

**PREPARING FOR
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

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Lessons For New Christians Preparing For Baptism

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INTRODUCTION

These lessons were written for you as a new Christian to help you prepare for baptism and membership in a Baptist Church. They are written to help you understand some things about the Baptist Church before you become a member through baptism.

You have received Christ as your Saviour. You have a feeling of peace in your heart now. You now want to follow the Lord in baptism and become a member of a Baptist Church. This is wonderful! Now, these lessons will help you understand more about the Baptist Church. There are several things you need to know before you become a member.

What will we study in these classes? We will study together: (1) What it means to be a child of God, (2) Telling others about your faith in Christ, (3) The Church --- Baptism and the Lord's Supper, (4) God's plan for the support of His work, (5) Your place in the church, and, (6) The main work of the church and the leaders of the church.

May the Lord bless you as you study these lessons. Your class leader will help you with any questions you may have about any of the lessons. Other church members will be happy to answer questions for you at any time. You will find a fellowship of love, and church members prepared to help you.

LESSON 1

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN AND HOW TO GROW AS A CHRISTIAN

When you repented of your sins and trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, something wonderful happened to you. The Holy Spirit of God came into your life and took away your sin. What does this mean? We can say that it means Jesus Christ is now Lord of your life. Before you became a Christian, you had another master. Satan was your master, though you did not realise it. He told you lies and led you in the wrong way. Now, you have Jesus to lead you in the right way. Your body has become "God's temple", because He lives in your heart. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Another way of saying the same thing is to say that you are a "new person in Christ." This is what 2 Corinthians 5:17 says. This verse tells us that anyone who is "in Christ" is a new creation of God. It means he is a "new person" spiritually. The verse also says "old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new."

As a "new person in Christ," you begin a new part of your life. This new life as a Christian is one of **GROWTH**. The Christian life is a life of continued growth in your knowledge about Jesus Christ and your understanding of God and His will for your life.

I want to share with you today some things that will help you grow as a Christian. They are absolutely necessary to your growth as a Christian. A new-born baby must have the right food to grow and must have loving care for his body. Otherwise, he will not grow properly. The Christian, likewise, must have certain "spiritual food" if he is to grow properly in his knowledge of Christ and his understanding of God's will for his life. Here are some "spiritual foods" to help you grow as a Christian:

(1) PRAY EVERY DAY

Even if you cannot say much in prayer, you can thank God for His blessings. You can ask Him to help you serve Him and follow Him faithfully. You must pray if you are to be a growing Christian.

(2) READ YOUR BIBLE EVERY DAY

The Bible is God's Word to you as His child. By reading it and obeying what the Bible tells you, you will grow as a Christian. If you will ask God to help you understand what the Bible teaches, He will guide your study.

(3) GO TO CHURCH WHERE YOU CAN WORSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

The Bible teaches that Jesus loved the Church. He started the Church. He is pleased when His children meet together to worship Him. You will find that singing, praying, and hearing God's Word taught and preached will help you grow as a Christian.

(4) TELL OTHERS WHAT JESUS CHRIST HAS DONE FOR YOU

As you learn more about the Bible, you will be able to use it to explain to others how they, too, can be forgiven of their sins. As a new Christian, you may not know much about the Bible. Don't let this discourage you. As you grow, your knowledge of the Bible will grow also. But even now, you can tell other people what Christ has done for you. This is the best way to begin your Christian life.

Remember these four things. They will help you begin your Christian life in the right way, and you will begin growing as a Christian.

Now you belong to God. You are His child. Nothing can change that truth. You belong to Him. There are some wonderful verses in the Bible you will want to learn today. We will study them together in class.

(1) John 3:16 -- This verse tells us we have EVERLASTING LIFE by trusting Jesus Christ, God's Son, as our Saviour.

(2) Romans 8:38-39 -- These verses tell us that NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US from the love of God.

(3) 2 Timothy 1:12 -- This verse tells us that GOD IS ABLE TO KEEP what we have committed to Him.

Now, let me remind you that we Christians live in a world where temptations will surely come to us from Satan. Many times you will be tempted to do things that you know are not pleasing to God. What are you to do then? Read 1 John 1:9. This verse tells us that God will forgive our sins. The verse was written to Christians. When God's children sin, He is not pleased. He will correct us and lead us back into the right way of living.

If you have sinned against another person, you must ask that person to forgive you. Read Matthew 5:23-24. These verses say we must be in fellowship with other people before we can please God in our worship. We will want to talk more about these verses in class.

Now, I want you to do one more thing today. On the lines below, write the name of one or more persons you know who are not Christians. I am asking you to begin praying for them now. Ask God to help you tell them about Jesus. Ask God to help you invite them to church, where they can hear God's Word explained.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What verses tell you your body is God's temple? I Corinthians _____

2. What four things can you do to grow as a Christian?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

3. Write the verses that explain the following truths:

(1) _____ We have everlasting life by trusting in God's Son.

(2) _____ Nothing can separate us from God's love.

(3) _____ God is able to keep what we have committed to Him.

4. What does 1 John 1:9 tell us? _____

LESSON 2

TELLING OTHERS ABOUT JESUS

In the last lesson we learned four things that will help us grow as Christians. Can you remember them? Three of them are written below. Can you write the fourth one?

- (1) Pray every day.
- (2) Read your Bible every day.
- (3) Go to church where you can worship with other Christians.
- (4) _____

Did you remember that telling others about Jesus was the fourth one? We will talk today about this important way of growing as a Christian.

We learn in the Bible that the apostle Paul was a great servant of God. He told many people about Jesus Christ. Many of them believed his words and became Christians. What did Paul tell them? He told them what Christ had done in his own life --- we call that his **TESTIMONY**.

You and I have **TESTIMONIES** also. God wants us to share our faith in Christ with our friends. We can tell them how we trusted Jesus and how He has changed our lives. We can tell how we know our sins have been forgiven. We can share how God is taking care of our lives now. The Bible says God will save anyone who will call upon Him. Do not be ashamed to tell others that you are now a Christian. God will use your words to help them become Christians.

There are some verses in the Bible that will help you as you tell others about Jesus Christ. They are all found in the book of Romans. This will help you learn to use the Bible in sharing Christ with others.

Romans 3:23.

All have sinned and come short of God's glory. This means every person has sinned and failed to please God. No man can make excuses, because these are God's words and not man's words.

Romans 6:23.

This verse says that the wages of sin is death. This means spiritual death, or separation from God. If a man sins, he will receive the payment for sinning. The Bible uses the word, "death", here to show that a sinner is separated from God. The Bible explains this as being "dead in sin." (See Ephesians 2:5 and Colossians 2:13).

Romans 5:8.

God proves His love for us by the death of Jesus Christ, His Son, on the cross. Jesus died in the place of sinners. If we receive Christ, we are saved from death (separation from God, now and eternally).

Romans 10:9-10.

These verses show that we must believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is our Lord. If we are not willing to confess Jesus as our Saviour, we cannot be saved from our sins.

Romans 10:13.

This verse tells us that anyone who is willing to call upon Jesus to save him will be forgiven of his sins.

You should learn these verses. Be able to find them in your Bible and show them to others. Satan wants you to be afraid. He wants you to feel that you cannot tell others about Christ. But, you can do it with God's help. Before you try to share Christ with others, ask God to help you by giving you the right words to say to them. Some people you talk to will refuse to listen to your testimony. Just tell them you will continue to pray for them. Also, your church has some tracts (some papers that tell about Jesus), which you can give to those to whom you talk. The tracts can be read after you are gone.

Let us pray that God will lead each of us to talk to someone about Christ today! In our next class we will give you time to share with us what happened when you tried to share Christ with another person, if you wish to share your experiences.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Write four ways you have learned to grow as a Christian:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

2. Write the verses that tell the following truths from the book of Romans:

_____ All have sinned and come short of God's glory.

_____ The wages of sin is death.

_____ Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth
that Jesus is Lord.

_____ Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

3. What will you do if your friend refuses to listen to your testimony about your
faith in Jesus Christ? _____

LESSON 3

THE CHURCH --- BAPTISM AND THE LORD' SUPPER

We want to begin today by giving you some time to share with the class your experience in trying to tell another person about your faith in Christ. Did you learn something that will help others in the class share their faith better?

In our study today, we begin some lessons about the church. We will also study the two ordinances which Christ gave to the church. These are Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

Who began the Church? In Matthew 16:13-18, we learn that Jesus is the One who began the Church. What is a church? From the Bible we learn that the church is **NOT** a building where Christians meet for worship. The church is people who have believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour and have been baptised. The building is where the church meets, but the people, themselves, are the church. The first Christians met in homes. We can meet in a home or under a tree or somewhere else. The important thing to remember is that **THE PEOPLE** are the church.

Who is the head of the church? As we read in Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus said He would build His Church. The Bible tells us He is the Head of the Church. Read Ephesians 1:20-23 and Colossians 1:18. We have spiritual leaders and helpers in our church, but Jesus, Himself, is our Head.

The Bible also teaches that all members of our church are equal. Each member has an equal right to speak as he feels, and then we decide together what we should do as a church. Since Christ is the Head of our church, this means that we must pray much so we will know the things Christ wants our church to do. When we sincerely pray and ask God to lead us, He will show us the right way as a church.

THE CHURCH ORDINANCES

There are two ordinances, or remembrances, which Jesus told us to do in the church. The first one is **BAPTISM**. In Matthew 3:13-17, we read how Jesus was baptised. This pleased His Heavenly Father. This is also an example to us as we follow Jesus. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples (believers) throughout the whole world and to baptise them. We can also read Romans 6:3-5. These verses give us a beautiful picture of what Christ has done for us. It is a picture of how the blood of Christ has already washed away our sins. When we are baptised, we are showing to the world what has happened in our hearts. Now, we are openly choosing to follow Jesus with our lives.

We might say we are baptised for three reasons:

- (1) We want to follow the example of Jesus as He, Himself, was baptised. (Matthew 3:13-17).
- (2) Jesus commanded His disciples to baptise those who became Christians. (Matthew 28:19-20).
- (3) We, ourselves, are openly declaring our faith in Jesus, and want to show everyone we have joined with other Christians to serve Him through the church. (Romans 6:4, Acts 2:41-42).

The second ordinance, or remembrance, which Jesus gave to the church is **THE LORD'S SUPPER**. We can read about this in Luke 22:19-20. These verses tell us about the last supper Jesus had with His disciples. After they had eaten the traditional Jewish Passover supper, Jesus told His disciples about His death on the cross. As He again broke the bread and took the cup, He told them that the bread and cup showed His death on the cross. Jesus told them the bread was a sign of His body which was given to die for sin. As they drank from the cup, it was a sign of His blood which was shed on the cross for them. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember Christ's death for us.

In 1 Corinthians 11:20-29, we read that we are not to eat and drink the Lord's Supper in order to have plenty to eat and drink. We are to do it to remember Him. Also, these verses show us that if we have sin in our lives, we must confess our sin to God before we can take the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, we do not please the Lord.

In class, your leader will help you understand these ordinances, or remembrances, better. If you have questions, you should be prepared to ask them in class or to the teacher privately.

Jesus began the Church for two reasons:

- (1) So we might meet together to learn more about Him in His Word and be strengthened in the fellowship with other Christians.
- (2) So we might go away from our meeting to tell others about Christ.

It is therefore very important that we meet together. We need the spiritual strength of worship and Christian fellowship as we try to live as God wants us to live in the world. (Remember, it is one of the four ways for a Christian to grow). It is important to remember something else. After worshipping, we are to go outside the church and win others to faith in Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Who began the Church? _____

2. Answer the following statements by writing "YES" if you think the statement is true, and by writing "NO" if you think the statement is false.

(1) _____ The Bishop is the head of the Church.

(2) _____ The people are really the Church.

(3) _____ Jesus told His followers to go into all the world and tell people to be good.

(5) _____ Baptism and The Lord's Supper teach us about Christ's death on the cross.

3. Write two reasons why Christ began the Church:

(1) _____

(2) _____

LESSON 4

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE SUPPORT OF HIS WORK

We are beginning to learn that God has a wonderful plan for our lives. We have learned about God's plan for our spiritual growth as Christians. We have learned about God's plan for sharing our faith with others. We have also learned about God's plan for us as members of the church.

God has a plan for everything. He had a plan when He created the world. He had a plan when He created mankind. We have learned about His plan for our church --- for fellowship and for witnessing in the world. Yes, God works by plans.

God also has a plan for the right use of our money. He has given us a plan to use our money wisely, and at the same time, to provide for His work in your church.

In this lesson we want to talk about the use of our money. If we follow God's plan, the needs of the church will be taken care of and our own lives will be blessed. What is God's plan? We must turn to the Bible to see this plan.

God's plan for financing His work is told throughout the Bible. Read Leviticus 27:30. This verse tells that a "tithe" of everything belongs to the Lord. Do you know what a "tithe" is? The word "tithe" means "tenth". A tithe is one-tenth, or ten percent of anything. What would be the tithe of one Pula? It would be ten thebe. What is the tithe of ten Pula? It is one Pula. God's work is to be supported by His people through the giving of "tithes", or ten percent of the money they earn at work.

When we read Deuteronomy 26:1-2, we learn something else about God's plan for the tithe. These verses teach us that the tithe is to be the **FIRST** part. That is, God's part is to be paid first. We should not just give God the part that is left over after we have bought food and other things. When we get paid, we should give God the first part of the money we have. Then, God will bless the rest of our money, which we use to buy the things we need. When we are living for God, what He gives us will be used for good things only.

Now read Malachi 3:6-10. These verses say that if we do not bring the tithe to God we are robbing Him of the part that belongs to Him. These verses

also teach us that when we are faithful to God, He will bless us. The blessing is that God is faithful to take care of His people who honour Him in their lives.

There are some other verses I want you to study.

Matthew 23:23.

In this verse, Jesus is speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees. He says the tithe should be brought to God. The tithe is included among those things which Jesus said ought to be done to honour God.

2 Corinthians 9:7.

Whatever our offering to God may be, whether small or great, it is important that we give our offering with a cheerful heart. Our purpose in giving our offering to God is that we love Him and want to please Him and honour Him. We are remembering that everything good which comes to us, comes from God. He directs our lives and provides for our needs. By our offering, we show that we are thanking God for what He has given us.

There is one other important Scripture we need to look at today.

It is 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. These verses are helpful to us. They tell about an offering that was being collected to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem. The church at Jerusalem was poor because they had been under great persecution by those who hated Christians. All the other churches were encouraged to help in this offering. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul is instructing the church in Corinth how to collect their offering. In verse 2, he tells them, "on the first day of the week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, according to how he prospers..." The "first day of the week" means Sunday, or the Lord's Day. Each person was to set aside money for the offering according to how God had blessed him during the week. It is a good guide for us to follow: to set aside money regularly for our offering. We are to give as God has blessed us. We should also remember that God's part is the tithe.

Now, let us see what happens when we bring our tithes and offerings to the church:

(1) First, when we do this God is pleased with us.

God has given me eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. He has taken away the guilt of my sins. God has given me much, and I please Him when I bring an offering, which belongs to Him.

(2) Second, God's work becomes strong and the expenses of the church are taken care of.

When the members of the church are faithful in bringing their tithes and offerings, the church can do many things. A building can be built. A pastor's salary can be paid. Sunday School books and other supplies can be bought. My tithe can help others learn about Jesus as Saviour. Remember, part of the work of the church is to tell others about Jesus.

(3) Thirdly, when we do this God has promised to bless our lives, and we will grow as Christians.

We can see that God takes care of us when we honour Him by following His commandments. We cannot expect God to bless our lives if we do not follow His Word. We must do what the Bible teaches us. When we follow His commandments, we grow as Christians.

Now, do you have any questions to ask about this lesson? The teacher will help you understand this plan God has for helping us grow as Christians and for taking care of His work.

God's plan for our lives as Christians is a wonderful plan. Part of God's plan is to help us use our money wisely. God's blessings include providing for our own needs and for the work of the church. Let us ask God to help us understand His plan better each day.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What does the word "tithe" mean? _____

2. Write the verses that tell us the following truths:

(1) _____ A tithe of everything belongs to the Lord.

(2) _____ A man can rob God if he does not bring the tithe.

(3) _____ Lay up your offering on the first day of the week.

3. How much is the tithe of ten Pula? _____

4. You have studied three ways your offering helps when you bring it to the church. Name one of the ways _____

LESSON 5

YOUR PLACE IN YOUR CHURCH

We have been talking about God's wonderful plan for your life. His plan for you led you to become a Christian. His plan includes your growth as a Christian. We have also talked about God's plan for your money. In these last two lessons we want to talk about God's plan for you as a part of your church.

You have received Christ as your Saviour and are now a Christian. When you are baptised, you will become a member of a Baptist Church. There are several things you need to know about your church membership.

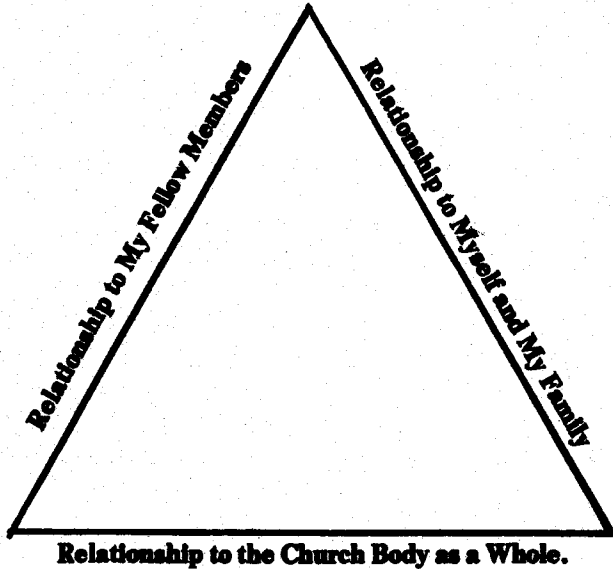
First, you need to remember that becoming a Christian and becoming a church member are not the same. Both of these have to do with your relationship to Christ. But, becoming a Christian and joining a church are two separate decisions you must make.

First, you were saved. You became a Christian. Then, you decided which church you wanted to join. When a person thinks that deciding to join a church makes him a Christian, he is not understanding the teaching of the Bible. A person can join a church and not be converted. Joining a church will not change one's spiritual condition. He must first be sure he is saved. Then, as a new Christian, he must decide which church to join. We are thankful that you have decided to join us as a Baptist. We want to help you understand the church fellowship you are to be a member of.

What is a church? What do you become a part of when you are baptised and join this church? There are many ways to describe a church. We may say, "a church is the redeemed family of God entrusted with the mission to represent Christ in the world."

We have said that being a member of a church is like being part of "the redeemed family of God." A church member in God's family is related in three ways to other members of the family. He has certain duties in each of these relationships. Let's look at these relationships now. We can think of them as a

triangle to help us see what we are talking about. All members of your church share these relationships (duties):



1. My Relationship (Duties) to the Church Body as a Whole.

- (1) To walk together in Christian love. (John 13:34-35).
- (2) To work together for the advancement of the church (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Corinthians 7:1).
- (3) To faithfully support its worship, ordinances (remembrances), discipline and doctrine. (Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- (4) To give the church an important place in my life. (Matthew 6:33).
- (5) To make my offering cheerfully and regularly (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- (6) To be active in church work wherever I may live. (Acts 11:19-21).

2. My Relationship (Duties) to Myself and My Family.

- (1) To maintain family and private worship. (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- (2) To educate my children in spiritual things. (2 Timothy 3:15).
- (3) To seek the salvation of the lost. (Acts 1:8).
- (4) To live a good Christian life in the world. (Ephesians 5:15; Phillipians 2:14-15; 1 Peter 2:11-12).
- (5) To avoid gossip and anger. (Ephesians 4:31; 1 Peter 2:21).
- (6) To avoid the sale and use of alcoholic beverages. (Ephesians 5:18; Habakkuk 21:5).
- (7) To be faithful to Christ in doing good works. (Titus 2:14).

3. My Relationships (Duties) to My Fellow Church Members.

- (1) To watch over one another in love. (1 Peter 1:22).
- (2) To pray for one another. (James 5:16).
- (3) To aid in sickness and troubles. (Galatians 6:2; James 2:1-26).
- (4) To show sympathy and courtesy. (1 Peter 3:8).
- (5) To always be ready for forgiveness and reconciliation. (Ephesians 4:30-32).

As a member of the church, you are not free from the temptations of Satan. Indeed, he always tries to get Christians to disobey God. Sometimes a church member will slip and fall into sin. What is our attitude toward that person to be? Do we turn away from him and have nothing more to do with him?

Read Galatians 6:1-2. These verses tell us that if someone in the church falls into sin, we should try to help him. We are to try to bring him back to the right way of God. As we do this, the Bible says we must be very careful that we do not fall into temptations and begin to sin in the same way.

God has given His children a wonderful promise to remember when temptation comes. This promise is found in 1 Corinthians 10:13. It tells us that God will not let any temptation become too strong for us if we will look to Him when we are tempted. God will provide a way for us to escape the temptation.

Now look at Matthew 18:15-17. In these verses we see what happens if a member of the church falls into sin and will not listen to those in the church who are trying to help him. Jesus said that if a brother (a fellow Christian) sins against you, you should first go to him and try to make things right with him.

If he refuses to listen, you should then take one or two witnesses from the church with you and again try to make things right with him. If he still refuses to listen, the matter should be brought before the members of the church. If he still will not listen to the church then he can be put out of the church. This means he would no longer be a member of the church. Even after he is put out of the church, if he wishes to visit in the services and does not disturb the services, the people should show love toward him and allow him to enter. After he is put out of the church, if he wishes to repent and ask the church to take him back, the church can decide to do this if they feel he is sincere and means what he is saying. We hope that in our church we will never have to put any of the members out of the church. However, if this problem does come to our church, we need to know what the Bible teaches and how God wants us to deal with the problem.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Answer the following statements by writing "YES" if you think the statement is true, and by writing "NO" if you think the statement is false.

- (1) _____ Joining the church is the same as becoming a Christian.
- (2) _____ The church is a building where God's people meet for worship.
- (3) _____ The church may be described as "the redeemed people of God."
- (4) _____ When you become a Christian, Satan no longer likes to tempt you.

2. As a church member, you have three relationships (duties). Two of them are given below. Can you name the third one?

- (1) Relationship (Duties) to the Church Body as a Whole.
- (2) Relationship (Duties) to Myself and My Family.
- (3) _____

3. What verse tells us of God's promise to deliver us in time of temptation?
1 Corinthians _____

4. What verses tell us how to deal with a church member who falls into sin?
Matthew 18: _____

LESSON 6

THE MAIN WORK OF THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERS

Since you are to be a member of the church, you will want to know more about what you are to do as a church member. What is the church's main work? Who are its leaders?

We have already said that Christ is the Head of our church. But, what about its earthly leaders? We want to look at these two things today: (1) the main work of the church, and, (2) the leaders of the church.

The church member who wants to grow as a Christian needs a clear understanding of the church of which he is a member. We have said that the two main duties of the church are (1) working to bring lost people to faith in Jesus Christ, and, (2) working to help Christians grow through church meetings and fellowship. Both of these are expressed in Jesus' instructions to the church in Matthew 28:19-20.

WORKING IN THE CHURCH TO WIN LOST PEOPLE

Jesus came into the world to save lost people. (Read Luke 19:10). The church is in the world for the same purpose. For the church to win lost people to faith in Christ, each member of the church must tell others about the way of salvation. You can tell others about Christ in two ways:

- (1) Sharing God's Word and what Christ has done for you.
- (2) Demonstrating the power of Christ by the way you live as a Christian.

WORKING IN THE CHURCH TO GROW AS A CHRISTIAN.

The church cannot fulfill its mission of telling others about Jesus unless its members are growing as Christians. Therefore, each church must spend some of its time and money in helping its own members grow spiritually. This means that church members must spend time ministering to one another. Not only must the church grow in membership, its members must grow spiritually as well. Each church member has a part in this work in the church.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and 1 Corinthians 13:1.

In these verses, the apostle Paul uses the human body to explain how each member of the church has an important part in the work and growth of the church. In writing to the Corinthian Church, Paul tells them that they are the "body of Christ." (See 1 Corinthians 12:27). Each member has an important work to do as part of the body of Christ.

Paul says all the parts (members) are equal in the church. This means that in the church racial and tribal differences are not found. All are just the same in the church. They are all part of one body. You can read this for yourself in 1 Corinthians 12:13-18. Paul reminds us that each part of the body is equal. The foot cannot say, since the foot is not the hand, that the foot is not part of the body. Nor can the ear say, "Because I am not the eye, I am not part of the body."

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:21-22. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you." And, the head cannot say that the feet are not important. All the parts of the body (all the members of the church) are necessary. Even if they cannot do much work in the church, they still have an important place in the church.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:22-27. You can see that Paul says even those parts of the body that seem to be less important really are the most important parts of all. Let me give you an example to show what Paul is saying: we can say a certain girl is very beautiful. We mean her face looks nice to us. But, which is more important about her, her face, or her heart? Her heart! For, if the heart stops working, she will die. If her face changes, it will not cause her to die.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, Paul shows that it is God Who gives us our place in the church. All do not have the same gifts and work to do in the church, though all have some work to do.

He also tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:1 that the greatest gift of all is given to every member of the church. What is that gift given to all members? The gift of **LOVE**. It is the most important gift, and one that makes us all important in the church. Each member is to use his gift of love within the church. It is the best gift and one which all members have.

THE CHURCH LEADERS

The Bible teaches that there are two kinds of leaders in the church. Their work is to lead the church to do the work a church must do. They should know that God has called them to do this work and they should be chosen by the church to do their work.

One of the leaders is the **PASTOR**. He is the spiritual leader of the church. The other worker is the **DEACON**, which means "servant" or "helper." These workers are responsible for helping to lead the church according to God's will for the church.

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-12. These verses tell us the kind of persons pastors and deacons must be. When a church looks for a pastor they should look for someone who has these things in his life. If a person has these good things in his life, and the church chooses him, he will do well in the church. If he does not have these things in his life, he will not do well as the spiritual leader of the church.

The pastor must study, preach, teach, lead, and must one day give answer to God for the way he has done his work. (See Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Peter 5:4). He is to lead the church according to the teachings of God's Word.

In 1 Timothy 3:8, the word "deacon" means "servant". The work of deacons began in the first church in Jerusalem. Men were chosen by the church to assist the preachers by ministering to the whole church. They were men of good character (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). There were seven deacons in the first church, but the number chosen was according to the particular needs of the church. In most churches, the deacons and pastor meet together regularly to plan and pray for the work of the church. All deacons are chosen by the church for their work.

Who makes the important decisions in the church? The pastor is responsible for the spiritual growth of the church. He is the "overseer" (that is what the word "pastor" means). But, he does not make all the decisions for the church. Neither do the deacons make such decisions.

Baptists believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of each church. Baptists believe the best way to discover and follow the will of God is through all the members of the church. Every church member has a right to express his opinion and to vote in church business. The members of a church decide by the vote of the members what the church will do. That is why it is important for every church member to attend the meetings of his church.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The two main duties of the church are:

(1) _____

(2) _____

2. There are two ways you can witness to lost people. One of them is written below. Can you write the second one?

(1) Sharing God's Word and telling what Christ has done for you.

(2) _____

3. What verses tell us that all members of the church are equal? 1 Corinthians 12: _____

4. What is the greatest spiritual gift of all which is shared equally by every member of the church? The gift of _____

5. Name the two spiritual leaders of the church:

(1) _____

(2) _____

CONCLUSION

You have now finished these lessons. There is one further scripture at which we need to look before you are baptised as a member of the church: Galatians 5:19-23.

These verses tell us some good things which are to be part of every Christian's life. They also tell us of some things which are not good and should not be part of a Christian's life. These things which are not good are seen in the lives of people who are not saved.

These verses speak about the nature of unsaved people, about the desire or wish to be involved in immoral and indecent actions, in worship of idols, and in witchcraft. These verses speak also about fighting, about anger, and about being jealous or over ambitious. They speak about desires to get drunk and engage in wild parties. The Bible says those who keep practicing such things have not become a part of the Kingdom of God.

"But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self control. There is no law against such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires." Galatians 5:22,23.

If you are involved or having difficulty in any of the things which are part of life of an unsaved person, it would be better for you to talk to your Pastor or teacher and pray for release from these things before being baptised.

When you have repented (turned) from all known sin in your life and have trusted Jesus as the only way of salvation, and have asked Him to be Lord of your life, you are ready for baptism.

It is our prayer that you will trust the Lord Jesus Christ to help and strengthen you; that you will find much joy in serving with other Christians through the church. May you be a blessing as you live for Him.