

## The Christian Community

Text : **Acts 2: 36-47**

### INTRODUCTION :

**A. Christians are called out of the world to live as a separate people.**

1. Our way of thinking must be changed to the point that our lives are transformed.
  - a. **Rom. 12: 2**
  - b. **I Pet. 1: 13-16** ... The transformation is so dramatic is it called a new birth.
2. We work together to bring about this change in every person who is called by the gospel.
  - a. **Eph. 4: 11-24**
  - b. **Col. 3: 5-11**

**B. The world is constantly trying to pull us back into its fellowship.**

1. **I Tim. 4: 1-3**
2. **Heb. 3: 12-13**

**C. As long as a Christian remains on the earth, the war against sin continues.**

1. If we were alone, the forces of evil would wear us down and overcome us.
2. God gave us the church so we would not face the enemy individually. (**fight as unit**)

**D. Those who say they want “*the man but not the plan*” are without understanding.**

( **I believe in God, but I don't want any part of organized religion ... of church.** )

1. No one today can have a relationship with God apart from His church, His body.
2. **Matt. 16: 18** ... The church was in the plan of God from the beginning.
3. **Acts 20: 28** ... Jesus purchased His ( God's ) church with His blood. (**valued it highly**)
4. **Eph. 1:7-8a** ... That same blood redeems lost people from their sins.
5. **Acts 2: 38f -cf- Gal. 3: 26-27** ... The same thing that saves one puts him in His church.

**Understanding the importance of the church, by this lesson we want to observe that :**

- a. The church is not a worship society.
- b. Rather it is a community of believers serving God as one body.
- c. Thus, membership in the community involves more than attending weekly meetings.
- d. Membership in the community of believers carries with it responsibilities to the comm..

## I. The church is not just a society of autonomous and anonymous worshippers.

### A. We have allowed our American culture to erroneously define God's church.

1. Most folks in America think of church as something one "goes to."
  - a. It's common to hear even Christians speak of "*the folks over at our church.*"
  - b. "Sorry, I can't go with you Wednesday evening; we have church." ( **event** )
2. The church isn't something one goes to or one does, it's something one is a part of.
  - a. Christians are the church.
  - b. The church is not a building. ( **Acts 11: 22 .. church's ears 14: 27 .. gathered church** )
  - c. It's also not "*acts of worship*" that are performed.
3. The church is a community of believers. ( **The church sometimes performs acts of ..** )
  - a. It's called a "**body**" composed of many individual members working together as one.
    - 1) **I Cor. 12: 12-27**
    - 2) **Eph. 4: 11-16**
  - b. It is referred to as God's "**household.**" **I Tim. 3: 15**
  - c. Both of these figures refer to people unified in purpose and all functioning as one unit.

### B. Unlike world religions, Christianity is neither a temple nor a ritual based religion.

1. Christianity is not something one has to go to a specific place to perform.
  - a. We don't become a Christian by going to a building. ( **born again of water & spirit** )
  - b. The building in which we worship is not a sacred place. ( **tombs, bars, under trees** )
2. Christianity is not a set of rituals one must perform.
  - a. There are "acts of worship" which a Christians does, but these are not the basis of the Christian religion.
  - b. There are NO rituals that will save a person or that will maintain his salvation.
  - c. There are no rituals which will merit favor with God. ( **One must give God his heart.** )

### C. Jesus did not die to purchase an anonymous group of worshippers.

1. The world erroneously defines us as a group of people who are united only in doctrine.
2. To the world we are but people who assemble :
  - a. in a certain place,
  - b. on a certain day,
  - c. to perform certain rituals.
3. Thus, on days and in places other than the assembly, **they expect we will be like them.**

**D. Jesus did not die to tack something on to anyone's life.**

1. He died to purchase individual people with which He composed His church.
2. Christians are purchased people who are called out of the world.
  - a. The very word translated as “church” means “to be called out from others”.
  - b. To be a Christian one must separate himself from the world. ( **not mix church in it** )

**II Cor. 6: 14-18** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>17</sup> “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. <sup>18</sup> “And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.

3. If God's Christ and His church have not become one's life :
  - a. he has not been “purchased.” ( **He still retains possession of his life.** )
  - b. he has not been “called out.” ( **he is still in the world.** )

**E. The church functions as a community separate and apart from the world.**

1. The blood of Christ makes us different from all other races on earth.
2. Love for each other pulls us to each other and away from people of the world.
3. Our citizenship makes us loyal to Jesus, a different King from the people of the world.
4. Commitment to the goal of our King ( saving souls ) gives a different paradigm.

**II. Most modern Christians often don't function as part of the community of believers.****A. In a national survey most professing Christians said they :**

1. attended worship services for their own spiritual benefit.
2. were satisfied with their own little circle of church friends.
3. thought social interests had little to do with Christian life.
4. had little interest in getting involved in the lives of others.

**\* This attitude is in no way akin to the Christian life or to the church Jesus built.**

**B. The bible presents god's church as being an active community of believers.**

1. When the Apostles were overseeing the church, the brethren were together daily.
  - a. **Acts 2: 42-** They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
  - b. **Acts 2: 46-** Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,
  - c. Jesus set His church up to function daily, NOT just assemble on Sundays.

\* **REMEMBER :** Once sold to Christ, our life is no longer our own !!

**Jesus is not obligated to fit into OUR schedule or to fit conveniently into our lives. WE MUST CONFORM.**

2. Christians are expected to perform their daily responsibilities.
  - a. **Heb. 3: 12-13** ... Encourage each other daily. ( cf - **10: 23-25** )
  - b. **Acts 2: 46** ... Daily fellowship
  - c. **Acts 5: 42** ... Daily teaching ( in places other than the church building )
  - d. **Acts 6: 1-7** ... Daily providing for one another
  - e. **II Cor. 11: 28** ... Daily concern for the church and the brethren ( **prayer** )

**C. The church is depicted as a place where the members lives meld together in Christ.**

1. **Rom. 12: 5** ... Christians are "individually members one of another."
2. **Acts 2: 44-45** And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.
  - a. **Read ... Acts 4: 32-35**
  - b. This was totally voluntary. ( see .. **Ax. 5** )
3. What are we taught by this ?
  - a. The lesson is not about specific acts of sharing.
  - b. **We aren't commanded to sell all**, but we are commanded to meet pressing needs.  
**Tit. 3: 14-** Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.
  - c. **The principle is being taught that we are one family and we care for each other.**

**D. Jesus views the church as His family.**

1. **Mark 3: 31-35** ... Relate the story.
2. **Heb. 2: 11 ff** ... Jesus is referred to as our older brother. ( **same brother = brothers** )

3. Those who have the same brother are also brothers.
  - a. Thus, the church is referred to as “**the household of God.**” ... **I Tim. 3: 15**
  - b. The church is corrected identified as a “**brotherhood.**” ... **I Pet. 2:17** ( **not a club** )

### III. Being a good citizen in the community of believers is not optional, it's required.

#### A. To establish fellowship with God is to establish fellowship with His church.

1. **I John 1: 3-** what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.
2. Those who are called ( *saved* ) are called into the church.  
**I Cor. 1: 9-** God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. ( cf - **I Pet. 2: 9 , 3: 9 , 5: 10** )

#### B. Each individual in the community of believers needs every other citizen thereof.

1. **Rom. 1: 11-12** For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; <sup>12</sup> that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.
2. What do you feel when you go into the assembly of the saints in a strange place ?
3. When times of tragedy strike, to whom are you close enough to turn ?
  - a. Often we are so busy with our own lives that we feel no need for others until tragedy.
  - b. Americans lead self-centered and isolated lives.
  - c. Surveys show that the majority of Americans are lonely.
    - 1) Substitute animals for friends
    - 2) Identify with TV personalities
    - 3) Seek companionship on line
  - d. People have a need to belong. ( **That's why peer pressure works.** )
4. Our mobility causes distance to become a barrier to relationships.  
\* **On the mission field, I found relationships essential to retention of converts. I established local fellowship and study groups to provide spiritual support.**

#### C. **Rom. 14:1-15:7** ... In the Christian community the strong support the weak.

1. **I Cor. 12: 26-** And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.
2. **Gal. 6: 1-2** ... Christians assist each other in the struggles ; physical & spiritual.
3. **Our support for each other is not limited to the assemblies.**

**D. Fellowship is more than :**

1. Doctrinal agreement.
2. Talking at the back of the building.
3. Assembling to eat together or inviting friends over.
4. It's melding our lives into commonness.
  - a. Fellowship is a way of life, **NOT** an event.
  - b. **It occurs when lives get involved with each other.**  
( **When Christians form a community and join together as one body to serve God.** )

**CONCLUSION :****A. The early church grew partly because they were a close knit community.**

1. The love they had for each other caused them to be highly spoken of by others. **Ax 2:47**
  2. People will be attracted to the church today if we are like the N.T. church.
    - a. When people move away from their support groups, they need a new one.
    - b. Families are scattered by employment, retirement, and circumstances.
- \* Physical families are temporary, but our church family is eternal.**

**B. God has called all those who will be saved into a life of community.**

1. Life in the Kingdom of God affects every aspect of every day of every Christian's life.
2. It provides security in this life and in the one to come.
3. With the security it establishes certain responsibilities. ( **not just worship & beliefs** )
  - a. Every member of the community must be involved with the life of other members.
  - b. Every member forfeits time, treasure and independence to other members.

**C. People will not voluntarily forfeit membership in such a community.**

1. People only leave the church when they do not feel loved, cared for, and desired.
2. Church discipline only works when people strongly desire to be part of the group.
3. When people treasure membership, they will want to share it with others.

**D. Your church family / community is a prelude to Heaven.****INVITATION :**

**Are you part of God's fellowship.**