

LBC Discipleship Course

Know Christ & Make Him Known Lesson 4: “The Church & Christian Liberty” (TC)

Hebrews 10:25 – “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.”

Matthew 16:18 – “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.”

Romans 14:7-8 – “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”

1 Corinthians 10:23 - “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”

The Local New Testament Church

God has established three major institutions on earth: the family, civil government, and the local church. It is the local church that has been commissioned by God to carry out His purposes in this present age. The importance of the church can scarcely be overstated. It is that which God purchased with the blood of His own Son (Acts 20:28). It is that which Christ loves, nourishes, cherishes (Ephesians 5:25, 29), and will come back for at the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

I. What the local church is not

- a. It is not a building.
 - i. The church is not the building, but rather it is the assembling of the body of believers together. If a “building” were the church, you could not have church without a “building”.
- b. It is not a denomination.
 - i. Some believe only those that are a part of their specific denomination will be in heaven. This is unbiblical because people are not saved by being in a church, they are saved because they are “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:1).
- c. It is not a state church.
 - i. The church and state are separate entities. The state is not to have the power to authorize or prohibit the rights within the church. The Christian should obey the laws of the land as outlined in scripture (Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17; Titus 3:1), but when the laws conflict with the Word of God, there are clear biblical examples of civil disobedience (Daniel 3, 6; Acts 5:29).

II. What is the local Church?

✠ A local New Testament church is composed of those who are:

- a. Saved (Acts 2:41, 47)
 - i. Some believe you must be a member of their church in order to be saved (Catholics); Baptists, on the other hand, believe salvation is a prerequisite to church membership.
- b. Baptized (Acts 2:41, Matthew 28:19)
 - i. What were they “added” to? Answer: They were added to the “church” in Jerusalem. Clearly you see before they were “added” to the church they were saved and baptized. Salvation and baptism came “before” church membership, not after.
- c. Organized with scriptural offices of pastor and deacon. (I Timothy 3:1-13)

- i. **Pastor:** This name means “shepherd”; we know Jesus is the head of the church and is called the “Chief Shepherd” (I Peter 5:4); we refer to the pastor as the “*under-shepherd*”. The Bible gives different names for the office of a pastor. They are *Elder, Bishop, Shepherd (Pastor), Preacher, Teacher*. These names do not refer to different offices, but rather different functions the pastor carries out. Christ is the head of the Church, but has placed the pastor to lead each local church body, to take the “oversight of the flock”, to “guard and strengthen the flock”, and to “feed the flock” (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3) (Qualifications of a Pastor - I Timothy 3:1-7).
 - ii. **Deacon:** This office is first seen in Acts 6:1-6 when the widows were being neglected. “Deacon” is derived from the Greek *diakonos*, meaning “a servant”. Their duties are defined by the name “deacon”; they are servants of the Lord through the local church, to aid the pastor as the second biblical office. Not only do they aid in physical areas, but in spiritual areas as well. Stephen was a great testimony to this in Acts 6 (Qualifications of a Deacon - I Timothy 3:8-13).
- d. Share a common faith. (i.e. Our Articles of Faith; their Apostles Doctrine) (Acts 2:42)
 - i. Acts 2:42 – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
- e. Observe Ordinances.
 - i. Baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41-42)
 - ii. The Lords Supper (Matt. 26:26-30; I Cor. 11:23-31)
- f. Carry out the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - i. What is it? Go ye therefore..... Share the Gospel, seeing people saved, baptized, and disciplined!
- g. Meet at regular times.
 - i. Why do we meet on Sundays? (John 20:19, 26, Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2)
 - 1. Jesus resurrected from the dead on Sunday. He appeared to His disciples as they were assembled together on Sunday. Then He returned eight days later to meet with His disciples again on Sunday, clearly setting a pattern of assembling on the Lord’s Day. The early church met on Sunday (Acts 20:7). The early church brought their tithes and offerings on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:2).

III. What is the purpose of the local church?

- a. To Preach the Word (Matthew 28:19-20)
- b. To Baptize believers (Acts 2:41; Matthew 28:19-20)
- c. To Disciple believers (Matthew 28:19-20)
- d. To Teach the Word (I Timothy 4:13; Acts 2:42)
- e. To Worship God (Acts 2:47 – “Praising God...”)
- f. To Fellowship through Christ with other believers.
- g. To observe the two ordinances.
- h. To Pray (Acts 2:42)
- i. To be a Testimony of God’s grace and power (Acts 2:43)
- j. Mutual assistance (Acts 2:44-45; I Timothy 5:3-16)
- k. To reach out into the community (Acts 2:46-47)
- l. To preserve the Truth (I Timothy 3:15)

IV. Why should I serve in the church, and how important it is?

- a. You have been gifted to serve in the church body. (I Corinthians 12:1-7)
 - i. The Bible is very clear that every believer has been given a gift from God.
 - ii. God has given different people various gifts and abilities (I Corinthians 12:4-10).
- b. You have been specifically placed in the body to serve.

- i. As a body, we all make up different parts of the body. Some parts may seem more important to a body (mouth and eyes vs. the big toe), but all are part of the body (I Corinthians 12:14-17).
 - c. Your service in the church will either build up the body, or your lack of service will hinder the body.
 - i. When you faithfully use your gifts and abilities for the good of the body, it will “build up” the body as it conforms to the image of Christ. On the other hand, if you do not use your gifts and abilities to aid the body, you will hinder the body. Your lack of service will also hinder your growth. Christians who do not serve, only soak in and never give out. Churches where people are unwilling to serve will ultimately cause that church to become anemic and ineffective. (Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:1-8)
 - d. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - i. How much of my time do I give serving in the local church body?
 - ii. How much of my talents do I give serving in the local church body?
 - iii. How much of my treasure do I give for the local church body?
 - iv. How much of my temple (body) do I give in service to the church body?
 - v. What is preventing me from serving more in the local church body?
- V. How do I begin serving in the local church?**
- a. By realizing your position before God
 - i. God is the owner of everything. (I Corinthians 10:26)
 - ii. God is Lord over all. (Romans 14:7-9)
 - b. By having a willing heart to serve.
 - i. God doesn't look for perfect people to serve Him, He seeks willing hearts!
 - c. By having a faithful heart as you serve.
 - a. When you commit to serve, be faithful to it.
 - b. As God's stewards, we are required to be faithful.
 - c. Faithfulness is hard to find. (Luke 16:10-11)

⇒ Unfaithfulness is very troublesome! How would you feel if every time you began to eat, a tooth broke; or every time you began to walk, your foot became dislocated? (Proverbs 25:19)

 - d. Faithfulness is rewarded by God. (Matthew 25:21)
 - d. Realize what the main purposes of the ministries in the Church are.

⇒ All ministries in a Church need to revolve around the Great Commandments given by Jesus. (Turn to Matthew 22:35-40)

 - i. To love and glorify God supremely. (Matthew 22:35-38)
 - ii. To love and serve people sincerely. (Matthew 22:39-40)
 - iii. To fulfill the Great Commission passionately. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Christian Liberty - What liberty do I have as a believer?

The New Testament is very clear that as saved people, we are no longer bound by any law to please God, but we are under His grace. Christians need to understand just what our liberties in Jesus Christ are, what lines need to be drawn in our lives in relation to our actions as a child of God, and the responsibilities that come with these liberties.

I. How should we use our freedoms and liberties in regard to God and others?

- ✚ Some today believe Christians are free to do whatever they want regardless of how it affects other people. They believe our actions have no real influence on other people, that the believer is no longer under the “law” and therefore can live any way they want because they are under grace. How should Christians use their liberties in Christ? Is the Christian free to do whatever he wants to do?

- a. We have been set free to serve God, and not sin. (Romans 6:11-22; 1 Peter 2:16)
- b. We have been set free to serve others, and not ourselves. (Galatians 5:13-14)
- c. We have been set free to please others, and not our fleshly desires. (I Corinthians 10:24, 33; Romans 15:1-3; Hebrews 12:1-2; Romans 8:18)

II. How should we use our liberties and freedoms in regard to “gray” areas?

- a. In regard to the “gray” areas, ask the following questions:
 - i. Is it Helpful? (I Corinthians 10:23)
 - 1. Is it expedient, beneficial, constructive?
 - 2. Does it cause me to grow spiritually or help others grow? (I Corinthians 6:12a)
 - 3. Does it help your walk with God and with others?
 - 4. How is it affecting your health? (I Corinthians 6:19-20) Your body is the temple of God!
 - ii. Is it Honoring to God? I Corinthians 10:31
 - 1. If the Lord returned at this moment, would I be ashamed? (I Corinthians 1:8; I Thessalonians 5:23)
 - iii. Is it a Habit? I Corinthians 6:12
 - 1. Is it an addictive behavior? Does it hold you in its power? Do you feel you need this to be happy and fulfilled? Does it control your thoughts or actions?
 - 2. Is it enslaving? Can you go a month without it? Can you go a week, a day, or even a couple of hours? Are you consumed by the thoughts of it?
 - iv. Is it Hurtful? I Corinthians 10:24; I Cor. 8:9, 13
 - 1. Are you convicted before, during, or after it? Do you find yourself needing to justify it even to yourself? In doing it, would you hurt someone else or cause them to be tempted to go against their conscience of what they think is right? Will it hinder someone else's spiritual growth?

III. What are my responsibilities & attitude toward other Christians?

- a. We are to pray for each other. (I Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2 Tim. 1:3)
- b. The primary attitude should be to love them. (I John 3:14-16; I John 4:20; I Peter 4:8)
- c. Be patient with them. (Romans 15:5-7).
- d. Be sensitive to their needs. (I John 3:17-18; James 2:15-16).
- e. Be forgiving of each other. (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

IV. What is "fellowship" (I John 1:3-7)?

“Fellowship” is a term commonly used by Christians generally referring to getting together for activities or times of sharing common interests. However, this is only a small part of true fellowship. It is true that to fellowship is to share things, but true biblical fellowship goes FAR BEYOND just a meal or an activity. It is the sharing of life through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ with another believer.

- a. The areas of true fellowship include among others:
- b. Prayer (II Corinthians 1:11)
- c. Faith (Romans 1:12)
- d. Ministry (II Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 2:9)
- e. Suffering (Philippians 3:10; I Peter 4:13)

Although doctrinal beliefs are vitally important, true biblical fellowship is not based on exact doctrinal agreement, but in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You MUST LEARN to have fellowship!