

LifeSavers Lesson 15: *BodyLife*

God calls us to a shared faith with fellow believers. Jesus says, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Whenever God's people come together to worship Him, God is present through His Spirit to instruct and bless.

As we near the end of earth's history, the benefit of Christians coming together to support one another becomes even more helpful and significant.

According to Scripture, each Christian believer is a member of Christ's body, the "Church."

Check one answer for each question:

I. The Christian Church

1. The church is the body of Christ.

Colossians 1:18-24: TRUE FALSE

2. Christ is the head of the church on earth.

Ephesians 1:20-23: TRUE FALSE

3. Individual believers constitute the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27: TRUE FALSE

4. Members of Christ's body seal their decision for Christ through baptism.

Galatians 3:27-29: TRUE FALSE

5. Members of Christ's body eagerly promote themselves over one another.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27: TRUE FALSE

6. Love is the critical indicator that signals who Christ's followers are.

John 13:34, 35: TRUE FALSE

II. The Purpose of the Church

7. God's people are called out of darkness to the unique mission of proclaiming His glory to their generation.

1 Peter 2:9-10: TRUE FALSE

8. People can be won to Christ through the positive witness of those who already believe.

1 Peter 2:12: TRUE FALSE

9. Jesus instructed His disciples (until the end of the world), to teach and baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19-20: TRUE FALSE

10. After the whole world has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, things will get back to normal.

Matthew 24:14: TRUE FALSE

While God's universal church encompasses people from more than any one church, we should look for a church that closely follows what Scripture teaches.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has accepted Christ's commission. It upholds the "everlasting gospel" as proclaimed by Jesus and the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14:6-12 (see Lessons 4 and 5 in this series). These messages warn of the nearness of the end of time. The aim of the gospel is to point people to Jesus as their Savior from sin and to prepare the world for His soon coming.

III. The Authority of the Church.

11. God established an organizational structure to empower His people in their mission.

1 Corinthians 12:28: TRUE FALSE

The word "**governments**" (KJV) in verse 28 is also translated "**administrations**" (NAS) and implies the work of steering, piloting or directing the church. Church leaders are instructed to "*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock*" (1 Peter 5:2-3).

The church needs an organization because there is no one person who is so gifted that he can be an independent Christian and still hope to accomplish its mission. The Holy Spirit has given each of us different gifts so that we will all be dependent upon one another. Everyone in the church is important and we need to work together!

Some have questioned whether or not they should belong to a religious organization or an institutionalized church since there are so many problems among church members themselves. They would prefer to be a part of Christ's invisible body comprised of all Christians in the world who believe in Jesus. But while on earth, Jesus urged His disciples to work together and learn to love one another (John 17). He wanted them to unite their efforts to take the gospel to the world. Scripture teaches that every part of the body of Christ must be connected with all of the other parts in order for the church to function as it should (1 Corinthians 12). Therefore, a Spirit-led organization is God's plan to successfully accomplish the world-wide mission of the church.

Since the church is the visible representation of the body of Christ on earth, it is important that each member follow Christ's example of love and unity in the truth so that purity of the church might be maintained and Christ's mission be uncompromised in the eyes of the world (See John 17:20-21).

12. Christ even established a process for dealing with misguided actions, interpersonal problems and grievances.

Matthew 18:15-18: TRUE FALSE

13. There is no sin that can exclude someone from membership in Christ's church.

1 Corinthians 5:1, 2, 9-13: TRUE FALSE

This side of heaven, the church will always have its problems because it is made up of Christians who, spiritually speaking, are still "under construction." Sadly, there are times when even leadership within the church has failed to act in a loving way when dealing with members and, as a result, some have been hurt. For this sin we plead for forgiveness from a merciful God and from those who have been mistreated. We pray for grace to do better and for the healing power of the Holy Spirit to soothe the wounds.

Yet, imperfect as it may be, the church is still God's agency for displaying His grace to the world. In spite of its failures, God will continue to use it until the church chooses to reject Christ's commission to preach the gospel. Let's pray for the church—its leaders, members, and its mission. Be careful not to allow harmful criticism to bring disrepute upon the church or its leaders that will hinder its mission of preaching the gospel.

IV. Seventh-day Adventist Statistics

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world-wide organization with churches in 228 countries. Figures from the 2002 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook show that it supports 5,605 educational facilities from elementary to the university level. It maintains 166 hospitals, 395 medical clinics, launches and planes as well as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) which meets humanitarian needs throughout the world. The Church maintains 56 publishing houses, which produce material in 343 languages, as well as radio and television production studios that proclaim the gospel in a relevant manner throughout the world. These efforts are generously supported by the more than ten million church members and, as a result, the Holy Spirit is increasing the Church literally by the thousands each day.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in the early 1860's by people who came from all denominations who, because of their study of biblical prophecies, became convinced that Jesus would soon appear for the second time. Out of love for Christ and a desire to fulfill the gospel commission, they set in motion an organization that would be able to grow to fit the needs of a Church that would preach the gospel "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" on the earth (Revelation 14:6).

54,500-plus local congregations are part of 516 Conferences world wide. These constitute 94 Union territories that make up the thirteen World Divisions. All of this is united into the General

Conference world headquarters which is located in Silver Spring, Maryland, near Washington, D.C. Each sector of the organization oversees the work of the gospel within its jurisdiction. They are designated as follows:

Local Churches – which belong to – **Local Conferences** – which belong to – **Union Conferences** – which belong to – **World Divisions** – which belong to – **General Conference** – World Organizational Center

14. According to Paul, having a connection with Christ's body becomes even more critical as earth's final curtain begins to close.

Hebrews 10:23-25: TRUE FALSE