

# THE CHURCH

## On Having Fellowship With Other Believers

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts...*

Acts 2:42-46

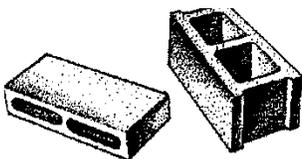
What we have here is a description of the brand new, infant church. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people became Christians; and here we see them being built together as a family and becoming a mighty army for God and His Kingdom.

Jesus said, *"I will build My Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* The Church is very important to God. He loves His Church. The Church isn't something you go to in order to be a Christian. In fact, you don't actually GO TO church at all. If you're a Christian, you ARE the Church (at least you're a part of it). The Bible never refers to the church as a *building*, it teaches that it is a *people*. Church is not *where* you pray, it's *you* who pray. John Wesley, a great evangelist in the 18th Century, said *"There is nothing so Un-Christian as a solitary Christian."* If God is your Father, that means I am your brother, because He's my Father too! A family is a small church, and the church is a large family!

I think you'll find that, as a new Christian, the Church will become a large part of your life. The relationships that you build, the things that you will learn, and the opportunities that you will have to serve; will all benefit you greatly in your spiritual development.

Let's talk in this section about...

Why you need the church and---  
Why the church needs you!



# WHY YOU NEED THE CHURCH

## **1. You need the Church For Preparation**

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."*

Ephesians 4:11-12

You need the Church to equip and prepare you. There are those in the church who can teach you what you need to know about living for Jesus. Your pastor has been called by God to help you discover the treasures available to you in God's Word. And there are many other seasoned followers of Jesus that can help mentor you in the ways of the Lord.

## **2. You need the Church For Partnership (Fellowship)**

- *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.  
1 John 1:7*
- *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16*

The Church is made up of people who speak the same language, are going in the same direction, and are committed to the same values and goals. That is why we need one another.

We need *unity* in order for this to be effective. The Bible tells us to "*guard the spirit of unity.*" Now *unity* is not the same as *uniformity*. In order to have uniformity, everyone would have to be the same (they'd *have* to wear "uniforms"). This is the opposite of how it is in the Church, because the Church is made up of a lot of different types of people. We don't want uniformity in the Church. *Unity* - yes, *uniformity* - no!

Notice in James 5:16 it says to confess to one another. This is part of our fellowship, because one of the biggest benefits of our relationships in the Church is accountability. In the Church we help each other stay on track spiritually.

### **3. You need the Church For Prayer**

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16*

If we are going to confess to one another, we must also *pray* for each other. One of the things we do to bless each other in the Church is to lift each other up to God in prayer. You not only need people to talk to you about God, but you need people who will *talk to God about you!*

I have found that the best way to get someone to pray for me is to simply ask for it. I strongly urge you to develop relationships with people in the Church so that you can share your needs with them for prayer. If others are going to *bear* your burdens, you are going to have to learn to *share* your burdens! That's a big part of what the Church is all about.

### **4. You need the Church For Praise (Worship)**

- *I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. Psalm 22:22*
- *From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. Psalm 22:25*
- *My feet stand on level ground; in the great assembly I will praise the LORD. Psalm 26:12*
- *I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. Psalm 35:18*
- *Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. Psalm 149:1*

On one hand, worship is a personal thing, but it also a very *public* thing. It is like the difference between singing in the shower and singing along with a big choir. Worship is supposed to happen in our lives on an individual level, but also on a *corporate* one. Look at the Scriptures above for examples of corporate worship. There's really nothing like lifting your voice to God along with your brothers and sisters, and glorifying Him together. The Bible says, "*Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together!*" Psalm 34:3

### **5. You need the Church For Prodding**

- *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews. 3:13*
- *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24*

- *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another --and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25*
- *If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Galatians 6:1*
- *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

It's clear, isn't it? We need to regularly encourage one another lest we become susceptible to the treachery of our sin nature. In other words, if we are not fellowshiping with other believers we will get calloused against the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We may need to 'prod one another' in love occasionally. If someone is caught in a sin, someone else in the church needs to attempt to restore them gently, mercifully and boldly. We're family!

***"There is nothing so Un-Christian as a solitary Christian."***

#### **6. You need the Church For Plurality**

*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. Romans 12:3-6*

After these verses, Paul goes on to mention six other gifts which are resident within the body of Christ. Notice how he talks about how much we need each other here. He urges us not to think of ourselves too highly, meaning we can't go out on our own and try to live the Christian life. We need other people. We are like a body with many members, and each member has a different function just like your human body. Our gifts and our callings make us *inter-dependent*, instead of independent.

I read a story about someone who had a dream about being at a huge banquet table with dozens of other people. The table was replete with a feast of every kind

of food and the people sat, famished on either side. The only problem was that none of those seated there had the capacity to bend at the elbow. Therefore, they couldn't get the food into their own mouths (How frustrating!). So they devised a plan to serve the person across the table from them - everyone feeding the other! What a great picture of the Church. It shows how much we need each other. We don't just feed *ourselves*, but we help one another find the nourishment provided by the Lord.

Do you know that it is almost impossible to start a fire with *one log*, even if it is a good log?! A few poor logs would make a better fire if they'd just stay together long enough under the spark. But if the logs roll apart, you have to keep putting them back together to keep the fire going. This is the reason we need one another. We've got to stay close enough together to keep the fire going!

There was a man who had his arms amputated in the Civil War, but he still wanted to contribute. He asked his commanding officer to restore him to duty. The officer pointed him to a blind man up on a hill who was filling buckets with water. He told the armless man to go up to the blind man and tell him when his buckets were full. The officer saw that either man working separately wasn't going to be particularly productive, but the two working together could fulfill a necessary task!

The Church is a *team sport*. T.E.A.M. stands for "Together Everyone Achieves More." You've probably seen the T-shirt that says, "There is no I in TEAM." No quarterback or pitcher in the world, no matter how good they are, can win a game by themselves. None of us have it all together, but together we have it all!

## **WHY THE CHURCH NEEDS YOU**

Though you may be a new believer in Jesus, the Church needs you! There are no *vestigial organs* in the Body of Christ (this is any organ that doesn't have any purpose in your body).

*"Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If*

*they were all one part, where would the body be?"* 1 Corinthians 12:14-19

"The Church is not some 'show' that you watch on Sunday. It's a family, whose members are fully engaged with God and with one another. You are an important part of the local church. Don't sit on the sidelines and watch - get in the game and play!

Let me illustrate my point by talking about two vastly different kinds of ships. There is the **cruise ship** with hundreds of people on board who are lying around on lounge chairs, sipping wine, with servants at their beck and call. They might be cruising to the Hawaiian Islands, or the Bahamas, or maybe to Alaska - but all they're doing is *cruising*. Then there is the **battleship**. On this ship, everyone on board has a job - a purpose. Some man the guns, some wash the dishes, others give the orders, while others keep the engines running smoothly. Everyone onboard has a part.

The local church should look more like the battleship than the cruise ship, because each of us in the Church has a purpose and a job to do. We all have gifts and callings to serve one another in our church family and beyond. There are no "cruisers" in the Church. Each of us has a role to play, a job to do to minister to others (inside and outside the Church). No one can do your part except you. There are no 'pinch hitters' to take your place. The Church is not a bus where the pastor does all the driving and everybody else sleeps in the back!

### **1. The Church Needs You For Preparation**

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*  
Ephesians 4:11-12

**There are no "cruisers"  
in the Church!**

For the very same things for which you need the Church, the Church needs you! In Hebrews 5:12, the writer says *"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!"* He is telling them that they are mature enough to teach other people. Not that everyone has the *gift of teaching*, nor is everyone in the Church called to leadership, but *everyone* can grow to the point of having something to teach others. I challenge you to use some of these

foundational truths that you are learning now in this manual to teach others who are younger in the Lord yourself!

## **2. The Church Needs You For Partnership (Fellowship)**

- *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7*
- *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:6*

You not only need to be held accountable, but you need to hold others accountable as you grow in Jesus and become mature enough to do so. Be a partner - as well as *look for* partners in the church!

## **3. The Church Needs You For Prayer**

- *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16*

Not only do you need to be held up in prayer, but you also need to be holding others up in prayer! Your prayers count as much as anyone else's! God is not going to just speak to *others* about you, He will speak to *you* about others and their needs. He will give you burdens, challenges and opportunities to pray for other people in the church.

Now that you know Jesus you are one of the "*righteous*" of which James speaks, and your prayer is as powerful and effective as everyone else's. The Church needs you for prayer!

## **4. The Church Needs You For Praise**

- Psalm 22:22 I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.
- Psalm 22:25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.
- Psalm 26:12 My feet stand on level ground; in the great assembly I will praise the LORD.
- Psalm 35:18 I will give you thanks in the great assembly: among throngs of people I will praise you.
- Psalm 149:1 Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints.

- Ephesians 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord
- Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

**Everyone can grow to the point  
of having something to  
share with others...**

Just as you need the Church for corporate worship, others in the Church need you to encourage them as you worship together. Your voice and your participation in worship can help other want to do the same. You can be an inspiration to others by your active involvement in praising God! Not only do you need *their* inspiration, they need *yours*!

#### **5. The Church Needs You For Prodding**

- *Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*
- *Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*
- *Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another --and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*
- *Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*
- *Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

Remember that you need others to *prod you*, or spur you on. But you also will have many opportunities to *prod them*, exhort them, be an agent of the Lord to stir them up for Him. You are needed in the Church to motivate others to love Jesus more!

#### **6. The Church Needs You For Plurality**

- *For by the grace given me I say to everyone of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who*

*are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*  
*Romans 12:3-6*

A family is a small church  
and the church is a small family.

Not only do you need the gifts of others, the Church needs your gifts. *You are gifted* by Christ to be a blessing in His Church. The whole body is weakened if you neglect to participate in the family of believers, because your gift is necessary in that family. Don't join a local church just for what you receive from it. Give back to it in time, talent, and treasure!

You have probably noticed that the list of reasons why *you need the church* are the same reasons why *the church needs you!*

One of the best illustrations for these reasons is the story of why geese fly in V-formation with one another. It's been discovered that as each goose flaps its wings, it creates an updraft for the goose immediately following. By flying in V-formation, they say that the whole flock adds at least 70% greater flying range than if each bird flew on his own!

They also have discovered that if a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the other birds. Also, when the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies 'point' for a while. Have you ever wondered why geese honk while they are flying in V-formation? Scientists believe that they honk from behind to encourage those in front to keep up their speed. When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They will either stay with him until he is healed or dead; and then launch out on their own again.

This is such a great illustration of how ***you need the church*** and how ***the church needs you***. When we fly *together* we have a greater flying range as believers in Jesus. If we try to do it on our own, we will discover the "drag," and it's harder for us to live the Christian life. If we stay in formation, we have the advantage of the lifting power of *other* Christians *around* us. *Even* 'lead geese' *get* tired, so there has to be a rotation of serving and leading in the church. We need to 'honk' at each other once in a while in order to inspire each other to greatness. When someone in the church gets hurt, wounded or falls we want to be with them in

order to be a strength to them until we, with God's help, nurse them back to health.

*Father God, I thank you for each person reading this book. I thank you for their commitment to Christ, and their commitment to the local church. I pray that each one will find the local church to which they need to belong. Help them to become part of the answer, instead of part of the problem. May they not isolate, but rather participate in a local fellowship of followers. May they be a blessing as well as be blessed by their church family. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## **FOR FURTHER REFLECTION**

### **Get started...**

- Read Romans 12:1-8 and write down the seven “Motivational Gifts” listed there. Begin thinking about which of these best describes you.
- In most churches the best forum for the development of the principles taught in this lesson is the small group that meets in a home, coffee shop, or wherever. Some churches meet only in homes, and that’s fine too. If you’re not in a small group of Jesus followers of some kind, be sure to locate and join it.

### **A verse to memorize...**

- Hebrews 10:25

(I recommend that you look up the verse, write it on a card or something, and repeat it over and over throughout the day until you can quote it verbatim.)

### **Read it and write it...**

- Take some time everyday to read the Bible. (I recommend that you begin with the Gospel of John and then move to the book of Acts. When you finish those books, go on to the Gospel of Matthew. If you’ve finished Matthew, then go on to the Gospel of Mark and read some more about Jesus.)
- And then journal your thoughts, feelings, and questions. In addition to talking to God everyday out loud, write some of your praises and prayers on paper (or on your computer). Be honest and intimate in your conversations with Him. Expect

Him to communicate with you with honesty and intimacy as well.



