

TEACHER EDITION



REAL
CHURCH

Discover God's Pattern for the Local Church

PAUL CHAPPELL

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The contents of this book are the result of decades of spiritual growth in life and ministry. The author and publication team have given every effort to give proper credit to quotes and thoughts that are not original with the author. It is not our intent to claim originality with any quote or thought that could not readily be tied to an original source.

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How to Use This Curriculum

Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the features of this Sunday school curriculum:

Schedule

The lessons contained in this curriculum are undated, allowing you to begin and end the teaching series at any time. There are thirteen lessons that may be taught weekly any time of the year.

Student Edition Books

Companion books are available through *Striving Together Publications*. These contain:

- The outlines with blanks that students may fill in during the lessons

- Various Scripture quotations that are used throughout each lesson
- The introductory lesson overviews
- Study questions for review throughout the week
- A suggested memory verse for each lesson

These books are excellent tools for the members of a class. We suggest ordering enough books for each member of the class, plus additional copies for new members who enroll in the class throughout the teaching series. Giving class members a study book encourages faithfulness to the class, provides students with a devotional tool for use throughout the week, and allows them to review what they learned previously.

Text

The verses from which the lessons are taken are included at the beginning of each lesson. These are provided so that you may read them through several times in prayerful preparation for your time in class. Many teachers choose to memorize their key verses. During the class hour, we suggest that you use your own Bible for Scripture reading and encourage your class members to do so as well.

Overview

The overview section is provided so that you may be aware of the overall emphasis of each lesson, especially as it relates to the other lessons in the curriculum. These brief statements provide a snapshot of where each lesson will take the students.

Lesson Goals

Bible teaching has a higher goal than the delivery of information. That goal is a life changed. Students want to know what they are to do with what they are given from God's Word. As you prepare for and teach each lesson, emphasize how those listening may apply its truths throughout the week.

Teaching Outline

The abbreviated outline enables you to view the entire lesson at a glance to see how the content fits together. Teaching with an organized outline increases the student's ability to understand and remember the lesson content.

Lesson Illustrations

Illustrations can be extremely helpful in communicating truth. Throughout the curriculum we have included various illustrations. Some illustrations are generic while others are personal to the author. These illustrations are provided as a guide for the teacher and can be replaced or used at the teacher's discretion. It is recommended that the teacher include some of his own personal illustrations.

A Real Beginning

Key Verse

COLOSSIANS 1:18

18 And 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.

Overview

The New Testament church is a real, visible body of assembled believers. As we identify authentic church life throughout this series, it is important that we understand that Christ founded the church, that He is the only head of the church, and that He must have preeminence in the church as we assemble and follow His leadership.

Lesson Goals

At the conclusion of this lesson, students should:

1. Know that Christ Himself started the church and that He is the head.
2. Understand that a New Testament church is comprised of saved, baptized members called into a local body.
3. Personally commit to standing for truth and continuing the local church through obedience to Christ's Great Commission.

Teaching Outline

- I. The Calling of the Church
 - A. By Jesus' invitation
 - B. By Jesus' authority

- II. The Composition of the Church
 - A. Composed of called-out people
 - B. Consists in local assemblies

- III. The Continuation of the Church
 - A. Through Christ's commission
 - B. Through believers' obedience

LESSON ONE

A Real Beginning

Text

COLOSSIANS 1:18

Introduction

In this lesson, we begin a study of that which Jesus loves profoundly—so much that He gave Himself for it.

EPHESIANS 5:25

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Throughout the New Testament, Christ places a high priority on the local church. In these lessons, we will understand better how Christ designed the church to function, how we can love and invest in it, and how we can

be built up and enriched through the church as we grow in Christ.

The word *church* can mean wildly different things to different people. So, before we even get started, let's take a moment to briefly define it biblically.

A New Testament church is:

- A local, visible assembly—the emphasis of the New Testament is placed on the local church. This is the place where we gather with a body of believers to grow, learn, worship, give, and serve.
- Comprised of regenerate membership—members of a local church should be saved people who know Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.
- Separate from the state—the local church is under the direct authority of Christ Himself. He is the head of the church. Thus, the church must be autonomous—free from outside control and free to answer to Christ.

Jesus Himself is the head of the church.

COLOSSIANS 1:18

18 And 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.

Jesus is the direction-giver, the leader of the local church. He literally purchased the church with His own blood.

ACTS 20:28

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

The local church is not ours—it’s His! We are owned by Christ—He called us out, and we belong to Him. We owe our loyalty and love to the Lord Jesus.

EPHESIANS 5:23

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

When we think about the local church and the future glorious church that will be assembled around Christ, we recognize that we, as a church, are comprised of blood-bought believers who owe our allegiance to Christ as our head.

The local church that uses Scripture as its sole authority in faith and practice is “the real thing.” It is not perfect, because it is comprised of real people! But it is loved by Christ, and it is a vital part of our Christian growth.

Charles Spurgeon said it well: “If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all. And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us.”

When we gather around Jesus in Heaven, we will find a perfect church! But until then, we thank the Lord for giving us a place to encourage and be encouraged through relationships and a place to grow through the teaching and preaching of God’s Word.

Although no church this side of Heaven is perfect, it can be authentic and genuine. In this study, we want to identify authentic church life and learn how to better follow the leadership of Christ in the church.

We begin at the most natural place—the beginning. The church had a real beginning.

Illustration

Scoffers of church life will sometimes say, “I just don’t believe in organized religion.” (Of course, one could make the point that we don’t believe in *disorganized* religion either!) Part of the purpose for this study is to learn how God planned for the church to be organized. Ultimately, however, statements leveled against organized religion usually carry the insinuation that the church itself is man’s idea—not God’s. And truthfully, many of man’s ideas have crept into the church. There are entire denominations that teach their human founders’ ideas rather than God’s Word and that govern themselves according to human ideas. Yet, the local church actually was God’s idea, and, as we will discover in this lesson, Christ Himself was the founder.

I. The Calling of the Church

To trace the beginning of the church, simply revisit the early moments of the ministry of Christ. After all, the church began with Jesus.

A. By Jesus’ invitation

We see the first assembly forming as early as Matthew 4, when Jesus called His first disciples.

MATTHEW 4:18–22

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

21 *And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.*

22 *And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.*

As we saw in the passage above, Jesus called individuals to leave the world and follow Him. First, He called out Peter and Andrew, and then James and John. Eventually, He assembled a group of twelve disciples.

These disciples were the first apostles. And it was these men who Jesus set to be the foundation of His future church.

EPHESIANS 2:20

20 *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

After Jesus called out the apostles, He commissioned them to minister, and He gave them the power to do it.

MATTHEW 10:1

1 *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, we see that He had the church in mind. Before the church was even started by Christ, we can see that He was already preparing the future leaders of this new institution.

The calling of the church was by Jesus' invitation, and it was by Jesus' authority.

B. By Jesus' authority

The institution of the church was not an idea of man. It was established by the direct authority of Jesus Christ.

MATTHEW 16:18

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Just before Jesus made this statement, Peter had made a bold declaration of Jesus' deity and authority.

MATTHEW 16:16

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

It was in this context, that Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church."

There is an interesting note concerning the Greek word Jesus used when He told Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church." The name Peter actually means "rock." It comes from the Greek word *petros*, and it refers to a large stone or a rock. But the Greek word for "this rock" in Matthew 16:18 is *petra*, and it means "a cliff or ledge; a projecting rock, bedrock"—which can even refer to mountain ranges.

Thus, Jesus essentially said to Peter, "You are a rock, but on the truth that you just spoke—that I am the Christ and have authority as the Son of God—on that bedrock, on that cornerstone, I will build My church."

God's assembly, the church, was not founded on human authority, but on God's authority.

Jesus must be preeminent in the church because He died for the church.

COLOSSIANS 1:18–20

18 *And 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.*

19 *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

20 *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

Illustration

Around the inside of the dome of Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome are words towering over six and a half feet in height from the Latin Vulgate: “TV ES PETRVS ET SVPER HANC PETRAM AEDIFICABO ECCLESIAM MEAM. TIBI DABO CLAVES REGNI CAELORVM.” Translated, these words mean, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

The Catholic church venerates Peter as the founder of the church, but Scripture clearly points to Christ as the founder. He built the church by His authority, and He purchased the church with His blood.

Belief in Jesus’ deity and authority is crucial to understanding the origin and foundation of the church. Scripture makes both of these attributes clear.

1 TIMOTHY 3:16

16 *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

So we see that the church was called by Jesus Himself. He first invited and assembled the twelve apostles, and then by His authority, He organized the institution of the church, with the apostles as the foundation on Him, the Chief Cornerstone.

But who belongs in the church? Who is the church comprised of?

II. The Composition of the Church

The local church is not a building or a location. It is a living habitation of God's people.

1 TIMOTHY 3:15

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

A. Composed of called-out people

The word most commonly translated “church” in our New Testament is the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “a called-out assembly.” This word is used 115 times in the New Testament, and 112 of those times, it refers to a local assembly of believers.

There is an interesting trail of linguistic etymology to our English word “church.” It is actually a derivative of the Greek word *kuriakos*. *Kuriakos* means “belonging to the Lord.” From *kuriakos* comes the Scottish word *kirk*. And from *kirk*, we get the English word *church*. Thus, *church* refers to a group of people who belong to the Lord.

When we understand this truth, we view church differently. Church is not just “organized religion.” It is

not just a place we meet so we can have something to do. We are a called-out group of people who belong to the Lord. The church belongs to Him, our lives belong to Him, and we gather together to worship Him according to the directions He set.

Just as Jesus personally called out His disciples in the first century, so we, the local church, are a called-out people. First, we are called out through salvation.

1 PETER 1:23

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

First century Corinth was a city hardened by idolatry and paganism. Actually, the depth of depravity in this city is inconceivable to us. They had houses of prostitution and hideously lewd rituals that were part of their idol worship. Human life was expendable, as men could receive the death penalty for so much as losing a race.

And yet, as Paul preached the Gospel in Corinth, people trusted Christ as their Saviour. Here, in the midst of this pagan, ungodly culture, God established a local church. Not a social club, not a parachurch organization, not a support group, but a local church—a called-out group of people directly connected to Christ through salvation and able to receive Christ's power to live the victorious Christian life.

When Paul later wrote to the church at Corinth, he immediately identified this church as a group of called-out people—sanctified (or set apart) and called to be saints.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1–2

- 1 *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*
- 2 *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

Members of the church of Corinth were not without difficulty or sin. (If you have any doubt, simply read the epistles of 1 and 2 Corinthians!) Many of them still struggled to gain victory over habits and vestiges of their lives before salvation. And yet, they were a church—owned by Christ, learning how to grow in Him and follow His leadership.

The local church is composed of people who have been called out through salvation. But to be members of the church, these saved people identify themselves with the church through water baptism. In Scripture, we see that water baptism identifies us with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

ROMANS 6:3–4

- 3 *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*
- 4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Baptism is a reflection on the outside of what has happened on the inside. It does not and cannot wash away our sins, but it does identify us with Christ's payment for our sins.

Additionally, water baptism identifies us with the local church.

ACTS 2:41

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Through the centuries, this important ordinance of believer's baptism has been misunderstood and twisted. Some baptize infants; some claim baptism washes away sin; some baptize by sprinkling or pouring.

The Roman Catholic church instituted sprinkling of infants. In the third century, the Council of Carthage declared: "We ought not to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God...especially infants...those newly born."

But if we look to Scripture, we see that baptism was always by immersion, after salvation, and only administered to those who personally put their faith in Jesus for salvation.

Even the Protestant reformers who left the Catholic church couldn't seem to shake the unbiblical practice of baptizing infants. In fact, many of the reformers mercilessly persecuted Baptists who had long stood for biblical baptism after salvation. Zwingli himself (one of the key leaders of the Reformation) had many Baptists, including pastor and evangelist Felix Manz, drowned for their belief in baptism by immersion after salvation.

Biblical believer's baptism is just one of the many examples of the difference in a church that takes the Bible as its final authority in faith and practice and a church that follows the traditions of men.

Scripture is quite clear that a New Testament church is comprised of people who have been called out through

salvation and who have identified themselves with the church through believer's baptism.

Additionally, Scripture teaches that Christ's churches consist in local assemblies.

B. Consists in local assemblies

The church is not simply a "universal" body of saved people. It is comprised of local assemblies that consist of saved, baptized believers.

As early as Acts 9, we see multiple churches established in Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria.

ACTS 9:31

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Real churches were functioning and multiplying without councils or denominations in the first century. These were autonomous groups of believers who had biblical church leaders and functioned under the direct headship of Christ.

In a biblical sense, the "universal church" will be assembled when Christ returns for us. In Scripture, this is called "the glorious church."

EPHESIANS 5:25–27

*25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

27 *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

We look forward to the day when we will gather with that glorious church—the only perfect church that will ever assemble! Until then, we are committed to assembling in local churches to carry out Christ’s mission on Earth.

III. The Continuation of the Church

How did a group of first century believers grow and multiply churches to the point that two thousand years later there are local churches all around the world? How can we today continue Christ’s purpose for the church?

A. *Through Christ’s commission*

Just before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He gave a sacred commission to His apostles. We call this the Great Commission.

MATTHEW 28:19–20

19 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

This commission was not for the apostles only. As we saw earlier, the apostles became the foundation upon

which the churches were built because of the doctrine they received from Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:19–20

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

TEACHING TIP

This would be an excellent time to mention your church's regular soulwinning times and outreach opportunities. Also, hearing a personal story of someone you have recently led to Christ would encourage your class.

As the apostles went into all nations preaching salvation, baptizing converts, and organizing churches, they transferred this commission to the local churches. Today, it is our privilege and responsibility to make this last command of Christ our first priority in the church. This commission is the reason the church exists—to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in every part of the world. (We will learn more about this in lessons 4 and 5.)

The churches that Christ has established continue as His people are obedient to His commission.

B. Through believers' obedience

It is amazing how many Christians in America will complain about the demise of our nation and the crumbling of Christian values, while they themselves have neglected Christ's commands concerning the church.

Illustration

Two men were out fishing on a Sunday morning when one said to the other, “You know, I really feel kind of guilty for skipping out of church this morning.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” the other replied. “But actually, I couldn’t have gone to church this morning anyway.”

“Really? Why’s that?”

“Well, I could have stayed home, but I couldn’t have gone to church because my wife is sick.”

It is amazing the excuses we will allow to keep us out of church, but not out of fishing!

Illustration

An elderly lady was amazed at how kind her next door neighbor was. It seemed that every day this young man helped her in some way, whether by carrying her groceries or assisting her in yard work.

One day she finally asked him, “How did you become such a fine young man?”

“Well,” he replied, “when I was younger, I actually had a ‘drug’ problem.”

The elderly lady was shocked. “I can’t believe that.”

“Yes ma’am, when I was a boy, my parents ‘drug’ me to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and for midweek Bible study.”

Faithful church attendance is not an option for the obedient child of God. Christ actually commands us to assemble with our church.

HEBREWS 10:24–25

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.*

We also must be obedient to stand for the faith and to boldly proclaim the truth. The Bible tells us that the church itself is the pillar and ground of the truth.

1 TIMOTHY 3:15

15 *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

If the truth is not preached at church and upheld by Christians, who will uphold it? God has designed the church to be both the guardian and the proclaimer of His truth.

Throughout the centuries, Christians have stood for the faith.

EPHESIANS 6:14

14 *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

Think of the believers in the early centuries. The book of Acts records many who were persecuted for their faith in Christ.

- Peter and John were arrested, threatened, and beaten (Acts 4, 5).
- Stephen was stoned (Acts 7).
- Saul, who would later become Paul, imprisoned and tortured many Christians (Acts 8).
- King Herod beheaded James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12).

- Paul was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and eventually martyred—all for the sake of the Gospel.

Then, too, there was brutal persecution of believers during the Dark Ages. You have perhaps heard of the persecution that many of the reformers endured. But Baptists themselves suffered much worse.

The Reformation took place in the sixteenth century, but authentic, New Testament churches were taking a stand for the faith long before the Reformation. Historians Dermout and Ypeig recorded, “We have now seen that the Baptists who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and who have long in the history of the church received the honor of that origin.”¹

TEACHER'S NOTE

*An excellent resource on Baptist church history is the book *The Glorious Church* by Mike Gass. This book is available through *Striving Together Publications*.*

New Testament churches have gone by different names in different periods of history and in different geographic areas. Many who we consider our Baptist forefathers were previously called Albigenses, Waldenses, and Anabaptists. Although some of these groups did err doctrinally in some areas, they were not part of the church of Rome and they did believe the basics of salvation by faith and in identifying with the local church through believer's baptism after salvation.

To illustrate the fact that Bible-believing, New Testament churches predated the Reformation, consider these facts and quotes:

- *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* estimates that one million Waldenses were martyred for Christ.
- Beginning in 1119, the Pope issued four crusades to exterminate the Albigenses and Waldenses. The Pope called for volunteers and promised them that they would receive the same rewards—forgiveness of sins and eternal life—for murdering these believers as they did for killing the Moslems.²
- By 1229 the Inquisition was in full action. In 1233 and 1234, Pope Gregory IV raised a German army to kill several hundred thousand more Albigenses near Breman and Oldenburg.³
- In 1524, seven years after the start of the Protestant Reformation, Cardinal Hosius, President of the Council of Trent, wrote: “Were it not that the Baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred years, they would swarm in greater number than all the Reformers.”⁴

Believers in local New Testament churches have stood for the faith through the centuries. Their heritage of courage and their commitment to truth is now our responsibility to continue.

Many Christians in America do not value truth highly enough. This is evidenced when they react to their pastor when he takes a biblical stand on a current issue or when they become angry when they hear biblical teaching or preaching that goes against their lifestyle.

The truth is precious. It's worth living for; it's worth dying for. As members of a local church, *we* are responsible to stand for the truth.

We also are commanded to teach the truth.

2 TIMOTHY 2:1–2

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Through preaching, Sunday school classes, adult Bible studies, discipleship, counseling, and many other ways, the church has been commissioned to pass on the faith.

Churches are often quick to institute groups or meetings around personal interests or age groups (i.e. a needle working group, kids' sports, etc.). While fellowship is important in the church, it is more important that we remember that biblical teaching and preaching is vital. We must give priority—both in the church's schedule and in our personal schedules—to the preaching and teaching of God's Word.

The local church has been ordained by God as the pillar and ground of the truth. The church continues as we, who are believers, are obedient to Christ's commands to assemble, to stand for the truth, and to teach the truth.

Conclusion

The history of the local church begins with Jesus Christ. He is the founder, the head, and the owner of the church.

The church consists of local assemblies of saved believers who have chosen to identify themselves with Christ and His church through biblical baptism.

And finally, the work of Christ is continued today through yielded Christians in local churches who are obedient to the Great Commission and to teach the truth and assemble around it.

In coming lessons, we'll learn more about authentic church life, as well as the privileges and responsibilities we have as members in a New Testament local church. Real Christians in real churches have been faithful through the centuries, and it is our privilege to be part of Christ's institution on Earth!

-
1. Bela Bates Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1835), 796.
 2. Bible Truth Publishers, *Bright Lights in Dark Times: Or the Waldenses and Their Persecutions in the Valleys of Piedmont* (Bible Truth Publishers, 1978), 43.
 3. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. V*, p. 514.
 4. Hosius, *Letters, Apud Opera*, 112–113.

Study Questions

1. Who is the head of the church? List two references that teach us this truth.

Jesus is the head of the church. Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18

2. Of whom is the local church comprised?

The church is comprised of saved Christians who have identified themselves with the church through believer's baptism.

3. How do we know that Christ designed the church to be a local, visible body?

All throughout the New Testament there is an emphasis on the local church. The word most commonly translated "church" is used 115 times in the New Testament, and 112 of those times, it refers to a local assembly of believers. As early as Acts 9, we see multiple churches established. Churches in the first century were functioning and multiplying without councils or denominations. These were autonomous groups of believers who had biblical church leaders and functioned under the direct headship of Christ.

4. What do we call Jesus' command to share the Gospel with all people? Where is it found?

We call it the Great Commission. In this lesson we saw it in Matthew 28:19–20. (Note: it is also found in Mark 16:14–18, Luke 24:44–49, John 20:19–23, and Acts 1:4–8.)

5. How faithful are you to assemble with your church family? In what way have you recently been blessed at a church service?

Answers will vary.

6. How can you involve yourself in the Great Commission this week?

Answers will vary but may include participating in scheduled church outreach or personally witnessing to a friend, neighbor, family member, or co-worker.

7. What is one area in which your pastor has taken an unpopular stand for truth? How can you let him know you appreciate his faithfulness to keep the church the pillar and ground of the truth?

Answers will vary. Ideas of how to encourage the pastor may include a note, a personal word of thanks, or a small gift.

8. In what ways is your life more anchored to truth because you are part of a real church?

Answers will vary.

Memory Verse

COLOSSIANS 1:18

18 And 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.

Order your copy of this
complete curriculum at
strivingtogether.com