

How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are

by

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Introduction

In parts of the world where the church does not exist, there is a great need not only to preach the gospel, but also to explain to the new converts how to begin a congregation of the Lord's church where they are. For this reason, a few years ago I presented these lessons on Sri Lanka Radio to the people of India and other countries throughout Asia. At that time the lessons were printed in India and sent to listeners and contacts who requested them. Now, these sermons are again being printed and will be used by World Bible School teachers and others as guidelines for students around the globe.

These sermons were directed to those who spoke and read English as a second language. For this cause, the lessons were kept very basic, and even repetitious, in an effort to better help the listeners and the readers to understand what was being said. This printing will also be going primarily to people of other nations. It is our prayer that it will be helpful to new converts, and that it will result in many new congregations of the church of Christ being established all over the world.

J. C. Choate

Lesson 1

God's Plan for Man

Beginning with this lesson we are going to be discussing the theme of **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are**. We will be talking about any number of things, based on what the Bible teaches, which will help us to see the importance of the Lord's church, the need for it to exist where we are, and how to make all of this possible.

For this occasion, our study will have to do with **God's Plan for Man**. We need not only to be aware of God's existence, that we are His creation, but also that He has an over-all plan for man.

God has always been, He lives now, and He will always be. He is not physical or earthly, but is a Spirit, according to John 4:24. He is *"one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Ephesians 4:6). He not only created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1), but He crowned all of His creation by forming man and woman in His own image (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7).

Man did not accidentally come into this world. Neither was he placed here to roam the earth without purpose or direction. His life was to be spent in a more noble way than that of seeking the pleasures of this world. Rather, he was put here to honor his Maker. In the long ago, the Psalmist David wrote, *"Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name"* (Psalm 100:3,4).

Even before man was created, God had a plan for him. He predestinated, or predetermined, or decided that the righteous would be saved but that the unrighteous would be lost. Speaking

to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul wrote, *“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:4-6). While God decided that the righteous would be saved but that the wicked would be lost, He has given each person the freedom to decide which group he will be a part of. If one decides to be numbered with the righteous, to be saved in this world and in the world to come, of course he must submit himself to the Lord in obedience in order that he may be saved, and be added to His church (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:47). To fail to do that means one has chosen to be numbered with the other group.

Although one is born into this world without sin, that is, he is born clean and holy, on reaching the age of knowing right from wrong he becomes a sinner. At this point God holds him responsible for his actions. Another way of saying it, he transgresses God’s law and is therefore lost. Sin is the transgression of God’s law, which means that one does that which is in opposition to God’s will (1 John 3:4). Speaking of this kind of people, Paul said, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

God saw man in sin, and knew that sin brings death (Romans 6:23), therefore He sent His Son into the world to save man. John wrote, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* (John 3:16,17).

Man could not be saved by his own righteousness or through animal sacrifices. Hebrews 10:4 says, *“For it is not possible that*

the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” That is why God sent His own Son into the world to live among men and finally to die for the sins of the world. We read, “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*” (Romans 5:8,9). Peter said that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Christ Himself said that His blood was shed that we might have remission of our sins (Matthew 26:28).

How can the death of one man and the shedding of His blood save us from our sins or wrong doing? We must realize that just *anyone’s death*, or just *anybody’s blood*, would not be able to save a person. But the death of Christ, the Son of God, the one who was without sin Himself, and the life’s blood that He shed on our behalf is a different matter. That sacrifice and that blood can save and make it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins.

The next question that comes to mind would be, “But how can the blood of Christ be applied to one’s sins so that they may be taken away?” According to the Scriptures, this is done by obeying the Lord’s commands. After Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, He sent His disciples forth with these instructions: “*Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:15,16). When one believes in the Lord, repents of his sins, confesses Christ to be the Son of God, and is baptized or buried in water, then through that obedience he reaches the blood of Christ and is forgiven of his sins. Paul said, “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (Ephesians 1:7). He is referring here to the blood of Christ.

In the book of Acts eleven cases of conversion are listed. In each one, the record clearly shows that through their obedience to

the commands of the gospel they were saved. They were cleansed, forgiven, or saved by Christ and His blood as they obeyed His commands. Apart from such obedience there is no salvation.

All those who obeyed the Lord and were saved were at the same time brought together in a group of people known as the church or body of Christ. With approximately three thousand asking to be baptized after hearing the apostles preach the gospel in Jerusalem, the record goes on to say, “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:47). This church was not just another church, one that belonged to man or was begun by humans. Rather, it was the Lord’s church, the spiritual body of Christ. It was the one for which He died, the one that wears His name, and the one that He will return for one day. The church cannot save anyone, but Christ is the saviour *of the church* (Ephesians 5:23), and therefore one must be a part of His church to be saved and to go to heaven (Ephesians 5:25-27).

As saved people, Christians, and members of the Lord’s church, then God would have His people to worship Him and to live the faithful Christian life so that heaven might be their eternal home. This is God’s plan for man.

If you are a Christian and a member of the one church we read about in God’s word — Christ’s church — we salute you. If you are not, we would like to encourage you to think seriously about the things that have been said, to obey the Lord, and to be just a Christian.

As we continue these studies we are going to show you how easy it is to obey the Lord and to be a member of Christ’s church wherever you are. If there is not already a congregation in your area, we will give you information on how to establish one. Continue to study with us and if we can answer your questions, provide you with literature, or be of help to you in your obedience to the Lord, please contact us.

Lesson 2

You Need a Bible

The church is very important and we want to tell you how to be a part of it. We also will show how the church can exist where you are, if there is not a congregation near you.

The church we are talking about is not just another church, a denomination, or some man-made institution. Rather, we are speaking of the church that we can read about in the Bible, the one which belongs to Christ, and the one which wears His name. Many things are involved and we are going to discuss these at length.

We want to remind you that God had a plan for man, put him here for a purpose, gave him a work to do, and prepared a home for his soul. All of this is revealed in the Bible, which means that **you need a Bible** or a New Testament, but preferably a Bible, if you are going to know what God's will is for you.

I hope you already have a Bible, but if you don't, please see if you can locate one. They can be bought in book stores, Bible Societies, churches, etc. I encourage you to use the King James Version, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Version, or some other accepted version of the Scriptures. There are many versions, or translations, available but some of them are inferior to the older ones.

First of all, you need to realize that the Bible is God's word. It is His final revelation, or will, for man. There are many statements in the Scriptures to emphasize its author, inspiration, and the need for accepting it as final. Paul said, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every*

good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is referred to as the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), and Christ said that heaven and earth would pass away, but that His word would never pass away (Matthew 24:35). We are not to add to it, subtract from it, or to substitute for it (Revelation 22:18,19; Galatians 1:6-9). We are to be doers of the word (James 1:22), and some day we will be judged by it (John 12:48).

But if you have a Bible, you need to know how to rightly divide it (2 Timothy 2:15). This means that you must realize that there are two main divisions in the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament began with the creation and ended with the prophet Malachi, foretelling the coming of Christ, the Savior. The Old Testament covers the Patriarchal and the Mosaical periods of time. The Law of Moses, given during the second period was God’s law for His people during that time. But then Christ came, He gave a new will or law, and in doing so He made the first one old. It was removed that we might have a better law. The Hebrew writer, in speaking of Christ and this change, said, *“Then He said, Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Hebrews 10:9,10). We are therefore not bound to keep the Old Law, since we now live under the Law of Christ. The people who lived in Old Testament times could not keep the laws of the New Testament (which had not yet come) any more than we who live today can keep the laws of the Old Testament.

Yet the Old Testament is still God’s word and serves a most noble purpose. It gives the history of man and also shows how God has dealt with His people. It gives examples of those who obeyed the Lord, and were blessed for it, but on the other hand, it also tells of those who disobeyed God and were punished for

it. Above all, it gives many prophecies of the coming of Christ, and of His death, burial, and resurrection. When we turn to the New Testament we can see how all of these were fulfilled. So, the Old Testament has many purposes, but we cannot follow it as a law and expect to be saved.

The New Testament reveals God's will for man today. It begins with Christ's birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection, and then proceeds to show how the church was established, and after that, how the gospel was taken to all the world.

With all of this in mind, the Hebrew writer said, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds*" (Hebrews 1:1,2). At the transfiguration of Christ, God spoke from heaven and said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him*" (Matthew 17:5). There is no doubt then as to who is to be heard, and that is Christ. Neither is there any doubt as to the testament which contains the law of Christ, and that is the New Testament.

There are several things we need to keep in mind as we study God's word. We therefore must accept it and respect it as divine law. We are not to reject it, argue over it, or question it. God has said what He has said and that should settle the matter.

Second, **the word of God will not divide us**. Of course we know that there are many people who claim to be following the teaching of the Bible, yet they are divided in both what they teach and what they do. Can this be possible? Absolutely not! The Lord has spoken to all of us through His word, and when we all believe what He has said, and we obey His teaching, that will make us one. That means we will all believe the same thing, all be saved alike, all be members of the same church, worship together, and have the same hope. Christ even prayed that we

might be one, but certainly not divided (John 17:20-23). Read through the New Testament and you will see that the Lord's people were one. Can it be otherwise today and be acceptable to Him?

Third, **the Lord's word is final.** He has no new message for man today and neither will He give new revelation in the days and years to come. He has revealed His will to man, and He has revealed all of it. If He had wanted to say something else, He would have said it. Since He gave only what we have, then we must conclude that He has no more to give. Again, there are those who claim that God has spoken to them, but for what purpose? If He gives the same message as revealed in the Bible, why would He need to speak to anyone directly? If He gives some new revelation, would He not be showing partiality to give new revelation to one and not to the rest of us? Of course those who claim that God has spoken to them will always say that God has given them some message, but it invariably is in conflict with what the written word says. That would mean that God would be contradicting His own word. Can we believe such? Never! Therefore we must conclude that He does not speak to man today apart from His word. If we want to know God's will we must go to the Bible. For one to claim that God is making a special revelation to him means that such a person is deceived, *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8).

Fourth, **we will one day be judged by the Lord's word.** Which word is that? It is the truth found in the Bible. What we read there will be the law by which we will be judged on the day of judgment. We will not live by one law and be judged by another. What He requires in the written word, He will require in the judgment *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My*

words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). He will not change it to suit our situation. This is why we must be very careful to do only what He has commanded. To reject any of His teaching now means that He will reject us on that day when we shall stand before him. If we believe the word, obey it, and live by it, then it will surely bless us on that day.

My friends, I hope you have a Bible, but if you don't, let me encourage you to put forth a special effort to obtain one. You need to read and study it, to know God's will. Read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to build faith in your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Read the book of Acts to learn what you need to do to be saved; that is, to believe in Christ, to repent of your sins, to confess Christ as the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of your sins. Read there also of the establishment of the Lord's church and how that when one obeys the Lord, Christ adds the penitent, obedient person to that church. To learn how to live the Christian life and to have the hope of eternal life, continue reading on through the New Testament.

Lesson 3

You Need to Be Saved

We will continue our series of studies on **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are**. If you are a Christian, and you are near a congregation of the Lord's church, we would encourage you to worship there. But if you are too far away, then we urge you to begin a congregation where you live.

In keeping with these thoughts, our emphasis at this time will be on the subject, **You Need to be Saved**.

If you are already saved, then of course I am not speaking to you; that is, unless you *think* you are a Christian but in reality you are not. There are many people like that. They have been taught that Christ is the Son of God, have come to believe that, and then they are told that because of *their faith* in Christ they are saved. Others have been told other things that would indicate that they are acceptable to the Lord. In this lesson we hope to be able to show you from the Bible itself what one must do to have salvation. Once you learn that, you can compare what you did with the Lord's will to see if you are saved or not. If you merely *think* you are, but in reality you are not, then I would encourage you to be honest enough with yourself and with God to act upon the truth that you learn, so that you can be saved.

All people are born into this world without sin. For the first several years of their lives they are not held responsible for their actions. Even the laws of our country will not punish children for their misdeeds during this youthful period of their life. But upon reaching the age when they know right from wrong, in the sight of God they become sinners. Sin is defined as "missing the mark" or "breaking the law" (1 John 3:4). Once one becomes a sinner he is lost and needs to be saved or forgiven of his sins. It might

be pointed out that one's own righteousness or goodness cannot save him (Ephesians 2:8,9). As already mentioned, even religious people may be lost. Christ said that it was not enough to call upon the name of the Lord, to do mighty works in the Lord's name, etc., but rather to be saved *one must do the will of the Father in heaven* (Matthew 7:21-23). Finally, even though one obeys the Lord and is forgiven of his sins, in order to remain saved he must be faithful (Revelation 2:10). In other words, it is possible for one to fall away or to go back into sin, and in so doing he is again lost in sin.

Not knowing you personally, I would not know whether you are a child of God or whether you need to be saved, but I think we can help you to see what your real state is at this time.

For instance, if you do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, you are not saved. Christ Himself said, *"He who believes on Him is not condemned; but he that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:18). He also said, *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins: for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24). While *faith only* cannot save, still one cannot belong to the Lord if he does not *believe* that Christ is the Son of God. The point is, once one becomes a believer in Christ, he must go on to obey the Lord's will in order to be saved.

Next, one may believe that Christ is the Son of God, but if he has not repented of his sins, if he has not confessed with his mouth that Christ is the Son of God, and if one has not been baptized, then he is not saved. Christ said that one must repent or perish. That is, one must turn away from his sins in order to be saved (Luke 13:3). On another occasion Christ said that one must confess Him before the Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32), and Paul said, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Romans

10:10). Then Christ declared, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). Now what does all of this mean? It means that if one wants to be saved from his sins, he must believe that Christ is the Son of God, he must repent or turn away from his sinful way of life, he must confess Christ as the Son of God, and he must be baptized or be buried in water to have forgiveness of his sins. If one has not done this, he is still lost.

Not only is the foregoing true, but if one is not a member of the church that belongs to Christ, that person is not saved.

A person might be a member of any number of churches, but still not be a member of the right one. Of course there are those who advocate that it is not necessary to be a member of **any** church to go to heaven. It is true that one can be saved and go to heaven without being a member of any denominational or man-made church, but one cannot be saved without being a member of the church of Christ. “But isn’t the church of Christ just another denomination?” you might ask. The answer is **NO**. While the church is not the saviour, Christ does add the saved to it. On the day of Pentecost, after the gospel had been preached and some three thousand obeyed the Lord, the record says, *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them”* (Acts 2:41). Again we read, *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47).

From these statements we conclude that if one is not a member of the Lord’s church he is not saved, since Christ adds the saved to the church. In other words, if one is not added to the church it is because he is not saved. We read in Ephesians 5:23 that Christ is the Saviour of the body or the church. How many churches does Christ have? Just one, according to Ephesians 4:4, and He is the Saviour of it.

There would be other truths to consider in relation to one’s

continuing state of salvation, such as worship, living the Christian life, wearing the Lord's name, etc., but for sure, **one must believe that Christ is the Son of God, obey the commands of the gospel, and be a member of the Lord's church in order to be saved.** Now I want to ask you the following questions: Do you believe that Christ is the Son of God? Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? Are you a member of the church of Christ? If you must say no to one or more of these questions, you are not saved. If you can honestly say that you are saved, then you must be able to answer YES to those three questions. If you are not a child of God, I want to encourage you to obey the Lord so you can be saved. Remember, you cannot save yourself and neither can you be saved by complying with the teachings of men. The only way you can have salvation is by doing what the Lord wants you to do. There can be no substitute for faith and obedience. And don't worry about **"joining" a church.** You cannot join the church of Christ. Once you have obeyed the Lord, and He has saved you, **He personally adds you to His church.**

Upon obedience to the Lord's commands, you are a member of the church that Christ said He would build (Matthew 16:18). That church *universal* is made up of many local congregations, wherever its members may be found. If there are two or three members where you are, or perhaps more, you should let them know that you have obeyed the Lord and that you want to have fellowship with them. Perhaps they already know this, but in case they are not aware of your obedience, you must let them know.

Should you be in a location where the church of Christ does not exist, it will be up to you to make the effort to teach those around you, with the hope that others will obey God. Please do not compromise and join some religious group that is already there, but rather work diligently to begin the church according to the teaching of the New Testament.

Lesson 4

How to Obey the Gospel

In this lesson we will study **how to obey the gospel**. Do you even know what the gospel is? Many people do not. How then can they obey the gospel if they don't know what it is? They can't, and that is why we are spending some time in discussing the gospel and how to obey it.

First, let's think about what the gospel is. This is a term that we use all the time, but what good is it to talk about "the gospel", if we don't know what it means. The word gospel is defined as **good news** or **glad tidings**. The Apostle Paul said, "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*" (Romans 10:15). Why is the gospel good news? It is good news because it is the fact of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

How could the death, burial and resurrection of Christ be good news? It is good news because Christ died for our sins, He died that we might be saved, and that we might have the hope of eternal life. But He didn't just die and that was the end of it. We can be saved from our sins because He arose from the grave to prove that He was God's Son and that He had the power to save man. Paul also said, "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in*

that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Then Peter declared, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

There are many other Scriptures which discuss the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, but how can that save me and you? First, we must believe that Christ is the Son of God and that He died, was buried, and that He was resurrected from the grave. Unless we believe this we cannot be saved. Christ Himself said, *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).*

But we can believe this truth all of our lives and still be lost, because it is not enough to merely believe. We must not only believe the gospel, but we must obey it. How can one *obey the gospel*? As we continue to read the Scriptures we are told that there are *commands* of the gospel. **First, we must hear.** That is why Christ commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Paul said that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). And of course that is what we are doing now. We are studying God’s word, we are hearing the gospel so that we may know what it is. Next, we must **believe** the gospel. Christ said, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).* The Hebrew writer says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

Then comes the command of **repentance**. That simply means that one must quit doing those things that are wrong. If one wants to be saved he must be willing to repent. Christ said that we must repent or perish (Luke 13:3). Paul proclaimed that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Peter told a large number of people that they should repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).

After repentance comes the **confession**, that is, one must confess with the mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Lord wants one to go on record that he believes Christ to be God's Son. If he is ashamed of the Lord, or refuses to confess Him, then he cannot be saved. Christ said that if we will confess Him before men, He will confess us before the Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). Paul said that we must confess unto salvation (Romans 10:10). Philip asked the man from Ethiopia to confess that Christ was the Son of God if he wanted to be baptized (Acts 8:37).

And finally, one must **be baptized, or buried in water**, to have his sins washed away. Christ said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Peter preached repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). There are many other passages of scripture that tell us that baptism puts one into Christ (Romans 6:3,4), and into the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). It is what makes the new birth possible as mentioned in John 3:3-5.

But above all, baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ died on the cross, and the sinner dies to his sins; Christ was buried in the tomb, and the sinner is buried in water; Christ was resurrected and one is resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-12). Isn't that beautiful? Paul then explains, *"For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life"* (Romans 6:17,18). The doctrine refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; obedience to the gospel, refers to the sinner as he

dies to his sins, is buried in waters of baptism, and then comes up out of that watery grave which is described as resurrection. Before this, one was a servant of sin, but after the completion of these acts of obedience, one is said to be a servant of righteousness. Therefore, when one obeys the Lord he is proclaiming his faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That is done by obeying the gospel.

Because one *can obey* the gospel, Paul said that the Lord will come back one day to take vengeance on those *who do not know God and do not obey the gospel* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Peter declared, “*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*” (1 Peter 4:17). It is obvious that one must obey the gospel to be saved and to go to heaven, since these writers say that the Lord will come back to take vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel, and if the righteous will barely be saved, what can one expect if he doesn’t even make an effort to obey the Lord?

But once more, **how** does one obey the gospel? The Scriptures teach that one must study God’s word to know the truth. On hearing God’s will, coming to know of Christ, we must believe that He is the Son of God, and that He has the power to save us in this world and in the world to come. Next, we must repent or turn away from all our sins. That means that we must give up our bad habits and quit doing those things that are wrong. Another way of stating it, one cannot repent of his sins and continue to deliberately do those things that oppose God’s will. After repentance, one must confess with his mouth, from his heart, that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Surely one cannot expect Christ to save him if he does not believe in Him enough to acknowledge that faith to others. And finally, he must be baptized or buried in water for the remission of his sins. When a person does this, the

Lord will save him and add him to His church. Isn't that simple?

Lesson 5

How to Identify the Lord's Church

Our theme is, **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are.** If you live near a congregation of the Lord's church that is wonderful. But if you live in some area where the church does not exist, it needs to be there. Or if you should move to a place where the church is not to be found, again it needs to be there. You might be the person to begin it. Think with me as we consider many things that may lead up to this.

To help with further understanding, we will at this time think about **how to identify the Lord's church.**

Let me make it very plain that you can definitely read about the church in the Bible. It is not only there, but it may be clearly identified. There are marks of identification that will distinguish it from all other religious groups. For instance, if you are a member of some church, or if you see churches around you, take those marks of identification that are to be found in the Bible and compare them with your church or anyone else's church and determine whether it is the church of Christ or an imitation.

You might want to know what difference it makes about the church, whether you are a member of one or the other. You might reason that the church is not important, that it does not save, and that one can go to heaven without being a member of any church. Now that sounds good and reasonable, but it is not. Why would the Lord have built a church, even given His life for it, if it was not important, or if one church is as good as the other? True, the church is not the saviour because the church is made up of saved people, but since Christ is saviour of the church, that

means one must be a member of the church that Christ is saviour of in order to be saved and to go to heaven.

Let us go directly to the Bible itself and observe some of the identification marks of the church. There will be many of them as you will see.

The prophets of God in the long ago spoke of the day that the Lord would set up His kingdom or church. Isaiah said, *“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:2,3).

Joel spoke these words: *“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on the menservants and on the maidservants I will pour out my spirit in those days”* (Joel 2:28,29).

Then Daniel added, *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (Daniel 2:44).

Now what were these prophets of God saying? They were telling of a time when the Lord’s spiritual kingdom or church would be established. It would be built in Jerusalem and from there the word of the Lord would go out to all the world. It would come with the power of the Spirit and it would never be destroyed, but it would stand forever. This was fulfilled in

Jerusalem (Acts 2) when the church was established through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and from there the gospel was taken into all the world. On that day the church was built and it has been in existence ever since and it will stand forevermore.

Jesus said that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18), and He did so with the help of the apostles. He had promised to send the Comforter, or the Holy Spirit, upon them to lead them into all truth (John 16:13). Just before He returned to the Father in heaven, He said to them, *“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). And so it came to pass.

We read in Acts 2 that the church was established in the city of Jerusalem. As previously stated, the prophets of God had named the city of Jerusalem where the Lord’s kingdom, or church, would be established. It was said also that the word of the Lord would go forth from this city. Christ said to his apostles, *“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things”* (Luke 24:46-48). After Peter and the apostles had preached to a large number of people in Jerusalem, and they wanted to know what they should do, Peter said, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38). Approximately three thousand obeyed and the Lord added the saved to His church (Acts 2:47).

We also read in Acts 2 that the gospel was first preached and the church of our Lord was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pentecost came on the first day of the week and this took place in approximately A.D. 33.

The Apostles received the power of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, to enable them to perform miracles to convince the people that they were of God, and to speak in the languages of the people gathered there (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4,9).

The church was made up of the saved, since Christ added the saved to the church (Acts 2:41,47). As such it was the spiritual body of Christ, with Christ Himself being its head. Speaking of Christ, Paul said, *“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”* (Colossians 1:18). Also, read Ephesians 1:22,23 and Ephesians 5:23.

The church was purchased with the blood of Christ. Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, *“Therefore take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, among which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood”* (Acts 20:28). Then on another occasion, he said to the Ephesians, concerning Christ and His church, *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the savior of the body”* (Ephesians 5:23). If Christ died for the church, and He is the saviour of it, that means that Christ attached a great deal of importance to it.

Christ is said to be the foundation of the church. After Peter and the apostles had confessed Him as being the Son of God, Christ responded by saying that He was going to build His church upon that truth or that rock, the rock being Himself (Matthew 16:18). Paul said, *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Peter spoke of Christ as being the chief corner stone (1 Peter 2:1-8).

Both the church and its members wear the Lord’s name. Salvation is in no other name (Acts 4:12). Referring to the congregations that make up the church, they are called churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). The church is also spoken of as the

church of God (Acts 20:28), and other descriptive names that honor the Lord. Its members are called Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

The terms of entrance are stated again and again in the book of Acts, as we read the different cases of conversion. On hearing the gospel, people believed in God and Christ, repented of their sins, confessed Christ as the Son of God, and were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 2:47).

As Christians, they worshiped the Lord, remaining faithful to Him, with the promise that Christ would return one day for His church (Ephesians 5:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

So the church is clearly identified in the Scriptures. Now how may you locate the Lord's church today? By using these same marks of identification. A church may claim to be of the Lord, but if it doesn't have these marks, it is not. If there is not a congregation of the church where you are, you can begin one by teaching God's word, converting others, and proceeding from there.

Lesson 6

You Are Important to the Lord

Our purpose in this study will again be to discuss **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where you are.** We believe that if we can clear up the misunderstandings surrounding the church everything else will fall into place. We don't want to over-emphasize the church, but at the same time we want to see it as the Bible presents it. Likewise, if you are not in an area where the Lord's church is to be found, and if you are a member of the church or if you desire to become a member of it, we would like to encourage you to be instrumental in beginning the church where you are.

In this particular lesson we want to emphasize that **you are important to the Lord.**

God made man. He made him in His own image (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7). That is, He gave him a spirit, a soul, that which will never die (Matthew 16:26). He loved him so much that He was willing to give His own Son to die on a cruel cross to save man from his sins (John 15:13). This means that each person is very important. It means that **you** are important.

Look at the individuals in the Bible who are most prominent. They became great people because they allowed the Lord to use them. Think about Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Isaiah, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, each of the apostles, and many others.

Think, too, of the Apostle Paul and what he was able to accomplish for the Lord during his lifetime. He started out as an enemy of Christ and His people. Once he was converted, however, he worked as hard, and no doubt harder, for the Lord and the

spreading of His cause than he had worked against Him. Think of his missionary journeys and all the people he was able to convert to Christ. Because of his work, and that of his converts, along with the other apostles and their converts, within less than thirty years the gospel was taken into all the world. A few people, or even one person, can accomplish an unbelievable amount of good when the desire, dedication, and commitment are there.

Look at the importance that was attached to one man and his family in Acts 10. Cornelius was in the Roman military, but he was a good man. He was a religious person, too, praying always and giving alms to the poor. God took notice of him. As the story continues, God sent Peter to Cornelius and his family for the purpose of preaching the gospel to them. The record says, *“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days”* (Acts 10:44-48).

One primary factor in the conversion of Cornelius and his household is the fact that they were Gentiles, and they became the *first* Gentile converts. Think of what this conversion meant to the cause of Christ in that day. Being the first Gentile converts, no doubt their names were often spoken from that time forward as an example of Gentiles becoming Christians. Not only that, but think of all of the Gentiles who followed in their footsteps. Even today most Christians come from a Gentile background.

Now let's go back to the conversion of the man from

Ethiopia. Although Philip was working in Samaria and was meeting with considerable success, still the record says, *“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.*

Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and overtake this chariot. So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, How can I, unless someone guides me? And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

The place in the Scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. So the eunuch answered Philip and said, I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:26-39).

Many great lessons could be drawn from the reading of this

conversion, but the thing that we are stressing at this time is the fact that this man was important enough that the angel of the Lord brought Philip and the Ethiopian together so that Philip could teach him the truth and, in turn, that this man might be able to obey the Lord. Now who was this Ethiopian? He was a very religious man, having traveled all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship according to the religion of Judaism. This would indicate that he was a man of humility, sincerity, and commitment. He was also a man of great authority, being Queen Candace's treasurer. Now on obeying the truth, and returning to his country, what influence do you suppose this one man might have had on the leaders of the country, his family members, and the people in general? We would have to conclude that God saw in him a great potential for spreading His cause, and I doubt seriously that this Ethiopian disappointed the Lord.

Now, who are you? Perhaps you think you are a *nobody*, but while you might never seem to be of great importance as a lone individual, if you will obey the Lord and give yourself to Him, He can make you a *somebody*. You might be young, old, a woman, a man, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, or whatever. You might use those things as excuses, saying that you can never amount to much for the Lord. But you are wrong. Look at the ordinary men and women of the Bible and how He took them and made great servants of them. Why can't He do the same with you?

What I am saying is this: If you will obey the Lord, and become a member of His church, and if you will give yourself to Him, that is, if you will work for Him, you can be a preacher, teacher, missionary, or perhaps serve Him in some other capacity that will enable you to do much for Him in the spreading of His cause. As we are stressing in these studies, if you are in a place where the church does not exist, you can take the lead there to begin the work. Oh yes, you can do that. The Lord has promised

to be with you and to bless your efforts. Please think about these things and pray that God's will might be done in your life.

Lesson 7

Why the Church Is Needed Where You Are

This entire series of lessons deals with the question of **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are**. It is possible that you may already be a member of the Lord's church, and a member of some local congregation. In that case, we are glad. However, if you are not yet a Christian, and if there is not a congregation of the church where you are, I pray that through these studies you may be encouraged to obey the Lord, that you may be saved. God will add you the church that Christ built. It may be, however, that no congregation of the church is meeting where you live. If that is the case we want to give you the information you need to enable you to begin the church in your community.

First, we want to tell you **why the church is needed where you are**. We are not talking about just another church, some type of denomination. As a matter of fact, there may already be several denominations where you live, but we are not talking about man-made churches. Rather, we are talking about the church that we can read about in the Bible, the church which belongs to the Lord. It is the one Christ died for, the one that He is saviour of, and the one of which He is head. It is also the one which wears His name.

Did you know that you can be a member of a denominational church and still be lost? Those who are in man-made churches will admit that you can be saved without being a member of any of them. That is why the Lord's church needs to be in your community, for your sake and for the sake of others who may want to obey the Lord.

Christ's church is important. It is not the savior, but one

must be a part of His church to be saved. As a matter of fact, if one is saved, in the process the Lord adds him to that body of saved people which He called His church (Acts 2:47). But hear the words of the Apostle Paul when he said, *“For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church: and He is the savior of the body”* (Ephesians 5:23). Please note that he says that Christ is the savior of the body. But what is the body? According to Ephesians 1:22,23 and Colossians 1:18, it is the church. So Christ is savior of the church. But how many bodies are there? Again, Paul says that there is only one (Ephesians 4:4). But if the body is the church and there is but one body, that means there is but one church. It makes sense to be a member of Christ’s church, and it makes sense for the church to be where you are since that is the church you and others must be members of in order to please God.

Another reason why the church needs to be there is to provide you and any other members of the church with a congregation with which to worship. If there is no congregation in your area, you may be weak enough to begin to worship with some other religious group. But this is definitely not the solution to the problem.

Let me explain why you can’t worship with some other church. If you are a member of the church of Christ, that means you are not a member of some denominational group. The Lord’s church is different from them in that it belongs to the Lord, it wears the name of Christ, and its worship and its teachings are different. How could you worship with a church that is not of the Lord? You couldn’t sing with them because they use mechanical music, while the Lord’s people sing only. Paul said that we should sing and make melody in our hearts (Ephesians 5:19). You couldn’t pray with them because they are not saved people. The Lord has promised to hear **His** people, but not the sinner (John 9:31). You couldn’t study with them because they

are governed by manuals and disciplines of men. You couldn't partake of the Lord's Supper with them because more than likely they would not even have the Lord's Supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Neither could you contribute your money to them because it would be used to uphold false teaching. And you couldn't fellowship them because you would not be able to encourage them to continue in their error. These are reasons why you could not worship with some other church.

Again, if you are in a place where the church does not exist, another danger would be that you might quit religion altogether. You might reason that since the church is not there, and you can't worship with other religious groups, why bother with any of it anyway? But that is not the solution to your problem. Rather, you must realize that there is something you can do to solve the problem.

You may have lived in your home place all of your life, taken a Bible correspondence course, or heard the gospel preached on the radio, and then obeyed the Lord only to discover that you are the only Christian there. Or you may have moved to your present home from some place where the church did exist. But regardless of how you happened to be there, thank God you are there, and please let this be an opportunity for you to begin the church where you are. But you might say, "Who am I to be able to begin the Lord's church?" No doubt you can find many excuses, but the fact is that you can do whatever needs to be done if you will make up your mind to do so.

The church needs to be in your area because you are there and because of all the others there who need salvation. You and the church represent Christ. You represent the truth of God, giving people an opportunity to choose between truth and error. If the church is not there to uphold the truth, the local people may not even be aware of God's will. The church represents the light, the Lord's way. Without it there is only darkness.

The church needs to be there not only to worship God but also to be active in preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ. This may be done in worship but also can be done through meetings, personal work, literature, etc. There are so many ways to proclaim God's will, but it is up to the church to take the lead.

How large must the church be to do this work? The Scriptures simply say in the words of Jesus, "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*" (Matthew 18:20). That means that you can begin a congregation with yourself and another member, and then you can go on growing to any size, as far as numbers are concerned.

Keep in mind that the Lord's church is made up of the saved, and as people obey the Lord, and He saves them, He adds them to all of the others who are saved. The local congregation begins with two or more members who agree that they will meet to worship and to work together for the Lord, and it grows from there.

The church or local congregation is not a material meeting house or church building. As a matter of fact, it doesn't matter where the church meets. It can have its own building or it may begin meeting in a home, in a rented hall, in a school building, or some other place. The important thing about the Lord's church is not *where* it meets, but *who* meets there.

The church will be known as the church of Christ, or in other words, it will wear a scriptural name as set forth in the Scriptures. In its worship, in its teaching, work, and in all that it does, it will be governed by the things taught in God's word. Its mission will be to spread the cause of Christ and to honor the Lord.

How exciting it is to be a Christian and a member of the Lord's church! Whether you are a member of a large local congregation or live in a place where the church has not existed, the fact is that you can play an important role in helping the church to grow or be instrumental in beginning a congregation where you are.

Lesson 8

How to Begin the Lord's Church

Our series of studies centers around the theme of **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are**, emphasizing on the need for the church to exist in your city, village, or wherever you may be. We are also stressing the fact that if you are a Christian you can have a part in beginning a congregation of the church where you are, if it doesn't already exist there.

In this lesson we want to talk about **how to begin the Lord's church**. In previous lessons we have discussed the need of salvation, how to obey the Lord, how to identify the church, why the church is needed where you are, etc. Now we want to show you how you can actually begin the church where you live.

Before we go any further, let me say again that we are talking about beginning the church where you are, *only on the basis that it is not already there*. If it is there, you need to fellowship the local congregation, not cause division by keeping separate. But be sure that the group calling itself the church of Christ is actually true, and not a denominational church in disguise. Check up on it. Visit and observe its worship. What name does it wear? In these studies we are trying to identify the church so that you will recognize whether or not it is the Lord's body. Someone might ask, "But what difference does it make?" It makes the difference between being right and wrong. Surely the Lord knows what He wants, and if He does, then that is right and any other way is wrong.

In some cities we have too many congregations in the sense that there are those who obey the Lord and, instead of worshipping with a nearby congregation of the church, they begin a work

in their home or in a rented facility. Sometimes two or three congregations meet on the same street. This is bad. It is bad because sometimes it represents division even among brethren. It is also bad when there are so many small congregations struggling to survive when they could unite and help and encourage one another to do a better job.

So we are not talking about beginning a congregation where there is already one or more congregations nearby. Rather, we are encouraging the beginning of the Lord's church in a city or area where it does not exist. Maybe you are wondering how it is possible to begin, or to establish, the church of Christ. Of course we are not talking about *founding* a church, beginning *a new* church, having *our* church, etc. We know that the Lord has already established His church (Matthew 16:18). It was established originally in Jerusalem when the gospel was preached and some three thousand obeyed it, were saved, and the Lord added them to His church (Acts 2). After that, wherever the gospel was preached, and there were those who obeyed it, a congregation of the Lord's church was started. Ever since that time, wherever the word of God was preached and people obeyed it, the church came into existence in that place. The same is true today, and this is what we are talking about when we speak of beginning the church where you live. The Lord's church can exist in a place only as you and others obey the Lord. It is that simple.

So your situation is this: You are a Christian and you want to worship the Lord. You want to be a member of a local congregation but there is not a church of Christ in your city. What can you do? First of all, I would suggest that, even though you are alone, you set aside some time each Lord's day (each first day of the week), which is Sunday, to worship God; to read the Scriptures, to pray, and to sing spiritual songs. Since the Lord would have His people to remember Him each first day of the week by partaking of the

Lord's Supper, you should bake some unleavened bread and obtain some grape juice, and you should follow the scriptural pattern of 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 of partaking of the bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of the blood of Christ. Then you should set aside a contribution from your salary to be used in the Lord's work, maybe purchasing Bibles and New Testaments to share with others, buying supplies for the Lord's Supper, to have funds to help those in need, etc.. Although you are only one person, still that would be encouragement to you and perhaps give you the strength that you would need to go on until you could find others that would be willing to join you in worship.

Next, if I were you, I would try to get my family members and friends to gather with me for worship. In the meantime I would be thinking of individuals, men or women, or young people, with whom I could talk and study the Scriptures for the purpose of converting them to the truth. I would be gentle with them, take time with them, but I would try to show them what one must do to be saved and then I would show them what the Bible teaches about the Lord's church. Maybe in time one or more would decide to obey the Lord. You would explain to them that on believing in the Lord and repenting of their sins, the next thing they must do is to confess Christ to be the Son of God. You could go to Acts 8:26-39 and read the story of the conversion of the man from Ethiopia as an example of one confessing Christ. Then you could ask those wanting to obey the Lord, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" Upon their confession you could take them to a lake, a stream of water, or some place where there would be enough water to immerse them, and baptize them. Prior to the baptism you would want to state that you are baptizing them by the authority of Jesus Christ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of their sins (Matthew 28:18-20). You can take the individual and immerse him in water. Be sure

to completely cover them in the water because baptism is a burial which pictures the burial of Christ (Romans 6:3,4 and Colossians 2:12).

When you have had one or more to obey the Lord, you have the beginning of a congregation of the Lord's church in your city.

You may meet in your home for worship on the Lord's day, or you may arrange to meet in some public hall. You can invite your family members and friends to come. You might be able to advertise your meeting place and encourage the public to come. It would then be between you and the other members to decide who will do what when it comes to the teaching, leading of prayers, waiting on the Lord's Table, leading the singing, etc. Of course the ladies could not be called on to take a public part, but they could help prepare the bread and fruit of the vine for the Lord's Supper. They could also teach the children or meet with other ladies for Bible study.

As to the preaching or Bible study, we live in marvelous times. If no one is prepared to preach at this point, some scripture could be read, and also a gospel tract or article might be read to those present. Beyond that, if you will write us for a taped sermon, perhaps we can send some on a regular basis. With a tape recorder you will be able to hear those sermons week after week.

Also, if you will write to us, or to other Christians that you may know, perhaps some arrangement can be made for a preacher to come to you for the purpose of conducting some gospel meetings.

If you are a young Christian or a woman, you may find it more difficult to begin a congregation, but if you will work at it, try to contact someone who can help you, and continue to teach your family members and friends, then you will definitely be able to do something. It might take a little longer, but you will surely succeed.

Actually, this is not as complicated and as difficult as it may sound. All it takes is for one or more determined Christians to

go to work for the Lord, and the beginning of the church and its growth will automatically follow.

Lesson 9

How to Baptize

Our series of lessons on the theme of **how to begin the Church of Christ where you are** continues. If you are where the church does not exist we want to encourage and help you to begin the church there. Of course if you are not a member yourself, the first thing you need to do is to obey the Lord and become a member. Then you will be in position to begin a local congregation.

As we consider all the things involved in something like this, we come to the matter of baptism, and especially **how to baptize**.

First we want to stress again the scriptural meaning of baptism and the purpose of it. The Bible tells us that baptism is a burial, an immersion, and that it is done in water. Paul said, *“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”* (Colossians 2:12). On another occasion he said, *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:3,4). We are told that when John baptized Christ He *“went up straightway out of the water.”*

In Acts 8 we read of Philip teaching a man from Ethiopia. When they came to a certain water, the Ethiopian wanted to know if he could be baptized. Philip explained that he could if he believed with all of his heart that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He then confessed Christ, and they both went down into the water, Philip baptized the eunuch, and then both came up out of the water.

Why did both of them go down into the water? So that Philip could immerse this man, and after his immersion, both Philip and the Ethiopian came up out of the water. So the Bible clearly teaches that baptism is a covering or burial in water.

Next we want to point out that baptism is for the remission of sins. We are not saying that baptism **alone** saves, but baptism does save (remits sins) on the basis that one hears the truth, believes in God, and then is baptized. Christ commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. In doing that they were to preach, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). Peter and the other apostles preached to a large crowd in the city of Jerusalem, and when those people asked what they should do, *“Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38). Baptism puts one into Christ and into the church. A similar statement is found in Galatians 3:26,27 when Paul said, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

Finally, in baptism one pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Christ died on the cross. In obedience to the Lord, one dies to his sins, or turns away from his sins. Christ was buried in a tomb. The one obeying the Lord is buried in the waters of baptism. Then Christ arose from the grave. Likewise, the one obeying the Father in heaven is raised from his watery grave to walk in newness of life. All of this is brought out in Romans 6. When one is baptized he is portraying the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection in his obedience. That is a beautiful act indeed!

If you have been baptized and you are a member of the

church, you are ready to teach these truths to those around you. But what will you do if someone wants to be baptized? Maybe there is no one to do the baptizing but you. But how can you do that? Actually, it is all very simple. First, find some water that is deep enough for a person to be immersed. It can be a river, a small stream, a lake, or just a hole of water somewhere. If you are living by the sea or ocean you can always baptize there. Next, set a time for the baptizing. Have the person to come to the water, bringing clothes to be baptized in, and to bring a change of clothes, along with a towel. The one doing the baptizing may also want to bring a towel and a change of clothes. Probably family members and friends will come along to witness the baptizing.

You may want to have a song or two. You will no doubt want to read some Scriptures, perhaps Acts 8:26-39 to show how Philip required the man from Ethiopia to confess his faith in Christ before proceeding with his baptism. After reading the scripture you would want to turn to the one to be baptized and ask him or her this question: “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” If the person does, he or she simply says, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

On the basis that the confession has been made, you lead the individual down into the water where it is sufficiently deep for the immersion. But before the actual baptism, you will want to make a statement something like this: “Based on your desire to obey the Lord, and your confession that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, by the authority of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost for the remission of your sins. Amen.” This statement of authority is found in Matthew 28:18-20.

You will then take the person’s hands, put one hand over the other then explain that you are going to put their hands over

their nose and that there is nothing to fear. If the water is not very deep, you may want to ask the person to sit down so that he can easily be laid back into the water. Then put your other hand behind the person's back, and gently lay him or her back until he has been completely buried in the water. Immediately raise the person up out of the water. That's all there is to it. It is very easy to do, and very simple. There is nothing to fear about the water because you will not go beyond a manageable depth, and the baptism takes only a few seconds.

Another method for baptism is to have the person kneel down in the water, and with only his head out of the water, and then put the head under the water. In that way you don't have to deal with the person's weight leaning him backward and then pulling him up. The main thing is to immerse the penitent believer. When that is done, then he has obeyed what the Lord has commanded. He or she has been scripturally baptized.

If song books have been brought along, a song or two may be sung after the baptism. If the person being baptized is a man, I usually ask him to lead us in prayer, since he is now a new Christian and a new brother in Christ. This will be his first prayer as a Christian, and how wonderful it is to hear him thank the Lord that he is now a child of God. I have heard some beautiful prayers by those who have just obeyed the Lord.

Now that this person has been baptized, the Lord has added him to His church. Locally, since you are a Christian and he or she is a Christian, there are now two or more of you that make up the church at your place. With the teaching of others, this baptismal service will surely be repeated many times.

Of course you understand that the sprinkling and pouring of water on the head are not scriptural baptism.

Have you, yourself, obeyed the Lord in baptism? If not, we pray that you will want to do so.

Lesson 10

How to Worship

Our lessons continue on the general subject of **how to begin the Church of Christ where you are**. If you are not a Christian and a member of the church, we want to encourage you to become one. If you are a member, and if the church doesn't exist where you are, we want to encourage you to begin a congregation there. You can start by having Bible studies in your home with your family members and friends. When others know enough that they want to obey the Lord, you will be able to establish the church right there where you are.

In this lesson we want to discuss **how to worship**. All of us need to know how to worship God if we are to begin a new congregation.

The Bible has a lot to say about worship. When Satan tempted Jesus to bow before him in worship, Christ responded, *"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve"* (Matthew 4:10). Again, Jesus said, *"God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."* It is therefore not enough to worship, but rather we must worship God only, and we must worship Him in sincerity and according to His will, as He has directed in His word.

Most people worship ignorantly, not even directing their worship to the God of heaven. The Apostle Paul came across a group of people like this in Athens (Acts 17:23). Christ said that many worshiped Him but they worshiped in vain because it was according to the doctrines and commandments of men (Mark 7:7). So we need to consider the kind of worship that God wants. In beginning a new congregation, how will God be worshiped? Let us go to the Bible itself to see what is required.

The Lord's people can meet at any time or place to praise their Maker through reading and studying the scripture, praying to the Father, and singing His praises. But the Lord has specifically directed the church to meet **every first day of the week** to do certain things that He requires as worship to Himself. In Acts 20:7 the record tells us of the church gathering on the first day of the week to worship. Paul commanded the Corinthian Christians to lay by in store, as God had prospered them, on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Under the Old Testament law the day of worship was the Sabbath day, or Saturday. With the coming of Christ, in His death on the cross, the Lord removed the old law and gave a new and better one (Hebrews 8:13; 9:15-17). With the new law He gave a new day of worship, the first day of the week, the Lord's day, the day we call Sunday.

Christians therefore are to assemble on that day for fellowship and worship. The Lord has promised to be with His people, even though there may be only two or three gathered together (Matthew 18:20). As He speaks to us through His word we also have several avenues of worship through which we approach Him to honor and glorify His name.

One way we approach God is through the reading and studying of His word. In this way God is speaking to us, talking to us about the things that He wants us to do. Christ said that we should search the Scriptures (John 5:39). Paul wrote, "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). God does not speak to us in an audible voice, but He does speak through His word. We should therefore listen in a reverent and humble manner, and then proceed to obey Him. James says, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*" (James 1:22). In James 1:21 he says

that this word is able to save our souls. Going to James 1:25, he reminds us, *“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does.”* We can see, then, the importance and value of studying or hearing God’s word as we come together for worship.

Another avenue of worship is prayer. The Lord wants to speak to us through His word, but He wants us to pray to Him. We are to pray in our own personal lives, but He also wants us to pray to Him as a congregation of His people. After the church was established, we read of the disciples, *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Christ said that we ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke 18:1). Paul said that we should pray without ceasing, or have the spirit of prayer or the attitude of prayer always (1 Thessalonians 5:17). On another occasion he said, *“Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God”* (Philippians 4:6). We could go on and on considering all of the verses of scripture that speak of prayer, but both in our private and public prayers, we should keep John’s statement in mind: *“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him”* (1 John 5:14,15). The key phrase here is that we should pray *according to His will*. As we do so, the Lord will hear and answer our prayers. We must realize that He knows what is best for us.

Next, consider singing as an avenue of worship. Paul says, *“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:19). He made a similar statement to the Colossian

Christians, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Colossians 3:16). You will notice that in these statements he stresses the fact that we are to sing and to make the melody in our hearts unto the Lord. In Hebrews 13:15 we are told that we are to praise *“God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”* All of this is saying that God wants **us** to praise Him, instead of using mechanical instruments of music as an avenue of worship to Him.

We are also to take part in the memorial supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 that we are to partake of the bread (unleavened bread) in memory of the body of Christ and all of the suffering He endured on our behalf. We are to partake of the cup (fruit of the vine or grape juice) in memory of the blood of Christ, the blood which was shed so that we might have the remission of our sins. He says that we are to partake of the bread and the cup only after we have examined ourselves to be sure that we are doing this from the heart and in remembrance of Him.

And finally, we are to give of our money on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). We are to give as we have been prospered, as we have purposed in our hearts, not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). This is to be done on a free will basis and the money that is given is to be used in the Lord’s work.

In a new congregation the men should plan who will read the scripture or give a lesson, who will lead the prayers, who will lead the singing, who will wait on the Lord’s Table. This should be arranged early enough that preparation can be made and that the ones providing public leadership will be present for the assembly.

Lesson 11

How to Serve the Lord's Supper

We continue with our series concerning **how you can begin the Church of Christ where you are**. You must realize, however, that in order to do this, you must first be a member of the church yourself. If you are not a member, we would encourage you to become one. You can do so by believing in God, repenting of your sins, confessing with the mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and by being baptized or buried in water for the remission of your sins. Upon your obedience, the Lord will save you and will add you to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).

In this lesson we will discuss **how to serve the Lord's Supper**, to guide you in your efforts to begin the church where you are.

The Lord's Supper originated with Christ, as He partook of the last supper with His apostles during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the Passover Feast. Christ lived and died under the law of Moses, but that law would pass away with His death and would be replaced with a new covenant, or a new testament, of which He would be the author. Christ and the apostles gathered for the Passover Feast, and He used this occasion to institute the Lord's Supper. The record says, *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"* (Matthew 26:26-29). The last verse of this passage, in the words of Christ, indicated that He

would not partake of the Supper again until after His death, burial, and resurrection and the establishment of the church. He then would be with His people in Spirit as they would partake of the Supper in remembrance of Him. The institution of this supper is also set forth in Mark 14:22-25 and in Luke 22:14-20.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth about the Lord's Supper, and he said, *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"* (1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

From the foregoing Scriptures, I think it is rather obvious that the Lord would have His people to partake of this memorial Supper. It should also be clear that the bread is to be eaten in remembrance of the body of Christ and the cup or the fruit of the vine should be drunk in remembrance of the blood of Christ. But why does the Lord want us to do this? So that we might remember Him and the sacrifice He made that we might be saved. As we partake, we are saying to ourselves, to the Lord, and to the world that we believe that Jesus Christ lives and that He will come again some day.

Paul said that before we eat of the Supper we should examine

ourselves. In other words, if we look at our heart and life and find that we have sin within us that has not been repented of and forgiven, we should make things right with the Lord before partaking of this supper. If we fail to do this we may harden our hearts against God and finally be lost.

Who can partake of the Lord's Supper? Actually, it is intended only for the Lord's people, but we pass it to all of those in our assemblies. Then it is up to each individual to decide whether he will eat of it or not. We cannot forbid anyone partaking, for the simple reason that someone might be visiting that we have not met. If we allowed only those that we know to be Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper, we might actually refuse to allow some visiting Christians to participate. So this is a decision each person must make for himself.

Next, **when** should we partake of the Lord's Supper, and **how** often? In Acts 20:7 we have an example of the Lord's people assembling for worship on the first day of the week, and during that meeting they partook of the Lord's Supper. We read, "*Now **on the first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*" As in Acts 2:42, this verse speaks of the Lord's people "breaking bread". In both cases this refers to partaking of the Lord's Supper. But how often do Christians assemble to sing, pray, study God's word, and give of their means? Every first day of the week, or every Sunday. That is also how often Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper. As you recall, Paul said, "*For **as often** as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:26). How often is that? Every first day of the week.

We know that many of our religious friends have the Lord's Supper only once every three months, or quarterly. Others have

it on special occasions, perhaps once a year. But we must beg to differ with these people. We disagree on the basis of what the Scriptures teach. If we are not going to follow the commands and examples set forth in the word of God, why bother with religion at all?

If you are going to begin a congregation where you are, you must remember that scriptural worship on the first day of the week will include the Lord's Supper. Whether there are two members or a dozen or more, the men should appoint someone to teach the Scriptures, to lead in prayer, and to lead songs. Then someone should be appointed to wait on the Lord's Table. Prior to having the Supper, it would be good to make some comments about it, along with reading some Scriptures, such as is found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 or Matthew 26:26-29. Other Scriptures referring to the death of Christ could also be used. The individual waiting on the Lord's Table could offer thanks for the bread, mentioning that each one is to partake of it in remembrance of the body of Christ, and of His suffering, and death on the cross. He, or others who assist, would then pass the bread around so that the ones present might have opportunity to partake of it, if they so desire. After partaking of the bread, thanks can be offered for the cup, or fruit of the vine, with explanation of the fact that it represents the shedding of the blood of Christ. The fruit of the vine, usually in small cups, can then be passed around.

Often the ladies take care of the preparation of the Lord's Supper, usually on a voluntary basis. Unleavened bread is baked and then some grape juice can be purchased, if it is available, or some grapes, or raisins may be purchased, and the grapes can be mashed to extract the juice, or raisins can be boiled, and the juice can be taken. The final preparations can be made on Saturday evening or Sunday morning. The bread can be placed on a plate and the fruit of the vine can be poured into a small cup or cups or

glasses. These are then arranged on a table and perhaps covered with a clean cloth. All who participate in this memorial should consider it an honor to do so.

Recipe for Communion Bread

1/2 cup of plain flour

2 tablespoons of olive oil

Dash of salt

Cut oil into flour. Add approximately 2 tablespoons of cold water. Mix together lightly and roll out on a floured surface. Score into small squares with a seamstress' tracing wheel or with a knife. Bake in 450 degrees oven until lightly browned. The amount may be increased or decreased according to the need. The bread should probably be prepared the night before so that it will be ready when needed.

Betty Burton Choate

Instruction for Fruit of the Vine

For the fruit of the vine, you may be able to buy a bottle of grape juice. If none are available you can buy raisins or dried grapes, boil them, and take the juice from them to be served in small cups or glasses. Or you can buy some grapes and squeeze the juice from them for the cups.

Lesson 12

How to Pray

We are continuing our series of lessons on **how to begin the Church of Christ where you are**. If you are a Christian, and you are in a place where the church does not exist, we want to help you be begin the church where you are. All you need is the knowledge of how to begin, and the zeal, drive, and initiative to do it. Of course if you are sitting there waiting for someone else to start, it may never be done. Think of yourself as being that one the Lord can use in a situation like this. What a joy and what an opportunity to work with God in such a way!

Thus far we have covered a number of vital lessons associated with this theme and now we want to discuss **how to pray**.

If you intend to begin a congregation, and have public worship services, you will need to know something about prayer, public prayer, the importance of it, and how to do it.

First let me explain what prayer is. It is an avenue through which we speak to our Father in heaven. In other words, prayer is one of the blessings and privileges is extended to God's people. But who are God's people? Those who have obeyed Him, the saved, Christians, children of God, members of the Lord's church, which is His spiritual family. If you will read through the Scriptures you will observe that prayer is reserved for those who have a son and daughter relationship with their Father. The sinner, the one who is not saved, the one who is not a child of God, cannot qualify to pray to God with the expectation of having his prayers answered. The blind man that Jesus healed had this to say, "*Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him*" (John 9:31). This man was expressing a principle of truth. He said that while God

does not hear the sinner, in the sense of answering his prayers, He does hear those who worship Him and obey His teaching, and of course this would have reference to one who has become a child of God. Peter said, *"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil"* (1 Peter 3:12). Isaiah wrote in the long ago, *"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear"* (Isaiah 59:1,2).

To help us to see that we must be children of God in order for Him to hear us, think about a foreigner calling upon the local government to extend to him the privileges and rights that are reserved for local citizens. Of course we know that is not done. Neither does God grant to those who are not His children the blessings He gives to those who belong to Him. If He heard and answered the prayers of the alien sinner, just as He does His own children, what advantage would His children have over those who are not His? Surely you can see the difference. The point is that if one wants the privilege of prayer, he must become a child of God.

Much is said about prayer in the Scriptures. The early Christians *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). Paul said, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Philippians 4:6). John declared, *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him"* (1 John 5:14,15).

We could go on quoting verses of scripture that encourage prayer both by the individual Christian and in a congregational

setting. There are certain guidelines, however, that are laid down that we should keep in mind. Christ said to His disciples, *“And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it”* (John 14:13,14). In John 15:16 He promised, *“Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.”* Then Christ said, *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”* We can see that things are becoming quite clear regarding the ones who can pray and the conditions that are laid down for answering those prayers. The Lord is directing His word to His disciples, to those who have obeyed Him. He is speaking to those who abide in Him, those who are in Christ and His church. He says that the requests to the Father must be made in His name since He is our advocate (1 John 2:1). Also as we noted in 1 John 5:14,15, our prayers must be according to His will.

There are other things the Lord had to say about prayer. He taught His disciples, *“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him”* (Matthew 6:5-8).

After telling the disciples that they should not pray to make show or to be seen of men, the Lord proceeded to give them an example of how to pray. This is referred to by most religious people as “the Lord’s prayer”, and it is often repeated in worship

assemblies, but it is not actually the Lord's prayer. It is simply a model prayer, and was not intended to be used as a prayer for Christians to say personally. If it was so used, the Lord's people would be doing the very thing that He said they should not do — to be seen and heard of men and to use vain repetition. Christ, however, was using that prayer as an example of how to pray.

There should be prayer during a congregation's worship. The members can pray personally and collectively, that is, as some brother in Christ leads them in prayer. All things should be done decently and in order, and therefore the men should get together before worship and decide how many prayers there will be, appoint some to lead in prayer. Or if the members of the congregation are agreeable, the one in charge of the services may merely announce that a certain brother will lead the group in prayer. Any number of prayers may be engaged in during a service.

The one leading in prayer should offer thanksgiving for the Lord's blessings, ask for guidance and help in the lives of the members, remember the sick and others who have special needs, and ask for the forgiveness of sins. This prayer, and all prayers, should be directed to the Father in heaven and should be in the name of Christ. The one leading in prayer should speak clearly, distinctly and loudly enough for all to hear and to be able to say "Amen", that is, to let that be their prayer also.

The members can sit, stand, kneel, or take a position in prayer that would be most comfortable to them and would be the means of expressing their humility and reverence to God. Mentions in the Scriptures of these postures while praying make this very clear.

Prayers are also engaged in during the Lord's Supper, and usually a word of thanks is expressed for the church being materially blessed before the contribution is taken.

Of course women are not allowed to take a public part in the

assembly, as we will be considering in a later lesson.

Lesson 13

How to Sing

We now come in our study of worship to the subject of **how to sing**. We have been talking about the different parts of worship. We have also been discussing the importance of worship and how to do it scripturally.

The Bible definitely teaches that we as Christians should engage in singing when we worship God. There are a number of Scriptures that we want to consider as we think about singing praises to God. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians, *“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:19). He also said to the Colossians, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Colossians 3:16). You will note in these two references that Paul said they were to **sing** psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and that they were to **make the melody in their hearts**. This indicates that the Lord wanted His people to have vocal singing or acappela music only. In other words, there was to be no mechanical music along with the singing. This may sound strange in our age, especially when most of the religious groups use mechanical instruments of music in their services, but the Scriptures nowhere advocate, or even encourage, such a practice.

You see, there are two types of music in the world. One is older than the other, and that is vocal music. This music is made with the help of one’s God-created vocal chords, and is said to be the most beautiful music in the world, made by the blending of human voices. The other type of music is mechanical, produced

on instruments made by humans. Human beat a drum, saw on a violin, or pluck a guitar. They play the piano, organ, and many other types of instruments of music. But all of these are lifeless, have no heart, and the only reason they make a sound is because someone plays on them.

Now which one of these types of music does the Lord want? As we have already seen, Paul says that we are to sing and to make the melody in our hearts. The Hebrew writer instructed, *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15). The inspired man of God says that we should praise the Lord with the fruits of our lips. This means that we should use our vocal chords as we sing praises to the Lord. He wants *His* creation to praise Him, not *our* creation. He wants that which is alive and vibrant to praise Him, not something that is dead and lifeless.

Some people would wonder what difference it makes which kind of music we use as we worship God. The point is, the Lord knows what He wants in worship and we should comply with His wish. It is not a matter of pleasing ourselves or man in general. Rather, the Lord is the one who is to be pleased. Paul said, *"I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding"* (1 Corinthians 14:15).

According to secular history, vocal music was used exclusively by the first century church in its worship to God, but hundreds of years later religious leaders of the day introduced mechanical music into worship. It has been accepted and used by the majority since that time, but if we are going to worship the Lord, why not worship Him as He has specified, that is, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)?

There are many reasons offered as to why mechanical music should be used in worship but none of them are based on God's

word and just plain logic and common sense.

Christianity is a unique religion in that it is a singing religion. Singing may be used to praise the Lord, but also it is a powerful teaching medium as it inspires people to obey God and to go on to greater heights of service.

Therefore when Christians come together on the first day of the week to worship the Lord, singing is one of the things they engage in. If you are in the process of beginning a congregation of the Lord's church, the men should choose one from among them who can direct the group in spiritual and scriptural songs.

When choosing songs, the leader needs to select those that are familiar, and by all means, they should be scriptural. That is, the message in them should be in harmony with the teaching of God's word. It is possible to sing error as well as to preach or teach error. As a matter of fact, when you sing error you *are* teaching error. As one sings he should meditate on the message of the song, and he should engage in the singing with the realization that he is teaching those around him.

Concerning the number of songs used, there is no set number. That judgment would be left to the song leader, and might depend on the amount of time available. Usually the leader stands before the audience. In the western part of the world, brethren normally use song books that have notes, and if one knows the notes he can read the music and can direct it properly and correctly. Sometimes he may use hand movements to direct the singing. In other parts of the world different systems may be used, and the song leader may have only the words of the songs, so that he may use tunes he has previously learned.

The whole congregation should participate in the singing. It might not be the best singing in the world, but if it is from the heart, it must surely be beautiful to the Lord. We are not to sing to entertain ourselves, although we may *like* to sing, and we

may be edified by it. We are not there to have solos, choirs, and special groups, but rather we are to have congregational singing, because *the church* is to join together in its praise to God. Sometimes if our singing is not as good as it should be, we may want to meet and have special training sessions. We may need to learn some of the songs, and that may be done by going over them again and again. We are not trying to put on a performance, and yet we do want to do a good job since our singing is directed to the Lord, and we don't want to put just anything off on Him.

According to the Bible, women may participate in the congregational singing, but there is no command or example that would allow them to publically lead the singing. We will discuss the woman's role in the church a little later.

We need to encourage our young men to learn to lead singing. This can be done by giving them an opportunity to lead in the evening services or on Wednesday nights to have a special class in which they can practice with the direction of some older brother.

Lesson 14

How to Give

We continue now with our general theme of **how to begin the church of Christ where you are**. With that thought in mind, we would like to talk to you about **how to give**.

If you intend to begin a congregation of the Lord's church where you are, you must have meetings on the first day of the week for the purpose of worshipping God. In addition to prayer, Bible study, singing, and the Lord's Supper, you will also want to allow those present an opportunity to give of their means or to make a contribution to support the Lord's work. Before we go into the process of how to do that, first we want to notice some verses of scripture that show the importance of giving.

We know that the Bible is filled with teachings and examples of giving. Even God gave His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world (John 3:16), and Christ gave His life that man might be saved (1 John 4:14). What greater example could we have than that? But *what* can we give to the Lord? *How much* can we give?

On one occasion when Jesus became aware that a young man was putting too much emphasis on material possessions, He told him that if he would be saved he should go and sell what he had and give it to the poor (Matthew 20:21). Luke wrote that we should remember the words of Jesus when he said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come*" (1

Corinthians 16:1,2).

A number of truths are set forth in Paul's statement. First, he identifies *the day* on which the giving is to be done, and that is the first day of the week. We read in Acts 20:7 where the disciples gathered for worship, and in so doing they partook of the Lord's Supper. Being together on the first day of the week for worship, naturally this would be a good time for the Lord's people to give of their means.

Second, he said that *everyone* should participate, that is, if they had been prospered the week before. If one has not earned, naturally he has nothing he can give. In this case, one should not feel disgraced for not contributing, since the Lord does not expect him to do what he cannot do. If he has earned, however, he should give. Not to give in this case would be a form of robbing the Lord of that which belongs to Him.

Third, he says that they *should lay by in store*. Today we usually think in terms of making a *financial* contribution, but there may have been times when the Lord's people did not have money that they could give, but they could give animals, vegetables, fruits, etc., and then in turn that could be used to support the Lord's work. Even today, in some parts of the world some Christians might not have money, but they might have other things to give. For instance, they might help to support the preacher by giving a chicken, some eggs, or other things. That would certainly count as a contribution.

Fourth, he said that they were to give *as they had been prospered*. That is, they were to give a portion of that which they had earned. *How much* would be left up to each individual, but each one probably knows how much that should be. The Jews gave a tenth of their earnings, and taking into consideration all of their additional sacrifices, they gave more than a tenth. We as Christians have a much better law; we have a Saviour, and we

have the hope of eternal life. Surely we would not give less than those who lived under the old law.

Fifth, the giving on this occasion was to be used to help to take care of some of the needs of the saints, and Paul said that they were to give at this time so that everything would be ready to go when he arrived. If God's people will give as they should, the needs of His work can be cared for without any problem. Certainly, the Lord does not expect the people of the world to support His work. A contribution from someone who is not a Christian would not be refused, but neither are they solicited.

Later Paul wrote the Corinthian Christians again, and said, *"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:6,7).

Please note that Paul teaches the concept of giving by using an illustration of sowing and reaping. Most people of that day would have been very familiar with that principle, as would people today. The idea is that the more you sow, the more you reap; if you sow less, you will reap less. This principle is true not only in farming, but in every other area of life. For example, if you give more to the Lord, then the Lord will be able to bless you more. If you give less, you can expect less in return. Of course if one gives more for the sole purpose of receiving more, his motive is wrong, and it will not work in that case. But if one is honest and sincere, loves the Lord, and is truly trying to do God's will, then the more he gives, the more he will be blessed.

So many are not blessed because they cheat God. They are selfish and put their needs ahead of the Lord. They wonder why their Father does not bless them more. One must remember to put Christ and His kingdom first and then the other things will be provided (Matthew 6:33). Try it and see if it doesn't work.

Paul said we should give *as we have purposed in our hearts*. We know what we have earned, and even before arriving at the worship place we should have already set aside the money we were going to give; then when the contribution plate is passed, we can give. If we wait until the last minute we may end up putting in more — or less — than we had intended. As Paul said, we should decide what we are going to give and then we are prepared to give as we should at the proper time.

Next, he says that our giving *should not be done grudgingly or of necessity*, but rather we should give cheerfully. We should not feel that we are being put on the spot, or that we have been forced to make a contribution, but we should give out of a desire, and we should be happy that we are able to give. The writer says that God loves this type of giver.

On the Lord's day someone should be appointed to pass the collection plate to those who are present for worship. This would be at a selected time, and perhaps would be preceded with a prayer of thanksgiving for our material blessings. All should be provided an opportunity to give, and then after the service it would be in order for two of the men to count the collection, keep a record of it, and perhaps to deposit it in a bank account in the name of the local congregation. One of the male members should be appointed to be the treasurer so that he can keep up with the funds and report the balance to the church. The funds can be used to preach the Gospel, buy supplies for the church, to help the poor and needy, etc.

Remember that our giving is a very important part of our service to God.

Lesson 15

Bible Classes

We have talked about teaching others the Gospel, baptizing them into Christ, and the way to worship. We will continue in our study as we discuss **Bible classes** and how to conduct them.

We know that the Lord has given us His word in the Bible. To know that book, and to know God's will, we must either study personally or hear it taught. Christ told the apostles that they should go and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15). Paul said, "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). Again he said, "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). God spoke from heaven, concerning Jesus, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him*" (Matthew 17:5). In these and many other verses we can see the importance of hearing and studying God's word. It is with that knowledge that we come to believe and to obey the Lord in order to be saved and to be added to His church.

Of course preaching, teaching, and personally studying God's word is fine for adults, but what about others? What about children of different ages? In the education of adults, lecturing is often used. Even there their classes deal with different subject matter and levels of learning. But when it comes to the education of children of different ages, classes are always broken down by different age groups. Never would you have a school that puts several hundred children together, at all age levels, and have a teacher give the same instruction to all of them. What kind of education would result from such a method?

We can see the wisdom of classes in our secular schools, so why can't we see the wisdom of having Bible classes? I have found that in many places it is very difficult to get small congregations to accept the idea of having Bible classes. They have met for so long in homes or in small quarters, have had some singing, prayers, and a Bible lesson delivered to all present, and for some reason they want to continue to do that. But they are not thinking of the children who cannot comprehend what the preacher is saying! If a class could be arranged for all the children, while a class is also being conducted for the adults, that would be of great benefit to everyone. The lessons could be prepared for the children and given on their level, and they would learn far more than listening to a lesson that is delivered to adults and parents, free of the distraction of caring for small children, would give better attention to the lesson.

Preaching and teaching are not actually supposed to be a form of entertainment or opportunity for someone to show his oratorical ability. Rather, their purpose is to help those present to learn God's will so they may obey Him. With this in mind, we can more easily see the value of classes, both for the children and for their parents. It has been found that in congregations where there are a number of Bible classes, far more truth is comprehended in the classroom setting than from a sermon.

If a congregation is going to be established where you are, keep the Bible class arrangement in mind. Even with a small group, an ideal way to work is to have an hour set aside for Bible study, and in that time let the men have a study, let the women have a class, and arrange a class for the children. Or the men and women have their class together and if there are several ages of children, they may be divided into two or more classes. Naturally, a lot will depend on where you will be meeting. Even in a hall, the classes may meet in different corners of the building.

In the home, classes can be conducted in the various rooms.

Another matter that will have to be worked out is teachers for the different classes. If though lacking in experience, those who will try can gradually develop the ability to teach. The main thing is to try. One can prepare a lesson during the week, and on Sunday be ready to teach the class. Advanced preparation should be made during the week so that the teachers will be prepared for the class on Sunday.

After classes, the congregation can gather for worship. Maybe one of the local members can teach the lesson, or it might be that a Gospel preacher could be invited to come to work as a local preacher. If none of these are possible, the men can take turns reading Scriptures or Gospel tracts. All things are possible where there is a desire to obey the Lord.

All kind of things may be developed through the Bible class arrangement, especially as the congregation grows and there is a need for more classes.

There is a great variety of subject matter to use. The class may study the Old Testament, the New Testament, particular books of the Bible, the parables of Christ, the life of Christ, the Gospel of Christ, New Testament worship, the church of the Bible, the Christian life, evangelism, etc. Or the studies may be planned to take the class through the Bible or through the New Testament in a given period of time.

Special classes can be arranged. If you have some new converts you might want to have a "New Convert" class. In that class you might go over the Gospel, the church, Christian living, and other subjects that new Christians needs to know to help them grow spiritually.

Sometimes there are training classes to give the men, and especially young men, an opportunity to learn how to make talks, to lead singing, to say prayers, etc. The purpose for such

classes would be to prepare these men to participate in the regular services of the church. The idea is not that we are trying to be professional, but we do want to try to do a good job, since it is being done for the Lord, and because the one participating is representing the Lord and His church.

Sometimes brethren like to have a drill class for the younger children, and ask them how many books there are in the Bible, to memorize the books so they can give them by name, to list the apostles, and to give many other Bible facts. This is good training for them. Some children's songs and choruses are often used in a class of this nature.

Naturally, in all of the classes the Bible or the New Testament would be the primary text book. But it might be that some of the teachers would want to work up an outline of their material, have it copied, and then give copies to the members of the class. Sometimes other congregations may have used material that would be available for use. These would be designed to help to bring out some of the teachings of the Bible, but in all cases the teacher should go through the material very carefully to be sure that only the truth of God is being taught.

Lesson 16

How to Evangelize

In keeping with this theme we will now discuss **how to evangelize**. To even begin a new congregation involves evangelism, which is spreading the cause of Christ. We are great believers in this, and we want you to get excited about it also.

One of the best ways to see the need of evangelism is to begin with the great commission. After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, and just before returning to the Father in heaven, Jesus spoke to His apostles, *"And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Again he said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19,20).

Luke recorded, *"Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high"* (Luke 24:46-49). Finally we read the words of Jesus, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

From the foregoing Scriptures the Lord was saying that His Gospel should be taken to all the world, to every nation of the

world, and to every creature of every nation of all the world. He said that the Gospel was to be preached first in Jerusalem and then in Judea, and on to Samaria, and finally, to all the earth. He further said that He would give the apostles the power of the Holy Spirit to guide them in doing this work. You see, they lived before the New Testament had been given in completed form, so the Lord sent the Holy Spirit to guide them into all the truth. Of course with the giving of the New Testament as we have it today, there was no longer a need for the miraculous guidance of the Spirit.

When we read Acts 2, we see that the apostles gathered in the city of Jerusalem. The Gospel had not been preached yet in fact, and the church did not exist at this time. But then the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles to guide them, to enable them to speak in the languages of the local people, and to be able to perform miracles. This power was given to them to convince the people that they were not false teachers but that they were truly of God. This was on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when Jews had gathered from all over the world to celebrate this feast. The Lord chose this time for the Gospel to be preached, and as a result some three thousand wanted to know what they should do. *“Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:38,40,47). With this, the church of our Lord was established in Jerusalem. The Gospel was preached again and again, with more obeying the Lord.

Later we have Philip going down to Samaria to preach that wonderful message of the Gospel. Many believed and were baptized. Also, in Acts 8 we read that Philip was directed by an

angel of the Lord to go and preach to a man from Ethiopia. He did so and that man obeyed the Lord, and no doubt he returned to his country to plant the cause of Christ in that part of the world. So the Gospel was being preached, and the church was being established in many places.

In Acts 9 we read of the conversion of Saul and we know what he did on his different missionary journeys. He took the Gospel throughout Asia and even into Europe. In Colossians 1:23 he said that the Gospel had been taken to every creature under heaven. Also in Romans 10:18 he said that the Gospel had gone to the ends of the world. Imagine that! In less than thirty years after the Gospel had first been preached, it could be said that the message had been taken to all the world! Yes, the church was established in Jerusalem, in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Colosse, and even in Rome, as well as in thousands of other places throughout the world.

How was this done? The apostles began the work in Jerusalem, and during the remainder of their lives they preached and planted the Lord's church wherever they went. But they couldn't do all that needed to be done. So, their converts helped with the teaching. There were Philip, Steven, and hundreds and thousands of others. Whenever the apostles, or their converts, went into a new place they preached the Gospel and among those who heard it, there were some who believed it, repented of their sins, confessed Christ as the Son of God, and were baptized for the remission of their sins. The Lord then saved them and added them to His church, and a new local congregation was formed! As the Gospel continued to be preached in that city and area, more obeyed the Lord, and the local congregation grew. In time those young Christians would reach out to the cities, towns and villages around them and preach the Gospel and more congregations would be established there. And so it continued until the cause of Christ had covered the earth.

The Lord is still commanding us, even to this very day, to take the Gospel to all the world. If you have obeyed the Lord, then you are saved, and you are a member of His church. Yet, there may not be a local congregation where you are. If not, how can one be begun there? By your own preaching of the Gospel to the people around you. You might begin with your family members and friends. That might be easy for a man, but what about a woman or a young person? In that case, you would have to do your teaching on a personal level, or perhaps someone could come in and help you to have some meetings. If you really want the Lord's church to exist there, I am sure that something can be done to help make it possible.

Gospel tracts, magazines, and other literature can be used to teach the Gospel. Personal studies can be engaged in, and also Bible classes can be arranged. By example and word of mouth, we should teach every convert, and our own children and young people, of their individual responsibility to be evangelistic.

If the word of God is taught enough, then this surely will produce some converts, and with converts, a congregation can be established. That is, the Christians there can begin to meet in a home, in a school, in a hall, or even out under a tree. The main thing is for you to meet, worship, and continue to teach God's word. Be evangelistic, always be looking for opportunities to teach others. With the work growing, maybe in time some efforts can be put forth to preach the Gospel to other cities, towns, and villages in the area.

Remember that the Lord doesn't want us to be satisfied with what we have, but he wants us to be going, preaching, converting, and spreading His cause. This is the work that He wants us to do. When we obey, He will be with us and bless our efforts.

Lesson 17

How to Organize

One of the very important things to keep in mind when beginning a congregation of the church is **how to organize it**. We, therefore, want to give some thought to that question at this time.

As we all know, in everything that amounts to anything, there is organization. Consider schools, businesses, government, and the military. All of these have one thing in common, that is, they have been planned, organized, and they work as efficiently as their organization. If they were not well organized, there would be confusion, lack of productivity, and they would end in failure.

Likewise in religion, there has to be organization. Christ promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), and He kept His promise, according to Acts 2. Among such a group of people, there would be a need for it to operate in an orderly and systematic way.

The Scriptures tell us that Christ would be its head (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23) and the body, or church, would be made up of all of those who have obeyed Him. Although the church exists throughout the world, locally it exists in the form of individual congregations. Christ is still its head and the congregation is made up of the saved. While the church does not have any universal human organization, locally it does have organization.

In the beginning of a congregation the men are the ones who see about the needs and take care of any business that may come up. From among the members it may also have preachers, teachers, song leaders, etc.. As the congregation grows in both age and numbers, it needs further organization. It may now have men who can be appointed as elders and deacons, officially appointed leaders.

Concerning these matters, Paul wrote Timothy, "*This is a*

true saying, if a man desire the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

To Titus, Paul said, “*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceiv-*

ers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain” (Titus 1:5-11).

It should also be pointed out that those who are appointed as elders of the church are in the Scriptures spoken of also as bishops, shepherds, presbyters, and pastors (Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 4:14; Ephesians 4:11). Furthermore, for elders to be appointed, at least two men must meet these qualifications, and then the congregation may appoint them to serve. In that capacity they will be under Christ, governed in all that they say and do by the word of God. They will attempt to “feed the flock”, that is, to see that the members are properly taught God’s will, and that they have mature spiritual leadership.

Concerning the qualifications required according to the Scriptures already noted, with the exception of three points, all members of the church should be able to meet them. Those exceptions are these: One cannot be appointed as an elder if he is a new member. Elders must also have only one wife, and have children who are Christians themselves, thereby showing their ability to give spiritual leadership to the church. Other than these, all Christians should be of good report, not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.

The elders of a congregation can serve only over that particular group of Christians. They have no authority over a sister congregation. Neither can elders of any other congregation rule over them.

With regard to deacons, there must likewise be two or more men who would serve under the elders as helpers or servants. There are qualification for them, too, as we have read. Also, the wives must be able to meet certain qualifications.

We generally think of the elders as being men who give spiritual guidance to the congregation while the deacons see after the

physical needs, though both may carry responsibilities in both areas. A congregation, in its early stages, or for the first few years, can exist without elders and deacons. Naturally, though, as it matures God's plan for the well-being is that it have elders and deacons. All of the members should love and respect their leaders and should follow their direction, as they follow Christ.

Then there are the evangelists or preachers. A preacher, however, is not the pastor of the church nor is he the one who rules the church. Rather, if there are elders, he serves under them. If there are no elders, then he works with the men of the congregation. He must be morally upright, and he must preach sound doctrine. As Paul told the young preacher, Timothy, *"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:1,2). Many statements in scripture are directed to preachers to remind them of their duty and responsibility to the Lord and to their fellowman in proclaiming God's message.

There are also teachers, or Bible class teachers. These can be both men and women. Of course the women would teach only the women and children.

In a congregation, whether small or large, certain tasks would have to be carried out. Someone would have to direct the singing, there would be the need for a treasurer, others would have to prepare the Lord's Supper, as well as to take care of other needs.

So to be most effective, and to do things in a peaceful and orderly fashion, the men of the church must be organized and systematic in looking after these responsibilities. With growth, and in time, each congregation can appoint elders and deacons. The church should respect and honor and obey its leaders, as long as they are faithful to God's word.

Lesson 18

Where to Meet

For our lesson at this time we will want to discuss **where to meet**. It is only natural that if a group of people is going to meet each week to worship the Lord, they must have a specified place to meet. There are different possibilities for, this, but first let us take a look at the early church and see what they did about a meeting place.

We know that when the church began on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, that the apostles preached to a large number of people, and three thousand obeyed the Lord (Acts 2:41). Nothing is said about where this took place, whether out in an open area, in an arena, on the temple grounds, or some other place. Acts 2:42 says that those converts *“continued in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers,”* and that they continued *“daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:46,47).

In Acts 3 we have Peter and John healing a lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple and this led to the opportunity for Peter to preach to a large number gathered in Solomon’s porch of the temple. After Peter told them what they should do, we read, *“Howbeit, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand”* (Acts 4:4). So the church was growing in number, but again, where did all of these people meet for worship? Perhaps they continued to gather in the temple, but that would no doubt eventually have problems, since they were not worshipping according to the law of Moses

but according to the teaching of Christ.

We are not thinking here so much about a meeting place for evangelistic teaching to be done. That could be done most anywhere. For instance, we have Philip meeting a man from Ethiopia out in a desert place, having an opportunity to join him in his chariot, and teaching him as they went on their way (Acts 8:26-39). In Acts 9 we read that Ananias met Saul on the street called Straight, told him what he should do to obey the Lord, and then assisted him in his obedience. Paul and Silas taught the Philippian jailer and his household the Gospel in prison (Acts 16).

We could mention the many other places where the Gospel was preached, such as in the various synagogues where Paul often went to teach the Jews. We read that while Paul was in Ephesus, *“He went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened, and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years; so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* (Acts 19:8-10).

Now we know that a school must have had a building in which to meet, and Paul taught there, but the fact remains that in all probability this would not have been the place where the Christians would have worshiped, just as they probably didn’t worship in the synagogue, although Paul went there to teach God’s will. So we raise the question again: Where did the Lord’s people meet for worship in those days?

Though we do not read in the New Testament of church buildings, as such, Christians did have individual houses in those days. Paul talked about teaching publicly and *from house*

to house (Acts 20:20). We also read concerning Paul's imprisonment in Rome, "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:30,31). The very fact that Paul was in his own house, and was imprisoned there for two years, tells us that he would have worshiped there. Paul also spoke of the church that met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19), and no doubt there were many other congregations that met in homes, as we read in Philemon 1:2, Colossians 4:15 and Romans 6:23.

But where did the church at Corinth meet? What about the church at Philippi? We know that when Paul went into that city, he found Lydia and her household out on the riverside where he taught them and converted them. Later he converted the jailer and his household. We know that the church grew there, even to the point of having men to qualify to be elders and deacons, because when Paul wrote to the church at Philippi sometime later he addressed his letter to the saints at Philippi, along with the bishops (elders) and deacons. But again, where did they meet for worship?

While there is no statement in the Scriptures that would show that the Lord was opposed to the church owning a designated building for worship, neither do the Scriptures go into that matter. We know that in Old Testament times God instructed His people to build the Tabernacle where He would meet with them. Then Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, a place where the Lord met with His people. But Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman that the time would come when God would not be worshiped only in a mountain there in Samaria, or in Jerusalem, but His people would be able to worship in spirit and in truth wherever they happened to be (John 4:1-30).

So it is evident that the Lord did not want to put emphasis on a building, lest it be turned into a temple or a “holy place.” He knew that Christians would be able to arrange a place to meet on their own. Evidently, the details were not important enough for God to legislate on the matter at all!

What about today? Where can the church meet? It can meet in a home, in a school building, or in a rented facility. Again, the Lord leaves that up to His people. We can meet wherever we want to meet. Of course, the larger the congregation, then the greater the need for its own facility. Also the larger the congregation, the greater its financial ability to provide a building for itself. It can even purchase property and construct its own meeting house.

But keep in mind, always, that the church **house** or **building** is not the **church**. Neither is it a **holy place**. It is simply a place where the Lord’s people can assemble for worship, to conduct Bible classes, etc. The building or meeting place is not all that important. The people who worship there are the ones who are important. Surely if the church begins where you are, arrangements can be made for it to have a place to meet.

Lesson 19

The Woman's Place

At this time we want to study the question of **the woman's place in the church**. In speaking of beginning the church where you are, I may be talking to a woman or a young lady. In that case, what can you do? As we will see, you can do a lot, but first of all, let's go to the Scriptures and see what they say about the woman's role in the church.

In these times of the Women's Liberation Movement, to say anything about the woman being limited in what she can do creates a response of resentment. There are those who are ready to strike back and to label one as being pro male, women haters, chauvinists, etc. This would be true in religion as well as in other fields of endeavor. Some of our religious friends have given in and permitted their women to become bishops, preachers, etc. in their churches. But it is not a question of what **we** want, or don't want, or how the world may classify us, or what reaction our stand for truth may cause, but rather the important factor is what the Bible teaches on this subject. We must be willing to accept what the Scriptures say about the woman's role in the church..

Please understand that God made man and woman; He made them different; He made one male and the other female. One was to be the father and the other was to be the mother. Now we accept those facts and roles, don't we? How ridiculous for a woman to want to father a child or for a man to want to give birth to a child! God gave each one a role and they cannot change, regardless of how much they would like to. The fact is, we should be happy with the role God has given us. The man's work is important, but so is the woman's work. One cannot do without the other.

How absurd to refer to God as a “She” when the Scriptures speak of Him as being the Father. Who would want to change Mary’s role of giving birth to Jesus? Actually, these are silly matters and Satan is more than happy to use them as a means of turning man and woman against each other, and for both to be hurt as a result.

Of course, there are many areas in which men and women should be treated as equal, with no distinctions made. We won’t quarrel with that fact, nor do we dispute the fact that in many parts of the world, even among major religions, women are mistreated, kept in the background, and is treated more as a servant or plaything for man than anything else. In so many cases the woman is literally kept out of sight, has no rights, and is not even allowed to go to a place of worship with her husband and children. How sad for human beings to treat other human beings with so little respect.

When we go to the Bible and consider man and woman in a spiritual context, we find that God has given each one a definite role, and that these roles are equally important. But God has not set man and woman against one another. He has not set them up to compete with each other for leadership, responsibility, etc.

For instance, when Jesus gave the great commission He initially gave the apostles (all men) the job of going forth to publicly proclaim His Gospel to the world (Mark 16:15,16), even though there were many dedicated women among His followers. It was the apostles who were promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit in establishing and providing leadership to the early church (Acts 2). Later, Paul gave the qualifications for elders and deacons in the local congregations of the church (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Again, only men were to serve in these capacities.

Now does this mean that God downgrades women in the church, or women in general? Absolutely not. Actually, the

woman's work is very important, probably far more important than most recognize. When you conclude that a woman must do everything a man does in order for her to be important, any restrictions are seen in a negative light. That within itself decreases the value of the woman in the eyes of many, because they are totally ignoring the equally important work God has reserved for women.

There is a saying that the "hand that rocks the cradle rules the world". That is, the woman gives birth to her children, has the greatest influence on them in training them, and so, through her children she may rule the world. Every Prime Minister, President, or leader, had a mother who influenced him greatly. Greater still, the mother who brings up her children according to God's will may influence them to become Christians, leaders, and workers in the church. They can change the world for better, and can change souls eternally. There is no greater work.

True, the woman cannot be a preacher, elder, or deacon in the church. She must even remain silent in worship, that is, she is not to usurp authority and take over the public service (1 Corinthians 14:28; 1 Timothy 2:11,12). That doesn't mean, however, that she can't participate in congregational singing, or that she cannot ask a question or make some point in Bible study. But it does mean that she must respect those in charge of the service or meeting.

Paul wrote by the inspiration of God, "*I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully*" (1 Timothy 5:14). He said again, "*The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God not be blasphemed*" (Titus 2:3-5).

Peter exhorted, *“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing”* (1 Peter 3:1-9).

Paul compared Christ and His church with a husband and wife when He said, *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:22-25).

Now in relation to where you are, what role is the woman to play? Suppose you are a woman, and you want to begin the church where you are. You would want to study with various ones, hoping that one or more will obey God. As a woman, and

you are able to convert other women, you can meet and worship together. When one or more men have been converted, it will be their responsibility to take the public leadership in worship. The Christian woman is permitted by the Lord to teach ladies and children, publicly or privately (Acts 18:26). She can certainly teach both men and women privately, and through her efforts a congregation of the Lord's church can be established.

Lesson 20

How to Support Preachers

In this lesson we will discuss **how to support preachers**. If you begin a congregation where you are, sooner or later you brethren will be faced with the question of whether or how to support a local preacher. What should you do in that case?

Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, *“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?*

Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the Gospel of Christ.

Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel.

But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the Gospel, I may present the Gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:1-18).

In this setting Paul is showing the freedom that he had as an apostle and as a servant of the Lord. He could have taken support from the brethren for preaching the Gospel, but in this case he did not. Under the circumstances, he felt that this might not be for the best. There were other occasions, however, in which he accepted support from the church. In writing to the Philippian Christians, he said, “*Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:15-18).*

Paul shows that it is certainly right for a labourer to be paid for his hire, and he illustrates by saying that the farmer, the vine-

yard keeper, and the shepherd live from that which they produce. He also reminds the readers how the priests were partakers of the sacrifices which were brought to the altar. He concludes that those who preach the Gospel should also live of the Gospel. In other words, the preacher should be supported in his work.

On another occasion, Paul wrote, *“For the Scripture says, You shalt not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. and, the laborer is worthy of his wages”* (1 Timothy 5:18). In this case he was showing that an elder who gave full time in the Lord’s work was worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17). That is, he was deserving of support.

So it is very clear that the Scriptures authorize support for those who work for the Lord. It is true that the service may be given free of charge, since the one doing it may have support from some other source, but there is certainly nothing wrong in providing wages from the church for one who gives his full time to the Lord’s work. Even if one is doing only part time work with the church, he can receive support in return for his efforts.

There is no doubt that there are hirelings today, as there have always been. These are the ones who work only for a salary, not because they believe in what they are doing, or because of their desire to serve the Lord. They are the ones who will preach whatever is asked to be preached simply to receive support. Jesus described them like this: *“But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep”* (John 10:12,13). In other words, the hireling is not honest and sincere. He does not really believe in what he is doing. He merely works for the money and not to further the Lord’s cause. It is up to the local church to be on guard against this type of preacher because of the tremendous

harm they will do, both in the church and in the community.

Now, suppose you are thinking about supporting a preacher. How do you go about choosing a man? He could be within the congregation or he might come from some other part of the country. Are you going to support a man part time or full time, that is, will you give him partial support or full support? Next, how much monthly support can you offer? If you don't have enough, perhaps some sister congregation or congregations could help you, at least at the beginning.

Do you want a young preacher or an older preacher? Do you want a single man or a married man with a family? Do you want a man with experience? How much experience? It would be good to check on him, where he has lived, what work he has done, etc. Is he a faithful Christian? Does he pay his bills? Is he a good moral man?

It would also be good to hear him preach before making a final choice. What kind of preacher is he? Can he get along with people? Can he take advice? Does he have the ability to convert people to Christ? Is he a leader? What about his doctrinal purity and soundness? You need to know where he stands on various doctrinal issues.

How much support would he need for himself and his family? If you are able to support him, and he measures up to your expectations, based on what the Bible teaches, then you can proceed.

It should be pointed out that a preacher's support should be reasonable both from the standpoint of the preacher and from the standpoint of the congregation. There should not be extremes in either direction. Don't starve a preacher, but neither should he be paid far more than the local Christians receive for their work.

Lesson 21

How to Help Those in Need

As we continue our studies, we will consider another matter which involves the local congregation, and that is **how to help those in need.**

We know that all people need the Lord in that they need to be saved from their sins. But once a congregation is formed and begins to grow, sometimes there are members who have physical needs. There may also be people in the city who are facing particular hardships in their lives, resulting in emergency needs. While the church has the primary job of preaching the Gospel, still it is made up of human beings and it deals with human beings outside the church, and therefore it cannot close its eyes in indifference to the physical crises which it may be able to help.

Jesus said, *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and gave You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?

And the King will answer and say to them, Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.

Then He will say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.

Then they also will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You? Then He will answer them, saying, Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.

And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:31-46).

If you have read through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the New Testament, you know that Jesus was compassionate and willing to help those who had sickness and other physical problems. I think we can see from the scripture we just read that Jesus would have His people also to be compassionate and sympathetic toward those who are hurting. He says that by helping those who are in need, in reality we are doing the same to Him. On the other hand, if we neglect those who are dependent on our generous compassion, we are rejecting Christ Himself. As we have seen from the reading, our soul's very destiny will depend on how we react to the needs around us.

On the occasion of the establishment of the church, the record shows that Jews had come from all over the world to celebrate Pentecost. The Gospel was preached, and some three thousand obeyed the Lord. These new converts stayed on to learn more of the message of Christ, and to have fellowship with one

another. Some of them began to need help with the daily necessities. The local brethren responded, and the record says, *“And all that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need,”* Later, we read in this same setting, *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need”* (Acts 4:32-35). Ordinarily the Christians would not have been selling their land and houses and dividing it up on a voluntary basis among themselves, but this was a special situation. Those who had lands they could sell, sold them and shared with the ones who had nothing.

We read further concerning the administration to needy Christians at that time, *“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we (the apostles) will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* (Acts 6:1-4). There were only twelve apostles, but there were many disciples. The power of the Holy Spirit had been given to the apostles to do a certain work. While they were concerned about the physical needs of

the people, there were others who could do that work while the apostles used their time in teaching the word to those who were hungry for truth.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 we find Paul taking a collection from the Galatian and Corinthian brethren for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Later he wrote that where there were widows in a congregation, that their family members should take care of them, but if a widow had no one to help her, was unable to provide for her own needs, if she was sixty years old or older, and was faithful, then the church should help her (1 Timothy 5). But Paul also laid down a principle that all should consider before turning to the church for physical help: *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Timothy 5:8). On another occasion, Paul said, *“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Now in a local congregation, young or old, few or many, the church should try to help those who are in need, and who are worthy of help, whether old or young, few or many. That might include one who is temporarily out of work, someone who has had an accident, a Christian with a huge medical bill, someone whose house has burned, etc. But the local brethren can give only as they have the funds available, and the members should not expect the church to help with their needs unless there is an emergency. When it comes to calling on other congregations to help with some need, that should be done only if it is a life and death situation, or some wide-spread calamity. On occasions of helping members, and non-members at times, the help should be given in the name of the church, with the prayer that people in the community will realize the loving concern of the church. Individuals, of course, can also help personally as they are able to do so.

Lesson 22

How to Work Together

In keeping with our theme, we will now discuss **how to work together** as members of the Lord's church.

First, we must understand that the Bible teaches unity, that we should all be one in Christ. Christ built the church, one church, and He wants us to promote that body. In John 17:20-23 He prayed for the apostles, for those who would be converted by them, and also for all who would obey Him. He said, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."*

There is nothing more beautiful than God's people united in obeying Him, that is, in being saved, being members of His church, wearing His name, worshipping and working together, and being faithful to Him. Paul said to the Christians at Corinth, *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Corinthians 1:10). David said in the long ago, *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"* (Psalm 133:1).

While unity is beautiful, division is ugly and destructive. Christ said, *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself will*

not stand” (Matthew 12:25). Paul condemned the division that was in the church at Corinth. He asked the members, “*Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*” They knew that the answer was no to each one of those questions. The point was that they should be following Christ and not man. Paul said to the Christians at Rome, “*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:17,18).

Sometimes **brethren** don’t get along with one another in the local congregation. This may be over doctrinal matters, but often problems arise over personalities, petty things, envy, and jealousy. Sometimes there is anger over who will preach, who is getting the most attention, or some other unimportant matter. This is sad, and it hurts the work from within the congregation. It also hurts the image of the church as non-members see the differences among the Christians. It will be hard to reach people as long as the members are divided. The Lord would have us to love Him, and to love one another, to appreciate one another, to help each other, and to pray for all the members.

But sometimes **congregations** in a given area just don’t get along with each other. They do not cooperate and work together. They don’t support each other in Gospel meetings and other good works. Preachers often are guilty of leading this kind of thing. It is as though they are competing with each other. This is bad and wrong. How can the church ever grow as long as these feelings of competition exist? Rather, the Lord would have these congregations and preachers to have fellowship with each other, to help one another, attend each other’s meetings when possible, and to cooperate in every way possible. It is true that no one

congregation should try to rule the other congregations, and tell them what they can or can't do. But as long as each one respects the other's autonomy, then it is certainly proper and in order for them to work together. We see this taught throughout the New Testament.

If we do have some differences with another member, or with another congregation, we should go to that individual or that congregation with the desire to work the matter out. If the division is over some doctrinal question, we should go to the Bible to see what it teaches. We should do this prayerfully and with the desire to be right before God and to do all that we can to keep unity among the Lord's people. We should never get angry about something and seek to hurt someone or to deliberately oppose another congregation. We should not walk out and quit the Lord and the church over every little matter that comes up. Our greatest concern should be to get the matter corrected and to be at peace, spiritually.

In the local congregation we should always encourage the members to work together and to work with the other brethren in the area. We are brothers and sisters in Christ and we are few in number in comparison to all of the people of the world. We need to be united in our efforts for God. We must realize, too, that we have a big job before us, that is, living for the Lord and carrying the Gospel to the world. Being united, we will have the strength to do that work. Furthermore, it is only as we are united that the Lord can be with us as we strive to do His will sincerely.

Since we are discussing this subject, let me take this opportunity to ask all of you what your understanding is concerning unity. Do you believe that all religious people have a right to believe what they wish, but that in a general sort of way, they should be united—united in the sense of all claiming to be followers of Christ? Are you a member of a denominational

church? Can you read about your church in the Bible? But you might say, “What difference does all of that make, just so long as you are a believer in Christ?” That’s the point, if you are a believer in Christ, surely you will want to do what Christ wants you to do. In our study we have discussed the prayer of Christ, and how he prayed that we might all be one in Him. We have also shown from the Scriptures that the Lord condemns division. So how can we believe in Christ and do the very things that He condemned? How can we believe in Him if we are not members of His church? And how can we go to heaven when we differ with the Lord and we are not even a part of His family on the earth? I beg of you to re-think these matters. I am not trying to push my church, my religion, or anything else, but I am trying to encourage one and all to obey the Lord and to be only what the Lord would have us to be.

And to those who are Christians and members of the Lord’s church, I am also telling you that we cannot be divided, locally or otherwise, and be acceptable to God. He wants all of us to speak the same thing and to do the same thing. He wants us to be united as a group of people and to be one body in Him, His spiritual body, His family.

Remember that Paul said, *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Remember that in worship, in preaching, and in our personal relationships, we are to work together in the greatest work in all the world.

Lesson 23

How to Forgive

We will continue our over-all theme of study at this time on **how to begin the Church of Christ where you are**. I am praying that as a result of this series of lessons, the Lord's church will be having its beginning in many new locations. Of course I am counting on you to help with that work. As I have said on a number of occasions, however, you cannot help until you have obeyed the Lord yourself. That is not difficult to do. You know that I have gone over the Gospel plan of salvation any number of times. I have pointed out that the Lord would have you believe in God (Hebrews 11:6), repent of your sins or turn away from them (2 Peter 3:9), confess your faith in Christ as being the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and then to be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). If you will do that the Lord will save you and add you to His church (Acts 2:47). As a Christian and a member of the church, you can worship God each first day of the week, and help with the Lord's work. As a Christian you can take the initiative in beginning a congregation of the church where you are if there is not one already there. We hope that you will do that.

We will now continue with our series of studies by discussing the important subject of **how to forgive**.

Since we were sinners, it was necessary for the Lord to forgive us so that we might be saved. He even sacrificed Himself upon the cross to make our salvation possible. We thank God for that, but even though the Lord has saved us from all past sins, we are human beings, subject to sin, and therefore we continue to need forgiveness. We must also be willing to forgive those who sin against us. Unless we learn how to do this, and are willing to

do it, we cannot be forgiven ourselves. You can see how important this lesson is.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”* (Matthew 6:12). He went on to say, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matthew 6:14,15). Isn’t it strange that we expect the Lord to forgive us, and yet we may not be willing to forgive those who do us wrong? The Lord says that we should be aware of the fact that it doesn’t work that way. If we refuse to forgive, He will not forgive us. Therefore, if we expect God to forgive us, we are going to have to forgive those who sin against us. It is just that simple. Forgiveness shouldn’t be a one-sided thing. We shouldn’t expect the Lord to do all the forgiving.

Paul said, *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32). Again, He said, *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do”* (Colossians 3:12,13).

I think it is rather clear that if others have sinned against us, and they ask for our forgiveness, we must forgive them. Even if they don’t ask, we certainly have a willingness to forgive, and we must not hold a grudge against them.

But what if we have committed sin against God and our fellowman? How can we have forgiveness? The Bible teaches that if we have personally and privately sinned, that is, if we and only God know of the sin, then we should repent of that sin and ask God to forgive us. In that case there is no need to go further with it.

If we have sinned against a person, or done him wrong, then

we should go to him and tell him that we are sorry for what we have done, ask his forgiveness, ask God's forgiveness, and let that be the end of it.

But if we have publicly sinned and brought shame upon the Lord and His church, we must go before the church, repenting of our sins and publicly confessing our faults. In Acts 8 we have Simon, who had been a sorcerer, obeying the Lord to be saved, and becoming a member of the church. But when he saw Peter and John giving some of the Samaritan Christians the power of the Holy Spirit, he was tempted to offer them money for this power. The record says, *"But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity. Then Simon answered and said, pray to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken may come upon me"* (Acts 8:20-24). So Simon repented and was restored, but there is no indication that he was ever given the power of the Holy Spirit, lest he be tempted to misuse that power.

Jesus told the story of the young man who was with his father, had everything, but decided that he would take his inheritance and leave. He did so, and spent all of his inheritance in riotous living. When he had nothing, and to save himself from starvation, he had to take a job of feeding swine, which was as low as he could go. The record then says, *"But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be*

called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.

“And he arose and came to his father, but when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. But the father said to his servants, Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:17-24). This story illustrates that if we drift away from God, if we will repent and confess our faults, then our Father is willing to forgive us and take us back. James says, *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).*

Now look at the other side. What if someone has sinned against us? In that case, Christ says, *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:15-18).*

Sin must be repented of and forgiven by the Lord if one is to be acceptable to him. You should keep these truths in mind in beginning a local congregation so as to keep the church as pure as possible.

Lesson 24

How to Have Doctrinal Purity

Using the theme of **how to begin the Church of Christ where you are**, our purpose is to give information that will help you to do just that.

As part of that information, our lesson here has to do with **how to have doctrinal purity**.

What do we mean by doctrinal purity, and why is that so important? We are talking about the doctrine, the teaching, the preaching of those truths that make it possible for one to be saved and to remain saved.

We know that God has spoken (Hebrews 1:1,2). Christ is said to be “the word” (John 1:1,2). Then we are told that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles and others in writing down the Lord’s message (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:21). In other words, God wanted us to know His will and He has given that will to us in the pages of the Bible, and especially in the pages of the New Testament, which applies to people of our day.

After the church was established in Jerusalem we read, “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). What was the apostles’ doctrine? It was the message from the Lord. But the disciples continued in it. That is, they continued to do those things that they had been taught by Christ, and they continued having fellowship, breaking bread, and in prayers together.

Paul spoke of sound doctrine on several occasions. He said that the sins of the world are contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:10). At another time he said that the time would come

when the people would not endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3). In speaking of the qualifications of elders or bishops, Paul said that he *“must be blameless, as a steward of God, not selfwilled, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, **by sound doctrine**, both to exhort and to convict those who contradict”* (Titus 1:7-9).

Notice, involved in the qualifications for elders is the requirement to be sound in the faith, or sound in what you believe. But to be sound in faith one would have to hear sound doctrine (God’s will) proclaimed, since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). In Titus 2:7,8 Paul says, *“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.”*

All of the Scriptures we have read emphasize expressions like “sound doctrine”, “faithful word”, “sound in the faith”, and “sound speech”. This stress was necessary to remind us to keep the Lords’ teachings as they were originally given and to guard against false teaching. Paul went on to say, *“Now I urge you, brethren, note them who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple”* (Romans 16:17,18).

Paul exhorted the young preacher, Timothy, *“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”*

(2 Timothy 2:1,2). He continued, *“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word! Be ready in season, out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables”* (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Peter said, *“If anyone speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”* (1 Peter 4:11).

With these warnings as a background, showing the importance of the truth, of sound and faithful teaching, let me tell you that if you are going to begin a congregation where you are, it must be done according to the teaching of God’s word. Accept into your fellowship only those who have been taught God’s will and have obeyed it. Those who believe in God, who have repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Christ, and have been baptized for the remission of their sins (Mark 16:15,16; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38). As you read through the book of Acts you will find many cases of conversion listed. All of them obeyed these same truths and, as a result, the Lord saved them and added them to His church (Acts 2:47). In John 3:3-5, conversion is pictured as the new birth. In Romans 6:3,4 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 we are told that when one obeys these commands, he enters Christ and the church.

The local congregation, then, will teach the Gospel plan of salvation, and it will also teach that there is but one church, that Christ built it that Jesus is the head of it, that it is built upon

Him, that it wears His name, that Christ died for it, that He is the saviour of it, and that one day He will come back for it (Mark 16:15,16; Ephesians 4:4-6; Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23-27). I have made those statements by the authority of the Scripture references I have just listed.

The local congregation will follow the scriptural pattern in worship by meeting on the first day of the week to sing, pray, study, partake of the Lord's Supper, and to give as prospered (Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

The local congregation will encourage its members to live pure and godly lives. Paul said, *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you"* (Titus 2:11-15).

The local congregation will strive to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. It will put forth every effort not to add to God's word or to subtract from it, or to substitute for it (Revelation 22:18,19; Galatians 1:6-9).

One of the best ways to keep the doctrine or teaching of the Lord pure is for each member to read and study God's word and to be familiar with it (2 Timothy 2:15). That way, not only will they know what God expects of them, but also they can be on guard against all false teaching. It should always be remembered that only the truth makes one free (John 8:32).

Lesson 25

How to Live the Christian Life

Our general theme continues to be **how to begin the Church of Christ where you are**. It is very important to know what the church is and what it is not. The church is made up of a saved group of people, those who have obeyed the Lord by believing in Him, repenting of their sins, confessing their faith in Christ as being the Son of God, and by being baptized for the remission of sins. This church was established by Christ, He is the head of it, and He is its saviour. It wears His name as the church and its members are known as Christians. On the other hand, the church is not a material building, or a man-made denomination,.

As we continue with this series, we will now discuss **how to live the Christian life**. If we are going to be members of the church, and have the church where we are, then we and others are going to have to live the Christian life if it is to be successful. There is no need to even become a Christian unless we are going to live the Christian life, and to be a faithful Christian at that.

In order to become a Christian one must confess his faith in Christ as being the Son of God. In Acts 8 we read of the conversion of the man from Ethiopia, and prior to his baptism he said that he believed that Christ was the Son of God. In Romans 10:10 Paul says that the confession is made unto salvation. But one is not only required to confess his faith in Christ in order to be saved, but he must continue to confess the name of Christ throughout his life in order to remain saved. That is, he must not only be ready to confess Christ with his mouth, but he also must confess Christ daily by the way he lives.

As a result of one's obedience to Christ he is saved and added

to His family, the church. He is now a born again person (John 3:3-5). As such he is a new creature in Christ. Paul said, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But let us proceed to explore what it is like to be in Christ and to belong to Him. Paul writes to the brethren at Colosse, *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in

word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:1-17).

Let us continue to read the words of the Apostle Paul as he talked about the Christians of that day, and how they depended on the miraculous power to help the church to get started and to grow into maturity. He says the Lord *“gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus; that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry,