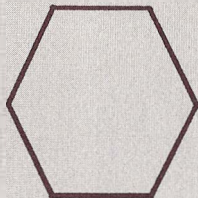
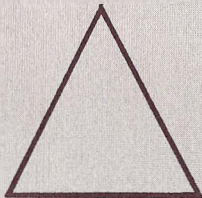
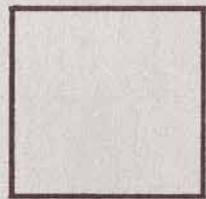
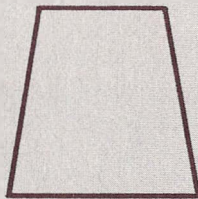


Where Do I Fit?

By
Pastor Hollis Partlowe



INTRODUCTION

The Aim of This Booklet

As the name suggests, this booklet has been prepared for new Christians, to help them to feel comfortable, to get adjusted to the local church, and to find their place of service in God's redeemed family.

Now that you are a part of the greatest group on the face of the earth, the Church of God, just how do you find your place in the Family of God? Where do YOU fit into his program?

"There is a place for every worker,
In the vineyard of the Lord."

Where is your place? This course of study is designed to help you find it. With prayer, your pastor's help, and the help of the rest of the congregation, you can find the slot that God has for you. It should be taken for granted that God never called anyone to sit on the sidelines and watch the action. Make no mistake! God wants you to be a participant, not a spectator.

It is important that the teacher read this whole booklet before attempting to teach the first lesson. The booklet is not intended to be exhaustive in its content. Your pastor (or teacher) can add any details that he wishes, or answer any personal questions that you may wish to ask.

Requirements for taking the course: Bring your Bible, study your lesson, take notes, do your memory work, and attend regularly. Do not miss a single class unless it is absolutely necessary. **THIS COURSE IS IMPORTANT!**

Each student should be required to memorize the books and divisions of the Bible listed on page 24. Take one section at a time. You can do it during the free moments that you have during the day. Women can put the page over the sink, and memorize while doing the dishes, ironing, or cleaning. Men can write down one section at a time, and work on it on the way to and from work, at lunch time, while waiting in the car for their wives, or during any other spare moments. Use spare time to memorize! The ABC's of Bible study require memorizing the books and divisions of the Bible.

The great doctrines of the Bible, commonly believed by the people of our General Conference, are stated on page 23. No effort has been made to study them, except to list them. After you have successfully completed this course in the milk of the Word, you will be ready to cast aside the nursery bottle and feed on the meat of the Scriptures. Study these great doctrines on your own, and under your pastor's direction.

It is the writer's prayer that you, "speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

Lesson One

LIFE AFTER BIRTH

The Bible teaches that when one becomes properly related to God through Jesus Christ, he is a new person (2 Cor. 5:17; John 3:3-5). Just what has happened to you, to bring about this drastic change? You have heard the gospel, believed it, repented of your sins, invited Christ into your heart, been baptized in his name for the remission of sins, and risen to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5). Your past, with its sin, is dead and gone; you are a babe in Christ and need the milk of God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2). Jesus Christ is enthroned in your heart. He has purchased you with his blood, and you are his (1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 7:23). God has purchased you with the blood of his own Son (Acts 20:28; John 3:16).

Perhaps every new Christian experiences moments of doubt. "Have my sins really been forgiven? Has God really blotted them out?" Let me assure you that he has. Scripture says that he has blotted them out (Isa. 43:25). He has removed them as far from you as the east is from the west (Psa. 103:12). Your sins are behind his back (Isa. 38:17), and cast into the depth of the sea (Micah 7:19). These verses have your name on them. Apply them to your life. Sin forgiven is now a reality for YOU!

No Longer Condemned

Scripture declares that by being in Christ you are no longer under condemnation (Rom. 5:1). Through Christian conversion, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to each believer, and the sin of each believer is imputed to Christ. That's right! On the cross of Calvary, Jesus suffered the penalty of sin for the whole world. As each believer turns to him in faith, God applies his Son's righteousness to that believer's account.

One cannot please God with his own righteousness because it is as filthy rags in God's sight (Isa. 64:6). Yes, one's own righteousness is a poor thing to bring before the Lord. Don't do it! We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8, 9). All of the good works in the world will not bring salvation to one person. The basis of our salvation is the death of the divine Son of God.

Growth Expected

When a baby is born into the world, we expect it to grow normally. In fact, if it doesn't the parents are quick to take it to a reputable pediatrician to learn the cause of the problem. In the same way, the newly born Christian is expected to grow, and not to remain a babe in Christ for years. "Go on to perfection" (maturity, Heb. 6:1). In the preceding chapter (vv. 12-14) the writer of Hebrews rebukes some of the early Christians for remaining babes, sucking on the bottle when they should have been taking the meat of the Word and teaching others. **DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!**

If you have risen from the waters of baptism with Christ, seek the things of Christ. Study carefully Colossians 3:1-4.

What should you put off? List on a piece of paper, or on the margin of this booklet, the terms used in verses 8, 9, 5. Use a modern translation, too.

What should you put on, according to verse 10? For future study see Ephesians 4:22-32.

To grow properly, you need:

1. To attend Sunday school and church services regularly (Heb. 10:23-26).
2. To learn to pray. Prayer is talking to God as a friend.
3. To read the Bible daily. Don't worry about the parts that you do not understand; obey the parts that you do understand.
4. To learn to feed yourself from the Word of God, starting with the milk (1 Pet. 2:2).
5. To share your faith with others. Let your friends know that you are a Christian. Invite them to services. Give them tracts.
 - A. Three characteristics of a witness:
 1. He must know something about the subject;
 2. He must be willing to talk;
 3. His life must reflect what he believes.
6. To ask God to show you where you fit into his family, and do the job that he assigns to you with all of your might (Eccl. 9:10).
7. To keep Jesus Christ enthroned in your heart through his Spirit every moment. He has saved you from your past sins, and he can keep you each step of the way. Believe that he is able.

Author and Finisher of Our Faith

Look to Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher, Beginner and Perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2). To all who thirst, he gives "the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6b). Baptism brings together two wonderful agents: the redeeming blood of Christ; and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (till Jesus comes—Phil. 1:6).

Lesson Two

THE CHURCH

While many think of the church as a building of wood, stone, and brick, the word is never used that way in the New Testament. Our aim in this lesson is to ask three questions, and answer them.

1. What is the Church?

The word "church" comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, denoting an assembly of "called out ones." This group is called out of all nations of earth, and separated to God for his holy purposes. It is collectively called the Church of God. Study Acts 15:14; Ephesians 3:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 1:4.

This group is often referred to as the "body of Christ," with Christ himself as head of the body (Col. 1:18). From this illustration we learn that Jesus is to the church what your head is to the rest of your body. It is he who is building the church. God has committed to him all power (authority) in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). The church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19, 20).

The Epistle to the Ephesians is rightly called "The Epistle of the Church." It teaches clearly that the church is made up of Jews and Gentiles united in one body, something that was never, never heard of in Old Testament times. In fact, this body of believers, indwelt by Jesus Christ through his Spirit, was a secret (mystery) in the Old Testament, and was not revealed until the days of the New Testament apostles. Study carefully Ephesians 3:2-6 and Romans 16:25. The church is a group entirely apart and distinct from the Jewish nation and its religion. While in the mind of God from the beginning, it wasn't brought into existence until after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Said he, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Incidentally, this is the first use of the word in the Bible. That little group of believers was baptized by the Spirit (Acts 2) and united in one body on the Day of Pentecost.

Then, too, the church is called the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22, 23). By this illustration, we learn that Christ is to the church what the husband is to the wife. Discuss this passage at length.

The church should be so unified that it can speak with one mind and one voice (Rom. 15:6). How can you contribute to this unity and purpose of God's church?

2. What is YOUR Role in the Church?

We live in a time when the world is getting more churchy, and the church is getting more worldly. So be sure of your commitment to Jesus Christ; be sure that your character is being transformed into his likeness, and that you are not being conformed to this world (Rom. 12:1, 2). The great enemy that you must avoid is being like the world (1 John 2:15-17). You have turned around; now be enthusiastic for God. By the way, the

word "enthusiastic" means "possessed by God." As a Christian, be an exclamation point, not a question mark. Never let anyone question whose side you are on.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-27 and Romans 12:4-10 the church is compared to a human body. One member is an eye, one an ear, another a foot, and so on, and God places the members "in the body as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18). Now the key is to find where God wants you, and make his will your will. Would he have you to sing in the choir, teach a class of children, be the custodian of the church building, or serve in some other capacity? Serve God where your talents will glorify him! The weaker, less honorable members are just as important as any in the eyes of God (1 Cor. 12:18-24). If there is any doubt in your mind as to where you fit, call your pastor and share it with him. He would be delighted to get your call!

God calls some to be pastors, teachers, evangelists, and other workers (Eph. 4:11-15). Observe that the purpose of these different offices is to perfect the saints and edify (build up) the body of Christ. That is the secret! Just as your eyes, ears, and hands benefit your whole body, so you are to benefit the body, the church, "speaking the truth in love" (v. 15). Further, you have been baptized by the Spirit (past tense, 1 Cor. 12:13, NASB), and added to God's family, the New Testament church. That's right! Every genuine believer HAS BEEN baptized by the Spirit, which means that God has joined, or fitted him into the body. Don't fear to use this term because of its abuse or misuse.

Then, too, since you belong to Christ, you are "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). Study Galatians 3 and Romans 4 as much as time permits.

3. What is the Role of the Church in the World?

The church is commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person (Mark 16:15, 16). This is the church's marching orders, given by its Head, and each member of the body is to help in some way. Said Jesus to his disciples: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Obviously, one person, or one congregation, cannot possibly accomplish this task alone. Hence the importance of a unified effort by the whole church. That is why the local congregations are united and organized into state and district conferences, and then in turn into our General Conference, "doing together what we cannot do alone."

Three Forms of Church Polity (Government)

1. The **Episcopal Polity**: Government of the church by bishops—actually three orders of the ministry—bishops, priests, and deacons.
2. The **Presbyterian Polity**: Government of the church by presbyters, or elders.
3. The **Congregational Polity**: Government of the church by the mem-

bers themselves. For further study of church government, see an excellent treatment of the subject in *Systematic Theology*, by Dr. Alva Huffer, pages 463, 464.

The church is to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). As individuals, we are to reflect the light and love of Jesus Christ, and to remain separate from the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Memory Verse: "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

Lesson Three

LEARN TO PRAY

Notice the disciples' request (Luke 11:1, 2). Jesus was a gifted preacher, a powerful person, a man who drew people to himself, but his disciples never asked him how to preach, or how to become a magnetic person. They did ask: "Lord, teach us to pray." This suggests that they saw something very desirable in the prayer life of our Lord.

Observe the attitude of the wicked toward prayer (Job 21:7, 14, 15). Today the same attitude persists: "It is wasted effort." "What good does it do?" "We get things done by doing, by organizing committees, by government action." "Write your congressman." "Enforce legislation!"

However, any discerning person cannot escape one great truth in Scripture. The men of the Bible prayed. No matter what the climate of the world, no matter what the cold reasoning of the intellectual, there stands in the midst of our gospels this unusual request: "Lord, teach us to pray!" I trust that you have the same attitude.

Jesus spent the whole night in prayer. He often was alone with God, to listen, to request, to receive guidance, to know the Eternal, to see the light, to obey his Father. Such prayer is not escape. Jesus' prayer room included the wilderness, the desert, the mountains, the woods—wherever quiet could be found. His prayer was constant. His life was prayer, and prayer was his life. Like breathing, prayer was always a part of him. Prayer and a spiritual life cannot be separated. Eternal life consists of knowing the Father and the Son (John 17:3).

The Five Elements of Prayer

(Cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-3)

Complete prayer should include five elements. Memorize them, notice the examples given, add some examples of your own, and put them into practice in your prayer life.

1. Adoration (worship; praise to God).

Bible examples: "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God" (Psa. 90:2b); the "one that inhabits eternity" (Isa. 57:15). Use your own words: Our Father in heaven, the Creator of all things in heaven and earth, or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Use phrases like these over and over until you feel comfortable with them.

2. Confession (has to do with our sins).

Bible example: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Study verses: Luke 18:9-14; Dan. 9:3-19; Luke 5:8; Gen. 18:22-33; Psa. 32:1-5; 38:17, 18; 51. Confess your selfishness, pride, jealousy, strife, contention, anger, rebellion, contrariness, argumentative attitudes. Don't forget the sin of omission (Jas. 4:17).

3. Thanksgiving (expressing our thanks for blessings received).

Bible examples: Psa. 107; Matt. 26:27; John 6:11.

Thank God in your own words for food, water, shelter, health, loved ones, friends, material things, answered prayer, the Bible, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, safety.

4. Supplication (petition—has to do with our needs).

Bible examples: Phil. 4:6, 19; Heb. 4:14-16; Eph. 3:20; 1 Sam. 1:11. Pray for guidance each day, an infilling of the Spirit, direction in witnessing, understanding the Bible, physical needs, unity of the church.

5. Intercession (offering prayer for others).

Bible examples: 1 Sam. 12:23, 24; Matt. 5:44; Num. 14:19; Acts 7:60; Ex. 32:31, 32; John 17.

Pray for the conversion of your family and friends, new converts, the sick, backsliders, missionaries, your pastor, General Conference, civil leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-3), Jerusalem (Psa. 122:6).

The model prayer is our pattern (Matt. 6:9-13).

Memory verse: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17).

Lesson Four

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit came upon the infant church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It abides as a permanent gift in each believer. God's Spirit directed men of the Old Testament, but there is a giving of it in the New Testament that was lacking in the Old Testament. What was special in chosen cases has become normal for all believers. In place of a temporary, spasmodic visitation, there is a permanent indwelling of God through his power.

To be filled with the Spirit is a commandment of the New Testament (Eph. 5:18). The thought is to be filled, and to keep on being filled, or controlled, by God's power. But how? In this lesson, let us learn how, step by step.

1. You Ask (Luke 11:9-13).

Read this passage carefully. Each Christian should simply ask to be filled with the Spirit, as with all needs. It is easy to tell one to do it. The problem is getting him to do it. Usually, that is the problem in all areas of the Christian life. Jesus lives in us! He comes to forgive, and then he comes to live. We have a Savior who lives not only in heaven, but also in us.

Let's face it! Nothing but the Spirit can defeat today's idols of materialism, prejudice, greed, pride, jealousy, and selfishness. However, we are not to emphasize the Spirit more than Christ, or Pentecost more than Calvary. If we do, we have lost our Biblical balance.

The church today does not lack numbers, programs, or money, but it does lack power, and the lack is becoming increasingly evident. In many ways, the church today resembles the church in the fifty days that followed the resurrection. The disciples knew that Christ had risen; they understood the Scriptures; they had received the Great Commission; but there was no power and no outreach. Then came Pentecost, and what had been only a doctrine became a living reality. Fear yielded to boldness, weakness to strength. We certainly need God's reviving breath today. Without it, nothing of value was accomplished in the early church. The principle holds true today.

2. You Believe (1 John 5:14, 15).

We KNOW (not just hope) that we have the petitions for which we ask in faith (confidence) according to his will. Here are two conditions. We know that being filled is God's will, because we have already learned that he is delighted when we ask him for his Spirit.

3. Repent and Confess all Known Sin (1 John 1:9).

"If we confess our sins," he will forgive. Notice the condition. Your sin must be dealt with before you can be filled with God's Spirit. Read Psalm 66:18 and Isaiah 59:1, 2. It is evident that the same can be said of many of God's people today. Here is Old Testament Scripture with New Testament relevance.

4. Yield Yourself to God's Control (Rom. 6:13).

Believers were once yielded to sin, but they are now yielded to God's control. We were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), but are now alive from the dead. Because the believer has a new nature, he has the capacity for serving righteousness. Many are experiencing this life-changing power; many more could, and should. The same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us to keep us in God's will. God places us in his redeemed family as sons, adopted by his Spirit (Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:6). Baptism is meant to mark a miraculous change in you. It is to testify that you have embarked on a new, clean, right way of life that will take you to the kingdom of God.

All of God's redeemed children have the Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:14, 9b). One might as well try to hold back the waves of the ocean with a pitchfork as to try to stop the works of darkness without God's power.

5. The Evidence is the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

When one produces these nine works, he should know and be assured that he is Spirit filled. What are you producing? In contrast, the works of the flesh are listed in verses 19-21. Here is a list of sins that will keep you out of the kingdom unless they are atoned for. One doesn't continue in sin while filled with the Spirit. God's power never leads one in that direction.

Is there a difference between being filled with the Spirit and led of the Spirit? What about the baptism of the Spirit and being sealed by the Spirit? One is baptized by the Spirit at conversion. He is also indwelt and sealed by the Spirit at the same time. These terms have to do with the conversion process. Of course, a believer is led of the Spirit as long as he lives. Being filled with the Spirit has to do with the degree to which God's power works in one's life. This, in turn, depends on the submissiveness and yieldedness of the individual.

6. Baptism of the Spirit.

"We are all baptized by the Spirit into one body, whether we were Jews, Greeks, slaves or free men, and we have all had experience of the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13, Phillips). This term does not refer to a second work of grace that enables us to talk in tongues, or to perform miracles. Observe, Paul says "we all." All believers have been baptized by the Spirit. He doesn't say, "Be baptized by the Spirit." He says that we all "have been" (past tense). Nowhere are we told to seek baptism of the Spirit. All believers have experienced this. It establishes our union with Christ. God places the believer in Christ by means of his Spirit.

7. Indwelt by the Spirit (John 14:23).

Here is one of the greatest truths of all Scripture. God and Jesus Christ, when invited, enter a human heart and make their abode there. When the believer is regenerated, our heavenly Father and our Savior take up residency in his heart. We are not only in Christ, but Christ is in us. The

greatest evidence of Christ in us is not an emotional experience, but a consistent prayer life, supernatural love, concern for the lost, and a desire to share Christ that moves us to act.

8. Sealed by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13b, 14).

The "earnest" is the down payment, with assurance of more to come. God has sealed us in his family. He is the Sealer; the Holy Spirit is the seal. A seal carries the thought of security, ownership, and authority. To be "filled" with the Spirit seems to refer to a fuller measure of the Spirit. We read that Jesus was filled without measure (John 3:34). No doubt, none of us has been, or will be, so filled, but it is my prayer that you will be filled, sealed, and kept until Jesus comes!

Let us ask God to fill us with his Spirit right now.

Pray in Unison:

Our Father in Heaven:

You are the only true and living God, the all-powerful and everliving One.

You have said in your Word that if I ask for the Holy Spirit, you will give it to me. I come now in childlike faith, asking you to give this blessed gift. I come, too, confessing all known sin, and asking you to reveal to me any unknown sin in my life. Remove every impure thought from me. I realize that I cannot please you and do right in my own strength.

So I come to you, Holy Father, yielding myself, my all, to your control. Fill me just now with your Spirit, your power, that I may produce the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Keep me mindful each day of your presence and power.

Dear Father, please seal me in your family with the Holy Spirit until the last day.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Memory Verse: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

Lesson Five

FIVE AREAS OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM

Part One

Pastor Warren Sorenson sees five areas of the church program: Worship; Fellowship; Education; Evangelism; and Service. Just about anything that you do in the local church will come under one of these headings. In fact, if you familiarize yourself with these five terms, you will have a pretty good grasp of what is happening in the local church—your church. They will serve as a handle in helping you to find and occupy a place in God's family, where you will feel comfortable, and find fulfillment in satisfaction and service.

Worship:

Webster defines the word "worship" as: "Courtesy or reverence paid to worth; hence, honor, respect; act of paying divine honors to a deity."

In Scripture, the word is defined as: The Hebrew word *shahah*—"bow down, prostrate"; the Greek *proskyneo*—"to prostrate, do obeisance to."

"Worship is the union of the two words 'worth' and 'ship.' Worship is recognition of worth. The believer's worship of God reveals how much God is worth to him."—*Systematic Theology*, by Dr. Alva Huffer, page 123.

Worship is much more than passively listening; it is actively participating in the heartfelt adoration of our Heavenly Father. Someone has said: "Many Americans worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship." Men need to worship. The patriarchs built altars after their journey's end. Examples: Noah (Gen. 8:20); Abraham (12:7).

The words for "worship" in the Bible are used in their different forms about 200 times. God's people are instructed more than 20 times to worship him (Psa. 95:6; 45:11; 29:2).

Worship is man's duty, and his greatest privilege. In worship, man makes two affirmations: he affirms the existence of God; and his own capacity for worship. In worship, one gives recognition to the "worthship" of God as Creator, and his own worth as a creature of redemption.

Early Christian worship was patterned after that of the synagogue. In addition, the Lord's Supper was observed, which was the climax of worship. The services of the early church consisted primarily of four things—doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). Evangelism happened! With the early disciples, worship preceded evangelism. Evangelism was the fruit of worship. If we fail in worship, we will fail in evangelism also. We cannot meet the world effectively until we have first met God.

There is a real need for congregational worship, involving words and acts by which the worshiper gives expression to his relationship with God. It involves more than mental assent. In the morning worship service, the minister and choir should not be the only participants, with the rest of the congregation serving as spectators. That is not the idea! In fact, the whole

congregation should be involved in at least four ways—singing praises to God, prayer, giving tithes and offerings, and reading the Scriptures.

John Lewis, Vice President of Oregon Bible College, has said: “Worship should be a celebration in which God is the audience and his people are the participants.” By the way, a church building doesn’t have an “auditorium,” but a “sanctuary”—a Holy Place, a place of worship. An auditorium suggests an audience. This we do not need in the church.

Questions

1. What preparation should one make before attending a worship service?

2. What preparation should a baptized believer make before partaking of the Lord’s Supper?

Fellowship: Among Webster’s definitions of the word are: “State or relation of being a fellow or an associate; community of interest, activity, feelings, etc.; friendliness; comradeship; any union or association; especially a company of equals or friends; partnership; communion; mutual relation between members or branches of the same church.”

For the most part, the word for “fellowship” in the New Testament is *koinonia*, which means fellowship, or communion. It occurs in: Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 8:4; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:9; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 1 John 1:3, 6, 7.

Other occurrences of the word in the New Testament are from *metochos*, which means “partnership, a holding with” (2 Cor. 6:14); *koinonos*—“to become a partaker” (1 Cor. 10:20); *sugkoinoeo*—“to be a joint partaker with” (Eph. 5:11).

The *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, page 282, the fourth definition of “fellowship,” says: “That heavenly love which fills (or should fill) the hearts of believers one for another and for God. For this love and fellowship, the Scriptures employ a word *agape*, which scarcely appears in classical Greek. This fellowship is deeper and more satisfying than any mere human love, whether social, parental, conjugal, or other.”

Fellowship, of course, is but one aspect of the church’s total being, but it is vitally important along with the other four mentioned in the first paragraph of this lesson. The church must worship, educate, evangelize, share, and serve.

Koinonia is the church abiding in the vine so that it can bear much fruit. It is the body becoming “joined and knitted together” (Col. 2:2, 19; John 15:1-14).

I suspect that many churches today are suffering a fellowship crisis. The church’s ministry will surely suffer if it has a lack of true *koinonia*. Two dimensions of fellowship are necessary: the vertical contact of the believer’s fellowship with Jesus Christ, and the horizontal dimension, his communion with other believers.

“Fellowship” is a word that means different things to different people; in fact, anything from friendliness to partnership. One may say: “The fellowship was great,” meaning that there was a friendly conversation.

Someone else may use the word to describe something a bit deeper—a sense of comradeship which made him feel secure and warm. Still another may use the word to reflect a sense of oneness and well-being derived from an actual bond of friendship and unity of fellow-members of the same body.

The Greek *koinonia* (used in chapter one of 1 John) is translated, according to *Young's Concordance*, as communication (1); communion (4); contribution (1); distribution (1); fellowship (12).

Koinonos is translated: companion (1); partaker (5); partner (3); fellowship (12).

Koinos is translated "common" 7 times.

"Fellowship" (*koinonia*) means "to share what one has in anything, participation." Doubtless, to fellowship is to share and participate.

The root of the word translated "fellowship" is our word for "common"—that which is shared by all. Hence, we read in the New Testament of our "common salvation" (Jude 3), and of "the common faith" (Titus 1:4).

"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Obviously, the Father and the Son are in partnership with believers. We have all things common. Think of it! That means that God's resources are MINE! What is his is YOURS!

Memory Verse: "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker" (Psa. 95:6).

Lesson Six

FIVE AREAS OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM

Part Two

Of the five aspects of the church program, we covered worship and fellowship in the last lesson. Now let us consider together education, evangelism, and service.

Education: The general aim of Christian education is to take people from where they are to where they should be. We like to see (and God likes to see) new Christians change, grow, and develop into mature believers. The Sunday school is the educational arm, as well as the evangelistic arm, of the church. This means that you are to be in Sunday school, and all of the services, on a regular basis. Whatever spiritual food is presented will not feed you unless you are there. Scripture teaches clearly that we are saved by faith (Heb. 11:6; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8, 9). How does faith come? "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Then, too, take notes. You'll learn ten times more. No one is well educated who doesn't have a good understanding of the Scriptures, regardless of who he is!

The church's mission is to reach persons for Christ, build them up in Christ, and send them forth to reach others with the good news of salvation and life eternal. How are YOU going to help? Since you have written upon your life the name of Jesus Christ, this responsibility is now to be shared by you.

Evangelism: The Great Commission that Jesus gave to you and me is recorded in Mark 16:15, 16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Cp. Matt. 28:19, 20.) Yes, the church is to go, teach, preach, and share our lovely Savior. Although we may work at our jobs to make a living, teaching and preaching Christ is our chief business. Nowhere does the Bible say: "Go and get decisions." It says, Go, witness, teach, make disciples, and baptize.

The two main motives for evangelism are:

1. The authority of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8).
2. Compassion for the lost (Matt. 9:36-38).

Biblical evangelism is personal. This is well illustrated by Andrew's bringing his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42a).

Three things that you can do toward evangelism right away are:

1. Invite others to all of the services.
2. Pray for the lost and unchurched.
3. Distribute good gospel tracts.

Three good tracts to use in personal work (available free from our General Conference) are:

1. The ABC's of Salvation
2. Six Steps to a New Life
3. Do You Ever Think About God?

Familiarize yourself with these good tools, and the other good tracts from the General Conference.

Many types of evangelism are good, and should be used: mass evangelism; radio; TV; the printed page; the pulpit; the classroom. The most effective, in my opinion, is person to person. Jesus taught the multitudes, but was equally quick to teach one person. In fact, two of his greatest discourses were each given to one individual: Nicodemus (John 3); and the Samaritan woman (John 4). Begin NOW to share your faith with one or two persons.

Service: God has called you into his redeemed family for a purpose—service. The aim of this whole booklet, and of this course, is to help YOU to find your place of service. The greatest joy comes to those who give themselves in service to others for the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the whole world as a mission field, which it is. Obviously, one person, or one church, cannot take on the whole world. Therefore, we need to organize and cooperate in a concerted effort to accomplish the job that Jesus has assigned to us, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). This pastor has little respect for anyone who stirs up strife, contention, divisions, and dissensions. God’s church cannot accomplish its purpose with that kind of attitude. Besides, the Bible speaks strongly against this type of behavior (1 Cor. 1:10, 11; 3:1-9; Phil. 1:15-19).

As a new Christian, remember the importance of teamwork. Where will you serve on the team? Should you serve in the music department, teach a class of children, be a deacon, or what? There are many areas of service available to you. Service means to translate faith into action! The word “minister” means “servant,” but he is not to do it all. The entire team is to serve, get involved. What is “reasonable service” according to Romans 12:1, 2?

Take another look at these five areas of the local church program. In which of these areas do you fit? Since there will be some overlapping, you may be involved in more than one of them, but a good understanding of these five basic areas will help you to find the spot where you can serve God best.

Memory Verse: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Lesson Seven

GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

Scripture says: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD" (Psa. 37:23). It goes without saying, however, that we must seek God's will. Someone said: "We would understand God's will better if we didn't always expect him to do things our way." We want God's way; yet our way gets in his way. There are no specific rules in Scripture that will tell you exactly what God wants you to do. Consequently, we have to reason from generalities to specifics. This is called the inductive method.

1. God's Will is for You to Know His Plan, as Revealed in the Bible.

Make God's Word your constant companion. We learn from it that it is God's will to have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9).

We have to start by doing the known will of God. It is easier to find God's will than it is to do it. In fact, most failures in the Christian life come, not because one did not know what to do, or did not know how to do it, but because he chose to do something else.

Doubts come to all of us. If you wonder whether God loves you, look for the answer in the right place. Look in the Bible; don't look at the circumstances. Remember that a Christian is a person with two natures—spiritual and carnal. As a new Christian, you have a real fight on your hands (Gal. 5:17). The old carnal nature will try to regain control of your life. The only way to win is to keep the Lord Jesus enthroned in your heart every moment. Study Romans 6:11-23, and all of Romans 7.

Every believer has within him a capacity to sin. This is called "the flesh," "the old man," "carnality." The believer also has a new nature, a capacity to serve God. The old nature continues with the new throughout the believer's life (1 John 1:8). Before the believer knew Jesus, his body was an instrument of sin. Sin expressed itself through his body. Now the believer is not to yield his members to sin, but to yield them to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:12-17).

Remember too that Christians are people of two worlds—this one and the one to come. This will encourage you to fight on and "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).

2. God's Will is to Have You Help Carry Out His Plan.

God's will must first be done in our character; afterward, in our career. This order is important. God tenderly says: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go" (Psa. 32:8). He doesn't want us to be stubborn and rebellious, like mules (v. 9). Mulishness caused difficulty. Our secret ambitions must be cast aside.

Search the Scriptures. They contain the will of God for you. The search is made through prayer and Bible study. Ask God to use you. His will for you will never be contrary to his Word. Our aim is not just to reach people, but to equip them, through the Word of God, to live the Christian life and to serve the Lord.

Study David's advice to his son Solomon (1 Chron. 28:9). Remember that God doesn't think as we do (Isa. 55:8, 9). His Word is not shallow. It will not be understood by means of a superficial inquiry. God has a plan for your life. He will lead you into just the right place. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10).

God is concerned about you. He has his best waiting for you. Do not wait for him to give you some miraculous revelation of what he wants you to do. Search the Bible. Do it now!

3. God Wants You Where Your Talents Do the Most Good.

As Christians, we are all members of one body (Rom. 12:4-6). Each member is to function for the benefit of the whole body. Make sure that you are helping, not hindering; going forward, not backward. If your purpose is out of harmony with God's, you will experience trouble and misery.

Waiting for God's will is a good test of our sincerity and willingness to serve him. I am not speaking of just idle waiting. Be patient, and wait on the Lord (Psa. 27:14; 46:10). Don't be in a hurry; God never is! Many want to know God's will for a hundred, or for a thousand years from now, but they don't want to know his will for the next five minutes, or for the rest of the day. That makes little sense! You know God's will for you each Sunday morning and evening, and at the time of the midweek service in your church. God's will, you see, is not distant. It is not some gift that he will hand you in the future. It is vitally related to your life today. God's will is not really hard to discover if we really want to know it. When my two daughters were small, they had little difficulty in knowing what pleased me. I am happy to say that most of the time they did. God loves his children more than any parent could. If we respond to that love, we will want to obey him.

The Bible speaks of the pillars of the church (Gal. 2:9; Rev. 3:12). As a pastor, I appreciate the pillars of the church. I know that they will be in prayer meeting each week, even if it is raining, or the temperature is 10 degrees below zero. If the sun is shining on Sunday morning, they will not be golfing or fishing—they will be in Sunday school and church. Pillars of the church are reliable and dependable. You can count on them! They will be there! They won't disappoint you! Someone said: "In the church we have pillars and caterpillars. The pillars hold up the church. The caterpillars crawl in and out." As a new Christian, which is your goal?

Romans 12:1, 2, teaches that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service. We are not to be conformed to this world; but are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In so doing, we prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Your greatest happiness and success will come in finding and doing God's will for your life.

Memory Verse: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

Lesson Eight

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF THE CHURCH; WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD EXPECT OF YOU

When you took that first step toward Jesus by faith, your local church was moving with you, praying for you, rejoicing and praising God. Even the angels rejoiced (Luke 15:10).

Now your church family will continue to be of real benefit to you. You need a good Bible-preaching and -teaching church, where you will be well fed spiritually. Tradition and man's philosophy do not save, and do not produce spiritual growth.

Your church will also provide fellowship and friendship for you and your family, where the Bible is taught to those of each age level. It will provide the learning situations in which you can grow up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Both you and the church are weaker when you fail to get together.

The church should also meet some of your social needs. Take advantage of these opportunities. Really get to know the members and friends of your church family. Share your faith and what God is doing in your life. Ask questions! The congregation will be thrilled to see your interest.

Then, too, your brothers and sisters in the faith love you. They want you to feel accepted by "the gang," so respond to their love and be a part of the group. It is not "they" any longer, but "we" and "us."

Worshiping, learning, serving, and sharing together bring definite changes. This brings us to what the church should expect of you. Remember that you have been accepted, not only by your God and his Son, but also by the local church and God's redeemed family throughout the world. Now what do you expect to contribute to the church? Just what does the church expect of YOU?

1. Your constant prayer support.
2. Your tithes and offerings on a regular basis (Mal. 3:8-10).
3. Your attendance at all of the services (Heb. 10:24, 25). (After being bruised by the world all week, attend God's house every Sunday.)
4. Make yourself available for God's use every day.
5. Change your character and behavior, which is evidence of growth.
6. Keep yourself filled with God's Spirit.

The goal of the church is given in Colossians 1:28b: "That we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus." How can we best accomplish that? How can YOU help make YOUR church what God wants it to be?

1. Learn to Love One Another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). One obvious sign of the early church was the love that the members had one for another. This is a desirable goal. Perhaps you were not brought up in a home where love was expressed.

Well, love can be learned. That's right! The ability to give and receive affection can be learned. You don't have to perpetuate a bad situation. If love makes the world go around, our globe is in danger of stopping. Real love is scarce in our society. Christians, of all people, should show love. Now to love your brother means to accept him as he is. Love is total acceptance. It means to accept, receive, and welcome, without conditions.

Normally it is not difficult to love our families and friends, but what about those we wouldn't normally choose as friends? This is where we need God's love (Rom. 5:5). His love accepts us as we are (vv. 6-10). In most groups, we find some who do not seem to fit: the chronically ill; the mentally slow; the poor (even those who will always be poor because of laziness or lack of motivation); and some who will never make the grade of social acceptance. God calls you to love them!

God first loved us (1 John 4:10, 11). Perhaps no one can truly love until he has been loved. Parents, give your children lots of loving! A Christian who has experienced God's love can love others, even the unlovable.

2. Learn the Great Doctrines of Your Church (the Bible).

No one can really love God without loving his Word. It is his message to us. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15). There are many cults, sects, and isms today, and many people are very gullible. The only way to be safe is to know the doctrines of the Bible. Study 2 Timothy 4:2-4; 3:1-5. These passages need strong emphasis today.

One reason that God has given his Word is for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Any Christian worth his salt will not take the doctrines lightly! When one decides that he is not going to study doctrine, he has made up his mind to be an immature Christian. When one says that doctrine is not important, he is probably saying, "I don't know the Bible, and I am too lazy to study." At any rate, it makes a difference what you believe because what you believe will determine what you are and where you are going. Many Christians are appallingly ignorant of the great truths of Scripture. They seem to oscillate between liturgicalism and what some have called Holy Rollerism. (Study Eph. 4:14, 15; Rom. 16:17, 18.)

Of course, even a beautiful Christian can seem to be a fanatic to a person who doesn't want any religion at all. Fanaticism is often in the other person's eye. A real fanatic is a person who is religious in an unreasonable and ungracious way. He doesn't follow the Bible, but goes to extremes in some things and then criticizes others who don't do the same. Keep a good Biblical balance for a well-rounded life.

3. Work Toward Unity.

Study Psalm 133:1 and Ephesians 4:3, 11-15. In church work, we must not be interested in creating stars, but in building a team. The united effort, the cooperative attitude, is important. Someone said: "Your church will grow and grow, but you must help to make it so."

"Don't be too eager to tell others their faults" (Jas. 3:1, LB). Faultfinding (which destroys unity) is not difficult. Anybody can grumble and

criticize, but it takes a big person to rise above it all and go on working faithfully and lovingly as Jesus did. People who don't get along with each other are not getting along with God. You can be an instrument of peace and unity, or of division. Do what God tells you to do, and you are a success!

4. Be Loyal, Reliable, and Dependable in the Whole Church Program.

We are a team. What does your boss expect of you in the way of commitment? Certainly the church and the Lord deserve no less! Jesus said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 14:15; 15:14).

There is a good lesson for all of us in the life of Martha (Luke 10:38-42). She was anxious, troubled, and cumbered about many things. I see tension in her life—tension between her and Mary her sister. She was telling the Lord what to do. Sometimes tension causes us to put down the one who can help us. Perhaps some of you are in the boat with Martha.

To be loyal, dependable, and reliable to the whole church, you may have to mark some things off of your present schedule. It is a question of priorities. According to your value system, how important is the church program? If you crowd too many things into your schedule, some of God's work will suffer. You will steal time from important areas. Obedience to Christ requires me to say "no" sometimes. Evaluate each of your activities, to determine which will be the best use of your energy and will contribute most to the team effort. Then say "no" to everything else.

"Folks often accept bad ideas that are new, just because they want to reject old ones." They rebel!

Scripture says that we are not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:23-26). Study this passage carefully. One obvious way that you can support the whole church program is to attend all the services which are designed to meet your spiritual needs. Your presence will also encourage others.

Memory Verse: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

The Church of God with headquarters at Oregon, Illinois, Believes

1. In a personal God, the Father (one person)—Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29; Isa. 42:8.
2. In Jesus Christ as the virgin born, divine Son of God and our Savior—John 3:16; Heb. 7:25; Matt. 16:16; 1:18-25; Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:31-33.
3. In the Holy Spirit—Rom. 8:14, 9b; John 14:23; Eph. 1:13, 14; 5:18.
4. In regeneration and the new birth through acceptance of the gospel—2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5; John 3:3-8.
5. That the Bible *only* is the inspired Word of God—2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 1:21; 2 Sam. 23:1, 2.
6. That the second coming of Christ is very near; that it will be literal, personal, and visible—Matt. 24:32-34; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Zech. 14:4.
7. That man by nature is mortal—Rom. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16.
8. That immortality and eternal life are the gift of God and are received only through Christ—Rom. 6:23; 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 2 Tim. 1:10.
9. That the dead are unconscious—Psa. 146:3, 4; Eccl. 9:5; John 11:11-39; Gen. 3:19; Job 3:17-19.
10. That the soul is the person and can die—Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Josh. 10:28, 30, 39.
11. That there will be a resurrection of the dead—John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15; 1 Thes. 4:16, 17; Rev. 20:5, 6; 1 Cor. 15:22, 23.
12. That righteousness comes by faith—Rom. 4:3-5, 12-25; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 11:6.
13. The support of the gospel through tithes and offerings—Lev. 27:30, 32; Mal. 3:8-10; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 9:13, 14.
14. In baptism by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ—Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27.
15. In discarding unhealthful practices such as use of intoxicants and tobacco—Prov. 20:1; 23:20, 21, 29-35; Hab. 2:15; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:9, 10.
16. That followers of Jesus should manifest true Christian modesty in dress and behavior and should shun all questionable worldly amusements—Jas. 1:27; 1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 24:37-51; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10.

Your pastor would be glad to further discuss any of these important doctrines with you. Call him for an appointment!

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2 Kings
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