



Life Lesson

THE CHURCH

PURPOSE: To show the spiritual nature of the church, its unity, and the necessity of our active participation in it.

PLAN: To define the word "church" and understand its importance by comparing it to a body, a family, and a kingdom.

INTRODUCTION: What do you think the word "church" means?

Let's examine several passages that will help us understand how this word was used in New Testament times.

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

ACTS 19:32,39

Give a brief explanation of Paul's work in Ephesus that led to the events of verses 32 and 39.

Do you see the word "church" anywhere in these two verses?

The word "assembly" in verse 32 and the phrase "legal assembly" in verse 39 are both translated from the word that is usually translated "church." The word "church" originally meant an assembly of people summoned for a particular purpose. The purpose could be secular or religious.

I CORINTHIANS 11:18

In this verse what kind of assembly is Paul referring to?
Christians gathered together for worship.

So one meaning of "church" can refer to the worship assembly.

EPHESIANS 1:22-23

Does this sound like it's referring to the church in general or to a worship assembly?
the church in general

The word "church" in the New Testament can refer to a group of believers assembled for worship or to the believers in general, whether assembled for worship or not. It is interesting to note that the word "church" never refers to a building but, instead, to a group of people.

II. HOW MANY CHURCHES WERE THERE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES?

I CORINTHIANS 1:10-17

What was Paul's opinion of the divisions in the church at Corinth?

I CORINTHIANS 3:1-4

What attitudes caused this division?
What attitudes cause division in the church today?

JOHN 17:20-21

How united are the followers of Jesus to be? *as close as the Father is to the Son*

In the New Testament the followers of Christ were called Christians. They were not branded with some denominational trademark. In order to promote unity this congregation claims to be Christians only, but not the only Christians.

III. THE CHURCH IS NECESSARY BECAUSE IT'S LIKE A

BODY

EPHESIANS 1:22-23

How is the church like a body?

I CORINTHIANS 12:12-20

Can a hand function if it's severed from the body?
Can Christians function if they are not a part of the body (the church)?

Mention that God gives each Christian a gift--a talent to be used for the good of the church. Encourage the person to be active and to use his talents for the growth of the body.

FAMILY

EPHESIANS 5:25-31

In what ways is the church like a family?
Let's review the parable of the Prodigal Son. (Lk 15:11-32) How would you describe the younger son's condition when he was in a distant country? Is it enough just to claim to be a son? Where did he need to be?
Now let's look at the older son. Is it enough just to be physically present? What's needed?

If we are part of the family, we'll be working with the rest of the brothers and sisters doing our Father's will.

KINGDOM

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

According to verse 13, where were we and where are we now?

ROMANS 6:11-14

What choices do we have about whom we will serve?
Whom do you want to serve?

We have seen how important it is to participate in the church. *We must not convey the idea that the church saves us or our participation in church activities will earn our ticket to heaven.* **This statement gives a good summary: The church does not save you, but all the saved are in the church.**

CONCLUSION:

What new ideas or concepts about the church have you learned?
What role do you see the church playing in your life?
What role do you see yourself playing in the church?

WORKSHEET The Church

What does the word "church" mean?

Acts 19:32, 39

I Cor. 11:18

Eph. 1:22-23

How many churches were there in New Testament times?

I Cor. 1:10-17

I Cor. 3:1-4

John 17:20, 21

"We are Christians only, but not the only Christians."

The church is necessary because it's like a . . .

BODY	FAMILY	KINGDOM
Eph. 1:22-23	Eph. 5:25-31	Col. 1:13-14
I Cor. 12:12-20	Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32	Rom. 6:11-14

"The church does not save you, but all the saved are in the church."