

Some churches recognize elders as a distinct ministry office from that of the pastor or bishop. It seems clear from Titus 1:5-9 that this distinction is incorrect since the terms bishop and elder are used in the same context apparently referring to the same office.

Qualifications of a Pastor

4. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and list all of the qualifications listed for a pastor.

5. Express what is meant by the husband of one wife?

This is one of the more controversial qualifications for a pastor and, in many cases, seems to trump every other pastoral qualification. However, all of the qualifications of a pastor are equally important. Since this qualification refers to the bond between a husband and his wife, it seems that the example of Christ fits well here. Christ has but one bride, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:21-33; 2 Cor 11:1). Yet, Church folks should avoid the tendency of expecting a pastoral family to be utterly perfect. Even Moses was separated from His wife for a time (Exodus 18:1-6) and continued to faithfully serve God in spite of this separation. Yet, Moses was never divorced from his wife.

6. What qualifications are given for a Pastor's wife? _____

7. What is the most important qualification of a Pastor?

Responsibilities of the Pastor

Look up each reference and briefly describe the responsibility given.

8. 1 Timothy 3.4-5; 5.17

9. Acts 20.28

10. Titus 1.7

11. Titus 1.9

12. 1 Peter 5.2-3

13. 1 Thessalonians 5.12-13

14. Hebrews 13.7,17,24

15. Ephesians 4:11-12

16. James 5.14

17. 2 Timothy 4.2

Pastors have the God-given responsibility of shepherding the body of Christ. Shepherding requires;

- That a pastor preach, teach and train the Church members to do the work of the ministry.
- That a pastor care for and correct Church members when necessary.
- That a pastor lead the Church, taking the stewardship, responsibility, and oversight of its ministries and members.

Church members who do not understand the God-given ministries of a pastor will find themselves making his work nearly impossible and will find themselves working against God and the authority structure He has placed in His Church.

The Church and the Pastor

How should the Church treat their Pastor according to the following passages of Scripture?

20. 1 Thessalonians 5.12-13

21. Hebrews 13.7,17,24

22. 1 Timothy 5.19

23. 1 Corinthians 9.7-14

24. Galatians 6.6-7

Church members should protect, provide for, and promote their Pastors. Church members should be especially careful about how they talk about their Pastor. Gossip and rumors are incredibly harmful to the Universal and Local Church. Going to Church on Sunday morning and having roast preacher on the way home in front of your children will destroy your child's confidence in the Church and its leadership. Recognizing that a Pastor is a gift God has given to the Church (Eph 4.8) will help Church members to treat their Pastors properly.

Unit Three

THE DEACON

The purpose of this study will be to examine the Scriptural case for the Deacon. It is helpful to understand the origin of the word Deacon. It comes from the Greek word '*diakonos*' which means “**one who serves.**” Hence, a Deacon is a servant of the Church.

The Establishment of the Office

1. Read Acts 6.1-6. What was the occasion that warranted the choosing of Deacons? (vs. 1-2)

2. Who chose the men that were to fill this position? (vs. 3,5)

3. What were they to do? (vs. 2-4)

4. How were they placed into their office? (vs. 6)

Some dispute whether or not this passage actually refers to the first deacons or not. However, the passage and the traditions of the Church come neatly together to lend strong evidence to the fact that this was indeed the first Deacon election. The office of the Deacon was created to serve and secure the Church. The first deacons were ordained to protect the Church from gossip and rumors, meet the needs of the people of the Church, and release the pastors for the ministry of the Word and prayer.

Deacons were not meant to be rulers or overlords of the Church. Nowhere in the Bible is there a command for anyone to follow or obey their deacons, as is found numerous times in the case of the Pastor. Hence, deacons are meant to be the servants of the Church under the leadership of the Pastor.

The Qualifications of a Deacon

5. Read 1 Tim 3.8-13 and list the various qualifications given for a Deacon.

6. Which qualification is the most important?

7. What does the “Husband of one wife” imply? (vs.12)

8. What are the qualifications of a Deacon's wife? (vs. 11)

The qualifications of a deacon are very similar to those of a pastor. The interesting thing about a deacon and his family is that there are qualifications listed for a deacon’s wife, while none are listed for a pastor’s wife. It is interesting that the Bible expressly forbids slander in a deacon’s wife, perhaps pointing back to the primary reason for the creation of the office in Acts 6.1-7: because of the murmuring among the Grecians.

The Responsibility of a Deacon

9. Read Acts 6:2,4 and describe the duties of a Deacon.

The Rewards of a Faithful Deacon

10. What is the result of a faithful service as a Deacon?

11. Is there any indication in Scripture of the Deacons exercising control over the Church? if so, where?

12. How many Deacons should a church have?

Scripture does not give a specific number of deacons for any given Church. It is worth noting that when these seven men were ordained as deacons there may have been hundreds of thousands in the Church at that time. Some scholars have suggested that as much as half the population of Jerusalem may have experienced the new-birth by the time of the establishment of this Church office.

A deacon that fully understands his purpose and position in the Church of our Lord will be an invaluable ally and partner in ministry for his pastor.

Unit Four
THE MEMBERS

Since we have already studied the basic requirements for Church membership, this study will focus primarily upon the responsibilities of each individual Church member.

It is important to remember that these responsibilities are basic to every Church member, regardless of office or supposed stature. The fact that one might be a Pastor, a Deacon, a Treasurer, or any other official of the church merely imposes more responsibilities upon that member. However, one's office does not relinquish any of their basic, Christian responsibilities.

The Most Basic Responsibilities.

Look up the following references and describe the responsibility listed:

1. John 3.3

2. Acts 2.38

3. Acts 1.8

4. Romans 12.18

5. Titus 2.11-14

6. Hebrews 10.25

Clearly, a person cannot be a part of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ until they are born-again and baptized by immersion. Each member is then called upon to seek the peaceful unity of the Church body and the edification (building up) and purification of the Churches membership. It is a given that one can do nothing toward the Church, nor receive nothing from the Church if they are not regularly and faithfully in their Church.

Our Responsibilities Toward The Church.

Read the following verses and list the responsibilities they reveal that you have toward the Church and its people:

7. Ephesians 4.3

8. Ephesians 4.11-16

Each member of the Church body must collectively work toward the unity of the Church as a whole. Christians must realize that there is a distinct difference between unity and uniformity. God does not expect all Christians to look and act alike (uniformity), but he does expect us to work together to build up His glorious kingdom (unity).

It is equally important that each Christian discover that their primary purpose in Church is not to receive something for themselves. Instead, it is to give something to those around them. Verse 16 stresses that every member of the body is to give

nourishment and strength to every other part of the Church body. You need to come to Church so that others might receive encouragement and enlightenment through your presence and godly ministry.

Our Responsibilities Toward Our Pastor

The following verse reveals some responsibilities that Church members have toward their pastor. What are they?

9. 1 Timothy 5.17-19

Verses 17-18 clearly refer to your tithes and offerings. Pastors cannot perform the ministries God has called them to do without the actual physical support that they need. Contrary to what many Church members believe today, tithes were not meant to build and maintain buildings, but were directed by God throughout Scripture to be given to the ministers that are performing God's work. When the tabernacle was built a special offering was taken. The same was the case for the Temple Solomon build. Hence, Church members need to develop a proper attitude about how their tithes and offerings ought to be used by the Church.

Secondly, all Church members need to diligently protect their Pastors from rumors, gossip, and false accusations. Gossip seems to be the nationally acclaimed past time for Church members in our contemporary culture. Whenever a Christian talks ill of their Pastor or their Church, they are severely hurting the reputation of the Church and Christ, who is its Lord. Christians must diligently protect and promote their Church and its people.

The Purpose Of Life

Consider the following verses and see if you can discover your God-given life's purpose.

13. Revelation 4.11

14. Matthew 6.33

God made us to glorify and please Him. Christians will fulfill God's purpose for them when they seek His will and way above and before all other things.

The Result Of Obedience

What do the following verses teach us about learning to obey God?

15. John 13.17

16. Matthew 6.31-33

17. Malachi 3.10-12

Many in our world belittle the Church by their words and actions. Perhaps they have not thought about how important the Church is to their personal spiritual

growth, or perhaps they have not thought about how important the Church is to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals that you can never be fully complete in Christ apart from His Church. The Bible also reveals that Jesus loved the Church so much that he was willing to die for it.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Do you Love the Church as much as Jesus does?

Something To Think About

Many in our day think of and work in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as if it is a democracy. We all want our rights, and we all want our say and vote. However, the idea of a democracy is foreign to the Bible and was foreign to the Church historically until near recent history.

American Christians like the principles of a democracy because we like our individuality and demand a certain sense of control. However, God does not make those kinds of allowances in His kingdom or his Church. The Church is not a democracy. Instead, it is an absolute theocracy, and our Lord Jesus Christ is it King.

Consider what the Bible states:

Colossians 1:12-18 ¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the _____ of his dear

_____ : ¹⁴ *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: ¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: ¹⁶ For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. ¹⁸ And he is the _____ of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the _____.*

God is not looking for your suggestions or your vote. He is looking for your complete surrender and submission to our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians do not actually get to choose their place in the Body of Christ or their part in God's glorious kingdom. Instead, the Bible reveals that:

1 Corinthians 12:18 *But now hath God _____ the members every one of them in the body, as it hath _____ him.*

This may seem like something fully against our joy and fulfillment in life. If we were being asked to submit and surrender to a human theocrat, we would probably be miserable indeed, but this is our Heavenly-Father, who loves us with an unconditional love, and who never makes even the slightest mistake. Hence, learning to completely yield to our God will provide us with our greatest release and contentment.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. He has placed each of us into His living body as He saw fit. We are called upon to yield to those authorities He has placed over us. Why should we surrender and submit?

Romans 12:1-2 ¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living _____, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, _____ of God.

Unit Five

Apostate Churches

It will not take a new Christian very long to realize that there are a lot of different kinds of Churches in our world. There are Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, and many more. Of the Baptist Churches, there are Southern Baptist, American Baptist, Northern Baptist, Reformed Baptist, Independent Baptist and still more. All of which claim to be Christian Churches and representatives of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As one begins to investigate these different Churches, one quickly realizes that all Churches do not believe the same things about the Bible, our Lord Jesus Christ, and what a spiritual Christian's life should look like. Some of these Churches might suggest that there really isn't any real difference between the different Churches and denominations, but it sure is easy to identify the differences that exist.

In an earlier study' it was suggested that a Bible-Believing Church will:

- Believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible and perfectly preserved Word of God. Churches that condone and excuse sin do not believe the Bible.
- Believe that Salvation is through faith and by grace alone, apart from any human work.
- Believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- Believe that our Lord Jesus Christ physically rose from the grave and is alive today seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

So, what about all these different churches and denominations? What does the Bible say about them? Jesus spoke about these Apostate Churches. This study will help you to discover what he said.

What Jesus Said

Read Matthew 25.1-13 before going on.

This parable of the Ten Virgins reveals what Jesus knew would happen to the Church. In order to understand what Jesus is saying, you need to understand something of the symbols used in this parable.

These are:

- The Ten Virgins are Church members.
- The Lamps represent the Word of God.
- The Oil represents the Holy Spirit.
- Where they Slumbered represents the Church Building or gathering place.
- The Bridegroom represents our Lord Jesus Christ.

Take a few moments to think about the parable Jesus told and the symbols just described and record your thoughts concerning what this parable might mean:

Notice that all of the virgins have lamps or Bibles. They all are seeking to meet the same Bridegroom. They have the same anticipation and the same general message. They all sleep in the same general place, or they appear to be gathered together.

However, there is a stark difference between them, and it is critical, for only the wise were allowed to enter the marriage feast. The difference is the oil in the lamps. The oil in the lamps represents the Holy Spirit. Those who had the Holy Spirit lit their lamps and went into the feast. The others were not allowed to enter

when the bridegroom came and closed the door.

A couple of things to think about

1. When does a person receive the Holy Spirit? (Ephesians 1.13-14)

The Bible is clear. Every born again believer has the Holy Spirit within them.

2. If a person does not have the Holy Spirit, then they are what? (1 John 5.11-13)

That's right. They are lost. They are not a child of God. Hence, the foolish virgins are in Church, carrying Bibles, talking about deep Christian truths, but they are not born again.

3. What percentage of these people were left out of the feast? _____%

Going to Church, carrying a Bible, using Christian terms, being a Pastor, Deacon or Sunday School Teacher does not guarantee that someone is saved. The only thing that can save a person is accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior.

The Apostle Paul gave us this warning:

Acts 20:29-30 ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall _____

_____ enter in among you, not _____ the flock. ³⁰ Also of

your own selves shall men arise, speaking _____ things, to draw

away _____ after them.

Jesus said:

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false _____, which come to you in _____ clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Peter Warned:

2 Peter 2:1-2 ¹ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false _____ among you, who privily shall bring in damnable _____, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall _____ their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

The Bible reveals that false teachers would find their way into the Church. We know from history and the Bible that these were already evident during the lifetimes of the apostles (Revelation 2-3). Therefore, we know that they are still present today.

Two Schools of Thought

Early in the Church's history, two different Christian education systems came into being. One school was established in **Alexandria**. These folks taught what is known as the **Allegorical Method of Interpretation**, which taught that everything in the Bible was symbolic and was a matter of interpretation. Nothing in the Bible was to be taken literally.

They also taught that the Bible was written by men about God. In other words they believe that the authors wrote what they believed about God, and, when you come right down to it, who's to say that your thoughts about anything are any better than

mine. Hence, what every man felt about God was just as valid as any other man's thought.

The other school was established in **Antioch**. This school taught the **Literal Method of Interpretation**, which taught that the words of the Bible meant what they said. The words were to be understood as they were written.

This school also taught that the Bible was authored by God and written through penmen through the supernatural process of inspiration. What any individual thought about God was impertinent, and all that really mattered was what God said in the Bible.

The Bible records:

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the _____ were called _____ first in Antioch.

Hence, there are two different ways to approach the Bible. The allegorical method can make any verse or passage of the Bible mean almost anything. The literal method only let's study the Bible mean what it says and seeks to understand the truths that are revealed through Scripture.

It does not take long for one to realize that these two methods are still very much among us today. It is the contrast between these two methods of interpretation that has produced the many denominations and churches we find in our world today.

What Are Good Christians To Do?

The Bible tells us to:

Romans 16:17-18 ¹⁷ Now I beseech you, brethren, _____ them which cause _____ and offences contrary to the _____ which ye have

learned; and _____ them. ¹⁸ For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

The doctrine we have learned is none other than the perfectly preserved Word of God. We must stand upon, trust, and obey those things revealed in God's Word.

Consider also that a deceiver is worse than a liar. You know a liar when you see them because they are lying. However, a deceiver is someone who is lying in a way that is very hard to identify. These false teachers and preachers are very convincing through their sincerity and convincing words.

Christians must be careful and diligent as they search for a Church home. There are many Churches in our world, but they are not all a part of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even different varieties of the same denomination can be starkly different in respect to our Lord and His precious written Word.

Also, Christians must remember that there are no perfect churches in our world. If an imperfect human being is a member of a Church, then the Church must be imperfect as well. However, you are still commanded by your Lord to find a Bible-believing Church and be a part of its ministries. Not just for your sake, but also for the sake of those who will be touched deeply by your contribution.

Remember a Bible-believing Church will:

- Believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible and perfectly preserved Word of God. Churches that condone and excuse sin do not believe the Bible.
- Believe that Salvation is through faith and by grace alone, apart from any human work.
- Believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- Believe that our Lord Jesus Christ physically rose from the grave and is alive today seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Unit Six

What's Right with the Church

The last unit of study concerning deceivers in the Church and the apostate Church could be discouraging for born again Christians. What every child of God needs to realize is that the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is still alive and well in our world. Anyone who has moved into a community and searched for a Church home knows how difficult it is to find a **Bible Believing Church** that is **Doing God's Kingdom Work** and has avoided the traps of extreme Liberalism or Legalism. But these Churches are alive and well in our world.

In spite of the warnings concerning the apostate Church in the Bible consider what is right about the Church according to God's Word.

The Commander of the Church

There is but one head of the Church and he is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:18 ¹⁸ And he [Jesus] is the _____ of the body, the _____: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

The Church was built by the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus is and always has been the head of the Church. Christians must understand that Jesus is not the head of worldly religious systems but He is the head of His Church which is composed of born-again believers. Hence, there are many Churches in our world and in your community that love the Lord and seek to yield to His spiritual leadership. This is the kind of Church you need to be a part of.

Also, remember that if you are a member of a Church that does not surrender to the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ or has become apostate then do not continue to support that false religious system. Good Christian people need to support and serve in good Christian Churches that love our Lord and serve Him with diligence and purpose.

The Commission of the Church

Our Lord commissions his Church with,

Matthew 28:18-20 ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is*

given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ _____ *therefore, and*

_____, *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and*

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ *Teaching them to*

_____ *whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo,*

I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Revelation 3:8 ⁸ *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an*

_____, *and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little*

strength, and hast kept my _____, *and hast not denied my*

_____.

God has set before His Church and His people an open door of ministry to **Evangelize Sinners, Encourage the Saints, and Exalt the Savior.** Hence, you should be a part of a Church that is focused upon our Lord's Great Commission.

The Community of the Church

Christians should resist the contemporary idea that they are a part of the Universal Church and have no need of the Local Church. The fact that there are so many apostate Churches in our world in no excuse for born again Christians to neglect the Church and Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible reminds us,

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

1 Corinthians 12:20-21 ²⁰ But now are they _____ members, yet but _____ body. ²¹ And the eye _____ say unto the hand, I have no _____ of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Every member of the Body (Church) of our Lord needs every other member of the Body of Christ. We nurture and received edification (building up) from the various members of the Church. No born again Christian can be fully complete or spiritually matured without the Church and its members. We need each other and God demands that we **not** neglect one another. Consider what the Bible says,

Ephesians 4:11-16 ¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the _____ [maturing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more _____, tossed to and fro, and carried about with _____ wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may _____ into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: ¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which _____ joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the _____ of itself in love.

You need the Church and the Church needs you. You need the Church so that you can be fully spiritually matured. The Church needs you so that it can be strengthened by your presence and contribution. **As a born-again Christian you need to find, join, and support, a good Bible Believing, God Glorifying, World Winning, Church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.**