

=PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING=

Lesson 9

The Christian and His Church

AIM: to teach my pupils the importance of joining and supporting the church.

POINT OF CONTACT: Compare the church with the physical body. You may have some pupil stand up and point to the members of his body, such as tongue, ears, eyes, hands, feet, etc. Show the pupils that the Lord compares the church to a body. Each of us is a particular member of that body. For example, someone is likened unto a nose, someone is likened unto the feet, someone is likened unto the hands, etc. This will prepare them for the lesson that is to follow.

INTRODUCTION: There are several different interpretations as to just what is the church.

1. There are those who believe that the church is composed of all believers. They say that when a person is saved he is automatically in the church.
2. There are those who believe that the church is only a local institution. They explain that a person who is saved is in the Kingdom of God but not in the church; hence, he should join a church of believers to carry out the Great Commission.
3. Then, there are those who believe that there is both a local church and an invisible church or universal church. They believe that the church is used in the Bible in two senses and that there is a universal church and a local church.

I believe that there is presently only one church, the local church, but that there is another church being formed that is often called the “church” or the “body” in the Bible. I believe the only church today is the local church but that all believers today are being baptized into a body which someday will be a church. We take this from the meaning of the word “church,” which is “assembly” or “called-out ones.” Putting these together, we call the church a “called-out assembly.” The only such assembly today seems to be a local body of believers organized for the propagation of the Gospel. However, every Christian is baptized into the body of Christ; and when that body is complete, we shall be called out to an assembly in the skies. Then the entire body of Christ shall be a “called-out assembly.” Hence, I believe that Jesus is building His church, that is, forming His body; but that since it has not yet been called out or become an assembly, it is not yet a church. The “called-out assembly” today is the local New Testament church, but there is one being formed which is the body of Christ and which shall be called out and become an assembly. Hence, this shall be the church victorious.

We should not be contentious about these matters. There are many different views concerning the church. One may be dogmatic about his own view but should exercise Christian grace and understanding toward those who do not share his particular view. Whether the church be composed of all believers or only those of a local group, let us discuss what kind of members of the church we ought to be:

- I. WE SHOULD JOIN A CHURCH. Acts 2:41, 47. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that the Lord was adding to the church, and that the people in the New Testament days joined a church. You will also notice the only two qualifications mentioned in the Bible for this joining were conversion and baptism.
- II. WE SHOULD REALIZE OUR PLACE IN THE CHURCH, FIND IT, FILL IT, AND REALIZE THE CHURCH NEEDS US. I Corinthians 12:14-17. Here the Lord likens us to a body, and each of us to a member of that body. The foot should not be jealous of the hand, nor the ear of the eye. Each of us is to be content in the place that God has given us in the church and realize that our place is important. Some are pastors, some are musicians, some are teachers, some are ushers, some are deacons, some are custodians, some are staff members, etc. Each of us has a place in the church, even if it is just a place of praying, tithing, attending, etc. Whatever our place is, we should fill it well. (Teacher, especially stress here the importance of everyone filling his place and that no one is unneeded or unnecessary. Especially should this be stressed to the little children!)
- III. WE SHOULD ASK GOD TO GIVE US A PLACE OF SERVICE AND NOT COVET THE PLACE OF ANOTHER. I Corinthians 12:18. God places us in the church where He wants us and where we can be of the most value. Let us find the place, accept it, be satisfied and do our jobs well.

- IV. REALIZE THAT YOU NEED THE CHURCH AND THAT THE CHURCH NEEDS YOU. I Corinthians 12:21. Notice the figure of speech here. The eye needs the hand. (Ask the pupils to help you figure how the eye needs the hand.) Notice that the head needs the feet. Suppose the head decided to go somewhere and the feet would not go. Don't you see? The head needs the feet, and the feet need the head. Feet without brains would not know where to go; brains without feet could not go anywhere. (Teacher, the possibilities of interesting teaching here are limitless. Use the illustration to its fullest.)
- V. LEARN TO APPRECIATE THE SEEMINGLY WEAKER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AND THOSE WHO DO LESSER JOBS. I Corinthians 12:22. Notice, the ones that seem to be more feeble are necessary. Oftentimes, the brain does not function because of some little insignificant member of the body that is not performing well. Oftentimes the leg cannot function because a toe is sore. The hand cannot function well because of a bad finger. The foot cannot work because of an ingrown toenail. We must appreciate and realize the importance of the seemingly weaker members.
- VI. WE SHOULD HELP THOSE MEMBERS WHO NEED IT. I Corinthians 12:23. Now compare this once again to the body. If the nose is shiny, we give attention to the nose. If a tooth is hurting, we give attention to the tooth. If we have a sore foot, we doctor the foot. The same thing is true in a church. We should not criticize those who are weak, but we should help them. It is the job of every member of the church to try to help the weak ones, realizing that we need them so desperately.
- VII. WE ARE NOT TO BE DIVIDERS OF THE CHURCH. I Corinthians 12:25a. Once again, we compare the church to a body. Oftentimes, surgery is necessary. It should, however, be done only as a last resort. When a member is not functioning properly, we should do our best, through prayer and help, to cure that member before we have surgery. Suppose, for example, a person has a bad appendix. It is best to try to cure the appendix and not have it removed. Only if the entire body is hurt and affected should surgery be performed. The same is true in a church. It is so easy for us to want removed the members who are not the "good ones." This is not to be our attitude; we are to help them and try to save the "body" from surgery. If the entire body is hurt, sometimes surgery is necessary. This should be a last resort.
- VIII. WE SHOULD CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER. I Corinthians 12:25b. As members of the church, we should have concern for one another and then take care of one another in need.
- IX. WE ARE TO SUFFER WHEN ANOTHER MEMBER SUFFERS. I Corinthians 12:26a. When someone steps on the toe, the tongue does not say, "That's good enough for you, old toe. You shouldn't have gotten in the way." Rather, the tongue says, "Ouch!" The eyes cringe, the muscles stiffen—the entire body runs to the rescue of the toe and suffers with it. When a member of the church suffers, we all ought to suffer. We ought to share the sorrow of those who sorrow just as the body shares with other members of the body who suffer.
- X. WE SHOULD REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE. I Corinthians 12:26b. When the feet and legs win a footrace, the tongue rejoices, the eyes beam, the hands clap—the body working together did it. The feet and legs may get the most praise, but it was a joint work. The work of the church is the same way. When something good happens to one of us, we should not be envious, jealous or covetous, but rather grateful that a member of the body receives some attention. We should rejoice with those who rejoice.

CONCLUSION: Let us vow to be faithful to our church throughout the year.