

— OUTLINE —

I. Every step I've mentioned so far—being water baptized, receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit, building a sure foundation in the Word of God—can be made much easier if you get involved in a good local church.

- A. The Lord created the church, which is simply a group of His people who meet together regularly for the purpose of loving each other, praying for each other, and building each other up.
- B. Many people love the Lord but don't like His people.
- C. That's because some Christians don't reflect God like they should.
- D. They hurt others with their mean-spiritedness and hypocrisy.
- E. Because of this, you may want to commit your life to Christ and enjoy a relationship with Him but have nothing to do with a church.
- F. I can relate to what you're feeling, but that's a wrong attitude to keep.

II. You grow spiritually by participating in a good church.

- A. As a believer, you're like a hot coal in a burning fire—you'll stay red hot and glowing as long as you're involved with other believers in a local church body.
- B. Separate and isolate yourself from the other coals, and it won't be long before you grow cold.
- C. Although there are plenty of bad churches out there, it's worth your effort to find the good ones—every believer needs to be involved in a local church.
- D. You can learn a lot from Christians who have walked in God's Word and have been through some things.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

EPHESIANS 4:11-12

- E. Many new believers want to bypass people and receive everything they need straight from God.
- F. However, the Lord prefers to work through mature Christians to build up and strengthen newer ones.
- G. God uses apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip and mature believers for the work of the ministry.

- H. He gave these people to build up the body of Christ until **“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”** (Eph. 4:13).
- I. Since the church hasn't fully attained that yet, God is still using these five different types of ministry gifts to accomplish His goals.
- J. You are disobeying God if you don't get involved with other believers.
- K. God will still love you and you won't lose your salvation, but you'll be a cold, isolated coal when you run into hurts and difficult situations.
- L. Instead of having a strong support system of other believers who love you and know your situation, you'll be on your own in the ocean.
- III. What you hear while you're young in the Lord will greatly impact your spiritual development.
- A. As a new believer, you're like a little plant that needs to be in a protected environment until your roots grow deep.
- B. Since you are forming your spiritual root structures, it's crucial that you hear correct teaching now.
- C. Although what you hear as a new believer is important, a church will supply you with more than just teaching.
- D. Your participation in a local body can provide you with needed fellowship and relationships with other Christians.
- E. Media ministries can feed you God's Word through audio messages, books, websites, radio, and television programs, but nothing helps the Word become flesh in your life better than regular interaction with other on-fire believers.
- F. God demonstrates His love through His people.
- By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*
- JOHN 13:35
- If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*
- 1 JOHN 4:20
- G. No one who refuses to relate to God's people can say they truly have a relationship with God.
- IV. A local church will provide you with the opportunity to put Christ's teachings into practice.

- A. It's one thing to hear the Word say to do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matt. 7:12), but it's quite another to actually live it.
- B. Your rate of maturity will slow down if all you ever do is shut yourself up with a Bible for weeks and months.
- C. Some things you'll never really learn until you have to deal with other people.
- D. Your local church leadership can provide ministry to you and your loved ones in practical ways that a media/traveling ministry cannot.
- E. You'll also find like-minded believers with whom you can establish close friendships.
- F. This doesn't mean you reject people who aren't believers, but from now on, your strongest friendships should be with other Christians (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
- G. If you remain unequally yoked with an unbeliever, sooner or later, that person will negatively affect you—**“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed”** (Prov. 13:20).
- H. You always rise or sink to the level of your closest friends.
- I. Regularly meeting together with other believers protects and promotes your spiritual health.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 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 10:23-25

- V. Don't let minor doctrinal issues prevent you from settling into a good church.
 - A. Even if it's not a strong faith-teaching church, it's better to participate in some local church than not to participate at all.
 - B. A good church preaches everything God offers in His Word—salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, healing, deliverance, and prosperity.
 - C. Don't stay somewhere that's against the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing, and so on.
 - D. Many groups teach that all you need to do to initially receive is believe but that after you're saved, everything is based on your performance—that's wrong!
 - E. You don't have to earn God's favor, earn answers to prayer, earn God's love, earn your healing, or earn anything else.
 - F. The atmosphere ought to encourage healthy relationships.

- G. Whether big or small, your experience in a church will normally come down to the quality of your relationships there.
- H. Trust the Lord to lead you to a good local church.
- I. Pray—then take some steps of faith.
- J. It's His good pleasure to guide you to your place in His body!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. How can steps in your Christian walk—such as being water baptized, receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and building a sure foundation in the Word of God—be made easier?
 - A. By joining a local church
 - B. By wishing and hoping
 - C. By paying someone
 - D. All of the above
 - E. None of the above

2. According to the lesson, what is the church?

3. True or false: Wanting to commit your life to Christ and enjoy a relationship with Him but having nothing to do with a church is a proper attitude to have.

4. You _____ by participating in a good church.

5. Separate and isolate yourself from other coals—other believers in a local church body—and it won't be long before what?
 - A. You grow cold
 - B. You grow stronger
 - C. Nothing happens
 - D. All of the above
 - E. None of the above

6. **“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the _____ of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).**

7. Are you disobeying God if you don't get involved with other believers?

8. What you hear while you're young in the Lord will greatly impact your spiritual development—why?

9. God demonstrates His _____ through His people—“**By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have _____ one to another**” (John 13:35).

10. True or false: Those who refuse to relate to God's people can say they truly have a relationship with God.

11. If all you ever do is shut yourself up with a Bible for weeks and months, what will happen to your rate of maturity?

- A. It will slow down
- B. It will speed up
- C. It will stay the same
- D. All of the above
- E. None of the above

12. Once you are born again, whom should your strongest friendships be with and why?

13. You always _____ or _____ to the level of your closest friends.

14. True or false: You shouldn't let minor doctrinal issues prevent you from settling into a good church.

15. Is it better or worse to participate in a local church, even if it's not a strong faith-teaching one, than not to participate at all?

16. Should you stay at a church that doesn't preach everything God offers in His Word?

17. What should the atmosphere of your church do?

— SCRIPTURES —

EPHESIANS 4:11-13

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; [12] For the perfecting 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.

ACTS 9:1-5

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, [2] And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. [3] And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: [4] And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [5] And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

JOHN 13:35

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1 JOHN 4:20

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

MATTHEW 7:12

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

JAMES 5:14

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? [15] And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [16] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, [18] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

PROVERBS 13:20

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

HEBREWS 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) [24] And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: [25] 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.