

THE CHURCH AND YOU

Lesson #11

TEXT: Eph. 3:20-21

INTRODUCTION:

- A. WE ARE NOT EXPECTED TO SERVE GOD BY OURSELVES.
- B. FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH IS MEANT TO ENHANCE OUR SERVICE.
- C. WE CAN BETTER SERVE WITH OUR BRETHREN WHEN WE KNOW:
 - 1. What the church is, both in its universal and local sense.
 - 2. What our responsibilities are toward the church.

I. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

- A. THE WORD "CHURCH" REFERS TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SAVED.
 - 1. The Lord adds the saved to His church(**Acts 2:47**).
 - 2. The church is God's "household" or "family"(**1 Tim 3:15**).
- B. THE WORD "CHURCH" IS USED PRIMARILY IN TWO SENSES.
 - 1. The UNIVERSAL sense: all the saved throughout the world.
 - a. It is used this way in passages like(**Mat. 16:18; Eph. 5:23 Col. 1:18**).
 - b. In the "universal" sense:
 - 1) There is only ONE church(**Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:4**).
 - 2) Christ is the head; we are members of His body(**1 Cor. 12:27**).
 - 3) There is NO EARTHLY ORGANIZATION.
 - 4) The universal church never meets as such; it has no "officers."
 - 2. The LOCAL sense: the saved in one particular locality.
 - a. It is used in this way in passages like(**1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16**).
 - b. In the "local" sense there are MANY churches(**Gal. 1:2**).
 - c. There is to be EARTHLY ORGANIZATION in each local church.
 - a) Ideally, each church has elders and deacons(**Phil. 1:1**).
 - b) Churches may exist until men can be appointed(**Acts 14:23**).
 - d. Local churches meet regularly; and Christians have responsibilities in connection with their brethren in the local church

II. RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH.

- A. WE SHOULD "JOIN OURSELVES" TO A LOCAL CHURCH.
 - 1. Only Christ "adds" one to the church UNIVERSAL; but one can and **should** "join" themselves to a LOCAL church(**Acts 9:26-28**).
 - 2. This enables you to benefit by the association of other Christians, and provides you an opportunity to be of service to them(**Heb. 3:12-14; 10:24-25**).
 - 3. There are some responsibilities Christ has given you that you cannot fulfill on your own; for example, the Lord's Supper(**Acts 20:7**).
- B. WE SHOULD COOPERATE WITH THE "LEADERS."
 - 1. In a fully developed local church, there will be "ELDERS."
 - a. The terms "elder, pastor, bishop, shepherd, overseer" are often used interchangeably(**Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2**).
 - b. Their qualifications are found in **1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**.
 - c. Our responsibilities to them are as follows:
 - 1) To respect them(**1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17-20**).
 - 2) To obey when they lead scripturally (**Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-3**).
 - 2. There will also be "DEACONS" to serve the people of God
 - a. These are "servants" who assist the elders in the work of the church
 - b. Their qualifications are found in **1 Tim. 3:8-13**.
 - c. The work they do is a very noble one(**1 Tim. 3:13**).
 - 3. There may also be EVANGELISTS and TEACHERS(**Eph. 4:11**).
 - a. The evangelists, also called preachers, teach the gospel to the lost.
 - b. Teachers concentrate attention upon edifying the members.
 - d. They likewise submit to the leadership of the elders
- C. WE ARE TO CONTRIBUTE REGULARLY TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH
 - 1. The work of the church can be divided into three areas:
 - a. Evangelism(**1 Tim. 3:15; Phil. 1:3-6; 1 Thess. 1:8**).
 - b. Edification(**Eph. 4:11-16**).

- c. Benevolence(**1 Cor. 16:1-2**).
 - 2. How the local church can raise funds to do its work(**1 Cor. 16:1-2**).
 - 3. Financial support enables the local church to do the work God gave it to do.
- D. WE SHOULD DO OUR PART IN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH.
- 1. We cannot "pay" to have our part of the church's work done for us.
 - 2. A strong church is one where every member is doing his part(**Eph. 4:15-16**).
 - 3. There are different kinds of functions we might perform(**Rom. 12:3-8**).
 - 4. What is essential is that we each do what we can with the same zeal and enthusiasm(**1 Pet. 4:10-11**).
- E. WE SHOULD HELP KEEP THE CHURCH UNITED.
- 1. Unity among believers is very important to Jesus(**John 17:20-21**).
 - 2. Division is condemned in the Scriptures(**1 Cor. 1:10-13**).
 - 3. What does maintaining unity require of us(**Eph. 4:1-3**).
 - 4. Here are some things we can do:
 - a. Be peacemakers when brethren have disagreements(**Matt. 5:9**).
 - b. Avoid gossip(**1 Tim. 5:13, 19**).
 - c. Avoid speculative questions(**1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Titus 2:23**).
 - d. Avoid partiality(**1 Tim. 5:21**).
- F. WE SHOULD LIVE A LIFE THAT SPEAKS WELL OF THE CHURCH.
- 1. Be an example to others(**1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7-8**).
 - a. Some people delight in finding Christians who are not living right and use them as an example to attack the church.
 - b. We are not to give them opportunities(**Titus 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:12**).
 - 2. We should strive to be an example of what Christians ought to be!

CONCLUSION:

- A. THE BLESSINGS OF FELLOWSHIP COME WITH RESPONSIBILITY.
- B. GOD'S WILL IS THAT WE SERVE AS PART OF A BODY
(**Rom. 12:4-5; 14:17-19**).
- C. SOME QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE YOUR THINKING:
- 1. Have you let a local church know that you wish to be identified as an accepted, working member of their group?
 - 2. Do you know the elders, deacons and other members of the church where you attend?
 - 3. Do you have a sense of what function you provide in the body of Christ, and are you fulfilling it?
 - 4. If every member of the church were as faithful and active as you in your service to the Lord, what kind of church would it be?