

LESSON 12

THE BODY OF BELIEVERS

Introduction

The word 'church' is the contemporary term which is used most frequently to refer to God's people in community. Church may not be the best term to use to describe God's people because of the identification of the word with the organizational aspect of the redeemed community. In recent years, more attention has been given to the relational aspect of God's people. The Church is defined frequently as a fellowship of believers rather than an organization of people. Also, the servant function of the Church must be included in the understanding of its nature.

The concept of the people of God in community is not limited to the term 'church' in the New Testament. P.S. Minear states that there are more than one hundred cognate ways of expressing the church idea in the New Testament.¹ Such expressions as the body of Christ, the people of God, the household of God, the flock, the Kingdom, the temple of God, believers, and saints are alternate terms for the church idea.

The Nature of the Church

Since 'church' is the most common designation for God's people in community, this term will be used in the following discussion. An attempt will be made, however, to counterbalance the emphasis which has been placed upon the Church as an organization or institution. The organization of the Church in a local setting is essential to its existence but not necessarily its basic nature. The Church has an inner reality which determines its nature and should determine the shape of the external, concrete organization. The fact that its nature includes spiritual and physical dimensions does not make the Church unique from other areas of existence. Man as a living being also has spiritual and physical dimensions to his existence. It is not easy to understand the relation of God who is Spirit to the universe which is material. Yet there is a relation because God who is Spirit created a material universe. The world of nature is not equivalent to the being of God;

¹P.S. Minear, "The Idea of Church," Vol. 1 of The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) p. 609.

Is this statement true or false?

Because the word 'church' is related usually to the organization of God's people, it may not be the best term to describe a fellowship of believers. _____

(true)

Some expressions for 'church' in the New Testament are:

the _____ of Christ

the _____ of God

the K _____

b _____

s _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Does the fact that the nature of the Church includes both spiritual and physical dimensions make it unique from other areas of existence? _____

(no)

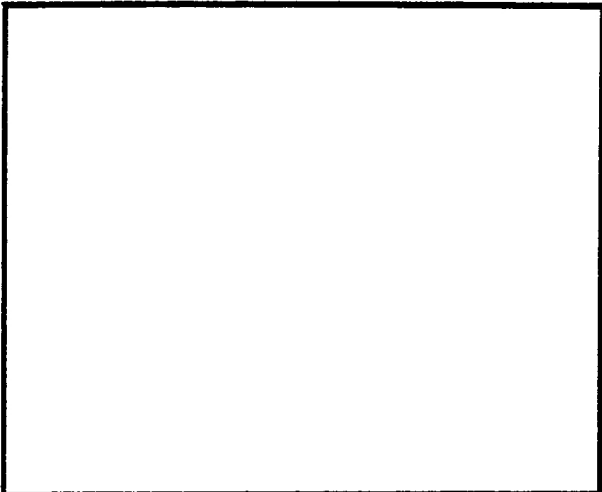
nevertheless, the invisible God is able to reveal Himself through His created universe. Likewise, the Church has an inner spiritual nature which is revealed through its external, concrete existence as a visible entity.

The inner nature of the Church

The Church as a fellowship.—Although the word 'fellowship' (*koinonia*) is not used frequently in the Bible to describe the Church, it is an appropriate term to describe the Church's inner life. Luke states that the three thousand who were converted at Pentecost continued in the instruction given by the Apostles and in fellowship (Acts 2:42).

Fellowship means primarily a binding together or joining together in a mutual sharing and participation. The concept was not used in the Old Testament to speak of man's relation to God because of the Hebrew consciousness of the distance between God and man, of the holiness of God. Terms such as 'servant' and 'covenant' which denoted the inequality and distance between God and man were used instead of 'fellowship'. The inhibition was not carried over into the New Testament because Christ bridged the distance between God and man. In Christ, man is able to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). Fellowship with Christ which is made possible through the cleansing from sin by His blood is the basis for fellowship of men, one with another (1 John 1:7). Fellowship emphasizes relationship: the relationship of man to God and the relationship of man to man. It also stresses participation. Man participates in the sufferings of Christ and in His heritage of glory (cf. 2 Cor. 1:5, 7; Col. 1:24; Rom. 8:17).

The expression "partakers of Christ" denotes the sharing in Christ by Christians. The concept is implied by the metaphor of the vine in John 15 and the body in Romans 12:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12ff. The new life of the Christian comes from the indwelling Christ (Rom. 8:1ff.). Since no distinction is made between the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9f.), the body of the redeemed is called "a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God" (1 Cor. 6:19—RSV). In this same context, Paul spoke of God's redeemed people as members of Christ. In Ephesians 2:11-22, the temple concept is brought to a climax. Gentiles who were once alienated from God's chosen community have been brought near by the blood of Christ. He has made one new man (one body) of the Jews and Gentiles through the cross. Paul also used the metaphor of the household of God to describe the one body of the redeemed who are fellow citizens and saints. Believing Jews and Gentiles are joined together and grow into "a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are



Fellowship means _____ together in mutual _____ and participation.

The relationships which fellowship emphasizes are:

man to _____

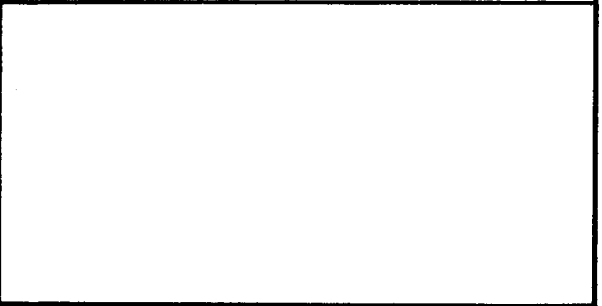
man to _____

(joining, sharing, God, man)

"Partakers of Christ" means sharing in

_____ by _____.

(Christ, Christians)



built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21f. —RSV). The Church as the body of Christ, temple of God, and household of God emphasizes the relationship of God's people to Himself through Christ.

The Church as regenerated people. —Because of the inner relationship of Christ and the Church which is His body, only those who are born of the Spirit are part of the Church: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). John baptized with water, but he announced that the One who came after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11). Baptism in water is an external expression of baptism with the Spirit or being born by the Spirit. The Spirit is not given through sacramental rituals, but the reception of the Spirit is externally expressed in the symbolism of baptism. It is the indwelling Spirit who makes one a part of the body of Christ. A person can be baptized in water, however, without being baptized by the Spirit. Water baptism does not make one a member of the body of Christ.

The Church as the body of Christ. —The Church as the body of Christ is nothing less than the presence of Christ Himself in the life and service of the Christian community. Some aspects of this concept have been discussed in a previous section which dealt with the Church as a fellowship. Paul related the concepts of the body of Christ and a fellowship in 1 Corinthians 10:14ff. in which the one loaf of bread of the Lord's Supper signifies a common participation (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ. The one loaf symbolizes the unity of the body. Other Scriptures speak of the diversity of the body which has many members. The one Spirit gives unity to the internal being of the Church. The diversity of the Church is in its external and visible expression. Each organization is composed of many members with different functions.

The internal life of the Church is the indwelling Spirit. The internal nature is best described as the relationship of man to God and man to man, but the external nature of the Church is diversified and is best described in its servant role. The members of the body are to serve both the needs of the fellowship and the needs of the world.

Since the head of the body is Christ, the Church does not need an earthly potentate. Christ is the head of every man even as the husband is the head of the woman and God is the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). This means that everyone is responsible to Christ and not to some earthly ruler. The concept is the same as the Kingdom of God in which Christ is the King or Messiah who rules over regenerated men as subjects of the Kingdom.

Only those who are born of the Spirit are part of the _____.

(Church)

The body of Christ as related to a fellowship of believers signifies both u _____ and d _____.

(unity, diversity)

The head of the body is _____.

(Christ)

Although there is a diversity of members from a functional perspective, the one Christ who indwells each believer gives unity to the Church which is His body (Col. 1:18). The indwelling Christ controls the life of each member and bestows gifts to qualify each member for his particular function (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4ff., 28ff.; Eph. 4:11f.). The Church is not qualified for its external, functional role apart from its internal relationship to Christ.

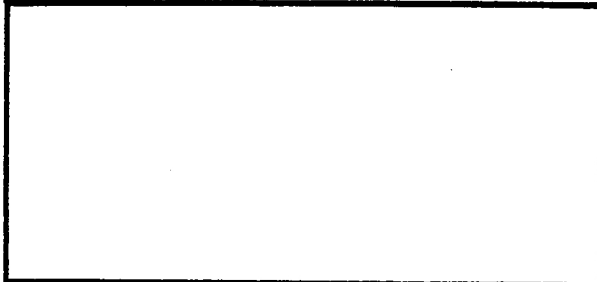
The Church as the people of God. — First Peter 1:3-2:10 relates the concept of the Church to the people of God in the Old Testament. This emphasis is on the Church as God's redeemed people: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18f.). The passage is filled with Old Testament imagery. The elect Church is described as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9). These descriptions are based on Exodus 19:4-6. As the people of God, the Church is the new Israel with the responsibility to worship only Yahweh and to make His name known throughout the world.

The external expression of the Church

The meaning of the word 'church'. —The word 'church' came into English usage through German and Latin from the Greek *kuriakon* which means "that which belongs to the Lord." Church is the English word used most always to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* appears 115 times in the New Testament and is translated as 'church' 112 times. On three occasions, the word refers to an organized mass of people or a political assembly in Ephesus and is translated 'assembly' (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Most of the appearances of *ekklesia* in the New Testament are found in Paul's Epistles, the Book of Acts, and Revelation. The term appears only twice in the Synoptics: Matthew 16:18 and 18:17.

Ekklesia is composed of two Greek words which mean "called out" or "assembly". It was used almost a hundred times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to translate *qahal* (assembly, gathering, or congregation). Through its use in the Septuagint, *ekklesia* became associated with the congregation or religious meeting before the time of Jesus.

The basic meaning of *ekklesia* is "an assembly of persons who have been summoned for a particular purpose". The congregation could gather for prayer, instruction, and deliberation (cf. Acts 11:26; 12:5; 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:4-5, etc.). Although the word 'assembly' is basic to the meaning of *ekklesia*, the community of believers was designated as the *ekklesia*, even when it was not in assembly. Paul persecuted the Church of God, that is, he persecuted Christians

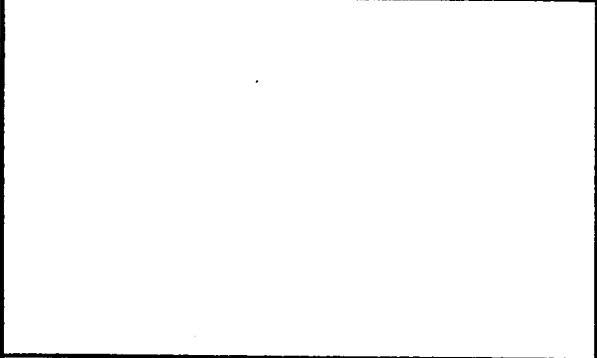


The responsibility of the Church as the new Israel is to worship only _____ and to make His name known throughout the _____.

(Yahweh, world)

Church is the English word usually used to translate the Greek word _____.

(ekklesia)



The basic meaning of ekklesia is 'an _____ of persons who have been summoned for a particular _____'.

(assembly, purpose)

whether they were in assembly or dispersed (1 Cor. 15:9). Christ is head of the Church and rules over its members whether they are in assembly or not.

A basic nature of the assembly is that it is a community 'called together' by God. It belongs to God because He has called it into being, dwells within it, and rules over it. His will and purpose are accomplished through it. Members of the Church are called saints because they are set apart into God's service.

The relation of the inner reality to the external expression of the Church.—The inner reality of the Church is based on the relationship of the redeemed to Christ who indwells them. It is a spiritual unity. Since the Church is a servant as well as a relationship, it must take on concrete, organic existence in its servant role. Local congregations are the visible and organic expressions of the spiritual body of Christ. Since each local assembly is also identical in its spiritual nature to the spiritual body of Christ, local organizations of regenerate members can also be correctly spoken of as the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27). Paul moved from the concept of the spiritual body of Christ to the body of believers in Corinth, which had many members with different functions, without drawing any distinction between the underlying spiritual reality and the functional organization. Each local congregation as a functional organization has the identical nature of the underlying spiritual body because the members are part of the body; therefore, Paul could speak of each local congregation as the body of Christ without concluding that Christ has many bodies.

Each local church must be both a spiritual organism as the temple of the Holy Spirit and a functional organization. The institutional and organizational aspects of the Church were not emphasized in the New Testament; however, wherever people meet together there must be some organization. Unfortunately, the Church of our generation has been interpreted primarily in terms of organization, and its inner spiritual reality has been neglected. Without the inner spiritual reality, a church is not different from any other social organization in the world. Its distinctiveness and power result from its inner spiritual nature in relationship to the resurrected Lord. Its organization can be similar to that of other earthly institutions, but its functions are determined by its inner nature.

The Church belongs to God because:

He has _____ it into being;

He _____ within it;

He _____ over it.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The relationship of the Church to the indwelling, redeeming Christ gives it _____ reality which is carried out in the servant role through _____ expression.

The visible and organic expressions of the spiritual body of Christ are local _____.

(inner, external, congregations)

A church would not be different from other social organizations without its _____ spiritual _____.

(inner, reality)

The Organization of the Church

Ecclesiastical authority

Some denominations conceive of the Church primarily as an organization and place authority in the hands of the one who is selected to be the head of the organization. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope is the infallible head of a world-wide organization. He is recognized as the final authority in the interpretation of Scripture and the government of the business affairs of the Church. Under the Pope are bishops and priests who are subject to him but who are given authority over the affairs of local congregations.

Episcopal churches (Anglican, etc.) have bishops or overseers who make up the 'superior clergy' and have authority over the 'inferior clergy'. The clergy has authority with regard to the teaching and business affairs in the Church.

Some local congregations are governed by presbyters or elders. There are two classes of elders—teaching elders and ruling elders. The authority of the Church is vested in the pastor and ruling elders, but above the local Church session stands the presbytery which is composed of the churches in a given district. The district presbytery is subject to the synod which in turn is subject to the highest authority of all which is vested in the general assembly.

Other denominations follow a democratic form of government. Theoretically, each member of the congregation has a voice in deciding business affairs of the Church. The business sessions are usually presided over by the pastor who supposedly moderates without controlling the decision-making. The influence of pastoral leadership comes through his correct interpretation of the Word and will of God in his preaching ministry. Most pastors also function as leaders in administration in which they lead the organization of the Church. Even among those churches which claim to follow democratic rule, many are not actually controlled by the majority of the membership.

Democracy is a proper structure for Church government provided the inner spiritual nature of the Church is understood. Proper Church government might better be described as a 'Christocracy' rather than a democracy. Christ is head of the spiritual body which means that He controls the Church. During a business session, the concept that each member has a right to vote his own mind should not prevail. Actually, the business of the Church is properly transacted only when members express the mind and

Read all of the topic The Organization of the Church.

Now match types of church authority with denominations by placing the correct letter in each blank.

- a. Episcopal
- b. Presbyterian
- c. Roman Catholic
- d. Democratic

- ___ 1. Teaching and ruling elders
- ___ 2. Rule of the people
- ___ 3. Superior clergy and inferior clergy
- ___ 4. Hierarchical system with a pope

(b-1, d-2, a-3, c-4)

will of Christ who is the head of the Church. The rule of Christ over the inner-spiritual body must be expressed visibly through the organized Church. This is possible when each member is controlled by God's Spirit rather than his own mind or spirit.

The organized visible Church functions properly only when it is aware of its internal spiritual nature as people in relation to Christ. The organized Church encounters problems when its spiritual foundation is neglected. The visible Church lacks power and effectiveness when it comes to depend on its organizational and human strength rather than its spiritual power from the indwelling Spirit. The organized Church goes astray when it looks to its own wisdom and depends on the thinking of its leaders rather than seeking the mind of Christ who is the head of the body.

The Functions of the Church

Worship

The functions of the Church must also be interpreted in the light of its internal spiritual nature. Since the basic nature of the Church is its relationship to God in Christ, the primary function of the Church is to give attention to its spiritual relationship. Worship has always been essential to maintaining a right relationship with God. Worship involves a recognition of the 'worth-ship of God' by sinful man who is invited to approach God. Only when sinful man recognizes that he lives by grace is he prepared to live by faith and dependence on God. As a sinner, he has done nothing by which to make himself worthy of acceptance by His Creator. On the basis of grace, he has been forgiven and boldly approaches the throne of grace. God's grace expressed in His gift of love on the cross motivates man to be controlled by God who loved him and gave His Son for him. He recognizes that his life is not his own because it has been bought with a price. Proper worship is basic to Christian service.

Service

The relation of service and worship.—Christian service is an expression of genuine worship. In worship, the Christian acknowledges what God has done for him in Christ. He responds by offering his life to God as a gift. His life is given in terms of service by which man yields to do the will and work of God. Man's service is, therefore, a part of his worship.

The servant role of the Church identifies it with the remnant of Israel. Isaiah 42, 49, 50, and

The Church should be governed by Christ who is _____ of the spiritual body and whose _____ and _____ are expressed by the members. (Compare your answer with the text.)

The primary function of the Church is to give attention to its relationship to _____ in _____.

An essential part of maintaining a right relationship with God is _____.

(God, Christ, worship)

Draw lines between words and phrases to indicate the relationship of worship and service.

Worship One responds by offering his life to God.

Service One acknowledges what God has done for him.

(Worship—One acknowledges, etc., Service—One responds, etc.)

52:13-53:12 speak of Israel as Yahweh's servant. The climax of the Servant Songs comes in Isaiah 53 when the servant is spoken of as an individual. Perhaps the individual servant was originally the corporate personality of Israel, but its highest application is Christ. Christ who is head of the Church earned that position as the Suffering Servant. After His disciples had confessed Him as the Christ, He revealed to them that they were the Church which is His body and would be required to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him (cf. Matt. 16:13-25). As the Church, His disciples also must share in His suffering, for the Church is a servant like its Master.

The nature of service.— The nature of the service of the Church is the same as that discussed in a previous lesson concerning the service of Christians. The functional or local Church is the agency of the Kingdom and its Gospel. The Gospel is the Good News that the Kingdom of God has arrived and men must enter it through repentance and regeneration by faith. Christ is coming again to bring the Kingdom to its consummation, but while He carries the task of the disciples is to preach the Gospel in all the world. All those who do not enter the Kingdom by faith before the return of Christ will be excluded from it forever.

In addition to announcing the Good News, the Church is responsible for baptizing those who respond by faith and teaching them to observe all things Christ has commanded. In addition to being a worshipping community, the functional Church is also a witnessing and teaching community.

The Church's inner relation to Christ requires that it express its internal nature in external deeds. The nature of Christ can be expressed best as love. In fact, the Bible states that God is love. His love was manifested impressively in the act of giving His Son to meet the needs of sinful man (cf. 1 John 3:16; 4:7-11). Since God who dwells in the Church is love, the inner nature of the Church is characterized by love. Divine love is not so much a feeling of affection as it is a concern for the needy which must be expressed in action. Unexpressed love is imperfect (cf. 1 John 4:12). The inner nature of the Church is perfected (made complete) only when its nature is expressed in actions of love through the functional organization.

What is the task of the Church while it awaits Christ's return? _____

(To preach the Gospel in all the world)

In addition to worship, other services the Church must render are:

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Another service of the Church is to express the _____ of _____ which indwells it.
(Love, God)

The Officers of the Church

Introduction

A theology of the ministry is difficult for several reasons. First, the special ministry was a developing office in the New Testament and is not well-defined. The early Church was functional rather than organizational; therefore, little attention was given to defining the organization of the Church. The emphasis of the early Christians was on the return of Christ rather than on the building of an earthly institution.

Second, New Testament writings give little description of the structure and officers of the Church. Church organization was slow in developing because the early Christians were not separated from the organization of Judaism at first. Only as they were forced from the synagogues did they find the necessity of developing their own organization. From the beginning, they had been a body in fellowship, but as that fellowship grew and expanded the problems became more complicated and some type of organized leadership was demanded.

Third, a variety of ministers is set forth in the New Testament, yet their responsibilities and functions are not clearly defined. Their work is often overlapping. Church organizations were small, and each member was urgently needed to contribute his ability for the benefit of all. The larger and more complex organizations today complicate the matter of involving each member in a specific ministry.

Fourth, different patterns of ministry emerged at different places and at different times in the early Church. Recent writers have reminded us that the episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational patterns can be supported from the New Testament Scriptures. Elders are mentioned in New Testament books which were written to Jewish congregations, but bishops were the indicated leaders in Gentile churches. Some denominations have considered bishops, elders or priests, and pastors to be three designations for one office. The Roman Catholic Church has set forth three levels of ministry: bishops, elders or priests, and deacons. The Catholic Church attempts to relate the bishops to the Apostles as successors, but many Protestant Churches believe that the Apostles had a unique ministry and are without successors.

The meaning of ministry

Two important teachings of Jesus concerning ministry are sending and serving. The former is represented by the word *apostolos* (apostle) and the latter by the word *diakonos* (deacon). Jesus taught

A theology of the ministry is difficult because the special ministry was a developing _____ and is not well-defined in the N _____ T _____.

(office, New Testament)

Another reason a theology of the ministry is difficult is that New Testament writings give little description of the structure and officers of the _____.

(Church)

Another difficulty is that a variety of _____ is set forth in the New Testament.

(ministers)

The fact that different patterns of ministry emerged at different places and at different times in the early Church is another reason a theology of the _____ is difficult.

(ministry)

With reference to ministry, Jesus emphasized _____ and _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

that greatness in the Kingdom depended upon service and even He, the Son of Man, came not to be served but to serve and to give His life for many (Mark 10:43-45). Jesus stated that if anyone served Him, he must follow Him and he would be honoured by the Father (John 12:26). Jesus was sent by the Father to serve. He said that as the Father had sent Him, even so He would send forth His disciples (John 20:21).

Jesus sent forth the Twelve (Matt. 10:5, 10; Mark 3:14, etc.), and the Seventy (Luke 10:1). Whoever received the ones who were sent received the One who sent them (Matt. 10:40). Those who are sent are chosen by God for their mission, and they bear the authority of Him who sends them forth.

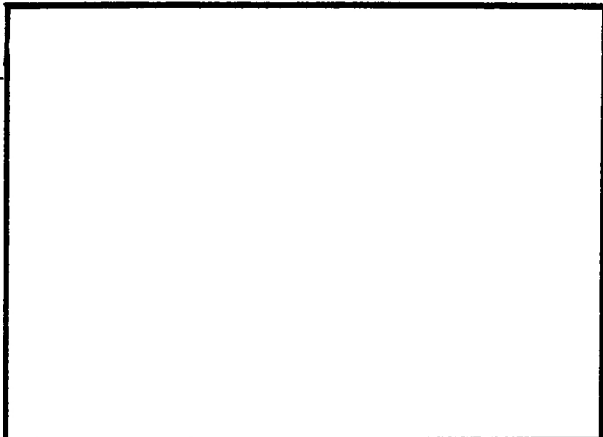
The attitude has arisen in the Church that great honour accompanies the offices of pastor and deacon. To be ordained to these offices is not a ritual of honour but a preparation for service. The word 'minister' means 'servant' as does the word 'deacon'. The pastor fills the role of a 'sheep herder' (shepherd), not that of a diplomat or political official. Functioning as a minister means to decrease through giving rather than to increase in position by receiving. To be a minister is not to hold an office of dignity, for Satan himself has ministers which deceitfully appear as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15).

Ministry in the sense of service is the most appropriate term to describe Jesus' role as the Servant-Messiah. Ministry is not dishonourable nor is it to be considered unpleasant in the sense of doing the distasteful tasks of the household slave. The ministering role of Jesus did involve humiliation, scorn, and death. The life of Jesus is best characterized by the quality of loving service.

Archon denotes leaders in the sense of precedence or ruling. But it is not used in the New Testament to refer to church leadership. *Timae* denotes dignity and *telos* defines power of office, but they are not used with reference to church leadership. The Old Testament concept of ministry attached superiority of position to the office, but the words used to translate ministry in the Septuagint were not commonly used by New Testament writers to refer to ministry in the Church. The New Testament appears to hold to a common priesthood with no distinction between clergy and laity. Although the functions of ministry vary, there is to be no attitude of superiority or recognition of positions with special rights and powers.

The variety of ministries

Various ministries are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, Romans 12:6-8, and Ephesians 4:11. These Scriptures emphasize that the gift of grace is bestowed on



Use these words in the blanks in the following statement.

<i>giving</i>	<i>decrease</i>
<i>receiving</i>	<i>increase</i>

Functioning as a minister means to _____ through _____ rather than to _____ in position by _____.

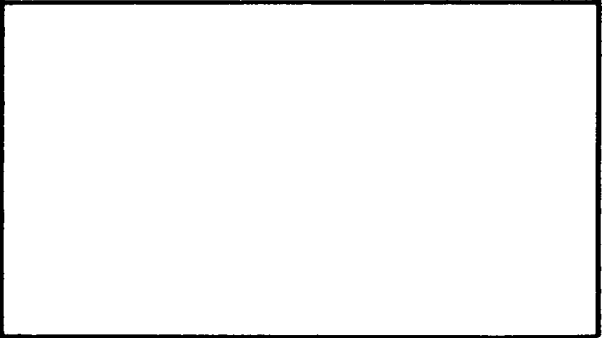
(*decrease, giving, increase, receiving*)

Jesus' life is best characterized by the quality of loving _____.

(*service*)

The New Testament appears to hold to a common priesthood with no distinction between _____ and _____.

(*clergy, laity*)



every church member; therefore, everyone is called to serve (minister).

Frequently, prophets were referred to along with the Apostles. The two terms are found in Matthew's, Luke's, and Paul's writings, but not in John's. The Church did not choose prophets just as it did not choose apostles. It recognized them and either approved or rejected them. The role of prophet as preacher has been assumed by contemporary pastors, but this function was not limited to one person for each congregation in the New Testament.

Teaching was a very important function in the New Testament Church. Paul warned the Corinthians of the seriousness of fulfilling this function. Teachers are listed third in 1 Corinthians 12:28, but the teacher and pastor are considered as one in Ephesians 4:11. The ability to teach is listed among the qualifications of the bishop in 1 Timothy 3:2.

The work of evangelism is mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. Timothy was exhorted to do the work of an evangelist. Other ministries listed are: helpers or assistants, miracle-workers, healers, administrators or governors, ecstatic speakers, exhorters, those who give, and those who show mercy.

In the Pastoral Epistles, Timothy seems to have combined in himself several of the gifts of ministry. With the development of hierarchy, only the bishop and deacons exercised the ministries. The New Testament does not prohibit nor deny the possibility of one person possessing several gifts for ministering, but it does emphasize that one person does not possess all the gifts.

Pastors

The role of the Apostles.—The Apostles were the early leaders in the Church but it is questionable whether pastors or bishops can be established as their successors. The Apostles had the special 'eyewitness' qualification which could not be passed on. The writings which became the New Testament are the documentary accounts of the experiences of these eyewitnesses and of those closely associated with them. With the passing of the apostolic generation, the New Testament writings became the accepted truth concerning Jesus Christ.

After Pentecost, the word 'apostle' appears to have had a broader application. Paul claimed the title for himself and spoke of James, the Lord's brother, Andronicus, and Junias as apostles. The primary task of the larger group of apostles was to go forth with the message of Christ.

The Church did not choose _____ and _____ . It recognized them and either _____ or _____ them.

(apostles, prophets, accepted, rejected)

Some types of ministries which Paul listed are:

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The modern-day pastor does not have the special advantage that the Apostles had in being _____.

(eyewitnesses)

The role of elders.—The use of the term 'elders' reveals the influence of the Synagogue and the Sanhedrin on the Church. The early Christians continued to participate in synagogue and temple services for 25 years after the death of Christ (cf. Acts 21:20-27). When Christians were forced to separate from Judaism, the organization in the churches which developed was greatly influenced by the Jewish organization. Elders were selected as leaders on the local level. Details are lacking as to how this took place and concerning the nature of the elders' leadership. Elders probably presided in the Christian assembly. Some may have read the Scripture while others led in prayer and delivered the hortatory discourse. During the early stages of the Church, perhaps mature men (elders) were looked to for leadership in the services. In following the pattern of the Jewish communities which had their council of elders or presbyteries, perhaps the Church selected from among the elders a presiding officer for the services.

Paul did not use the term 'elder' in his writings except in the Pastoral Epistles. With the exceptions of Acts 14:23 and 20:17 and the Pastoral Epistles, the term is used only with reference to the Church at Jerusalem.

The role of bishops.—In the Greek culture, bishop was a technical name for civil and religious officials. Stoic philosophers used the term to describe their mission as heralds of the gods. The term referred to overseers, directors, and supervisors of provisions, buildings, and cult associations. In the Septuagint, the term is used for God and in a number of instances for ordinary overseers; however, it was never used for ministers in religion. The word was used with reference to the inspectors set over the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes to carry out his religious policies.

Opinion is divided as to whether the term was used in Acts 20:28 and Philippians 1:1 in a technical sense or not. Peter exhorted the elders to "feed the flock of God" and to "take the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ... neither as being over God's heritage, but as being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:1-3). The most important occurrences of the term are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 where qualifications of bishops are discussed. The expression, "office of a bishop," (1 Tim. 3:1) leaves no doubt as to whether reference is made to an official group. Titus 1:5 and 7 identify elders and bishops as referring to the same person. The same is true in Acts 20:17 and 28. Elders of the Church of Ephesus met Paul at Miletus. They are called overseers (bishops) of the flock and they are to feed the flock (a pastoral duty). Many denominations find Biblical grounds for identifying the roles of bishop, elder, and pastor.

Organization in the Early Church was greatly influenced by the _____ organization.

(Jewish)

Bishop, elder, and pastor may refer to the same office, as supported by:

1. Acts 20:17. Paul spoke to the _____ of the Church of Ephesus.
2. Acts 20:28. Elders were called _____ (bishops) who fed the flock of God (work of pastor).
3. Titus 1:5, 7. _____ and _____ are referred to as the same person.

(elders, overseers, elder, bishop)

The authority of the leader. — The role of the elder in the life of the Jewish community and the overseer in the Greek community allowed considerable authority on the part of the person who served in these capacities. The Apostles exercised considerable authority over new churches being established, but indications in Corinth are that Paul's authority was questioned. It appears that in the New Testament the leader had as much authority as the congregation gave to him, but he remained subject to the group. His position was functional rather than authoritative.

The concept of the priesthood of believers results in the ministerial responsibility of every member. This removes the distinction between the bishop and the laity. Each member is called of God to service. A bishop has the responsibility to minister as leader of the group because of God's call. He is part of the body of Christ and is not elevated to a new level of authority. He is a responsible overseer serving the spiritual needs of the body of Christ.

The New Testament sets forth the anointing by the Spirit of all believers. This anointing qualified them as prophets and ministers. Since every member is born of the Spirit and the Spirit abides in the 'temple of God', each member can know the will of God through the Spirit. The authority of God is spoken through the corporate body of Christ and not just through the individual bishop. 'Christocracy' rather than hierarchy seems to be the more consistent method of determining the voice of God as spoken by the Spirit through the corporate body.

The work of bishops and elders is not described in the New Testament. The moral and spiritual requirements for bishops are set forth in Titus 1:7ff and 1 Timothy 3:2ff. Apparently bishops and elders were responsible for leading in the spiritual development of the Church. They are required to have the ability to teach. Paul specifically connects teaching with pastoral work (Eph. 4:11). The responsibility of the pastor is to teach and train the members of the Church for ministering.

Deacons

Little controversy has waged over the office of deacon. Paul described deacons as fellow-workers and assistants in evangelizing. Timothy is referred to as a deacon in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 and 1 Timothy 4:6. Paul used the term to describe his own ministry many times (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6, etc.).

In Philippians 1:1, the noun has become the title of particular officials. The list of qualifications for deacons is given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. According to

In the New Testament Church, a leader had as much authority as the _____ gave him, but he remained subject to the _____. We can say his position was _____ rather than _____.

(congregation, group, functional, authoritative)

The concept of the priesthood of believers removes the distinction between the _____ and the _____.

(bishop, laity)

The major responsibility of the pastor is to _____ and train the members of the Church for _____.

(teach, ministering)

Acts 6, deacons were required to have spiritual qualifications, and Stephen and Philip became preachers and evangelists.

The traditional view is that the office of deacons originated in Acts 6. Whether this office was occupied by women or not is a controversial question. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is called a servant or deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea.

The Ordinances

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven ordinances which are called sacraments or signs. Sacrament comes from a Latin word which means 'mystery', 'shut up', or 'concealed'. Catholic doctrine states that the sacrament or material sign causes what it signifies. To live the new life of grace, man is given saving grace through the sacrament of baptism. The sacrament of penance restores grace when it is lost by mortal sin. The sacrament of confirmation bestows the new birth of the Spirit. In ordination and marriage, sacraments infuse grace to help in every circumstance. Through the Mass or Eucharist, participants gain grace for daily living. The sacrament of extreme unction is given to the sick who are in grave danger of death to supply them with sufficient grace for the critical experience. The eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, and feet of the sick man are anointed with olive oil and blessed by the bishop. The sacrament confers grace, remits sins, and alleviates the suffering of the sick. The sacrament of holy orders prepares a person for a ministry of dispensing sacramental grace.

Most Protestant churches find only two rituals in the New Testament which were commanded by Jesus: the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples and to baptize them in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. At the conclusion of the Last Supper, He instituted a memorial supper which He commanded His disciples to observe in remembrance of Him.

Baptism

Judaism baptized Gentile proselytes in a ritual of purification. After a proselyte was circumcised, he offered sacrifices, heard the Commandments, pledged himself to obey them, and then plunged himself into a pool of water. The Qumran community also practised baptismal purification rituals. Its practices differed from those of John the Baptist in that the person baptized himself.

Catholic doctrine states that the sacrament is a material sign which _____ what it _____.

(causes, signifies)

The two rituals found in the New Testament which most Protestant churches believe were commanded by Jesus are: the _____ and _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

John the Baptist preached repentance in preparing for the arrival of the Kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 3:1ff.). The prophets informed Israel that she had been forsaken by the Lord's presence because of her sins. In order for the Lord to return to Israel, there must be repentance. Matthew does not explain the purpose of baptism but notes that those who were baptized of John in the Jordan were confessing their sins (Matt. 3:6). Even the Pharisees who claimed to keep the Law came to be baptized by John. John refused to baptize them until they brought forth fruits which revealed repentance. Apparently John did not think that baptism would remove their sins, but the fact that the Pharisees and Sadducees joined other people in being baptized indicates that the ritual was an identification with the Kingdom movement. It was the external sign of those who had been inwardly cleansed of their sins in preparation for God's presence in His Kingdom.

Baptism is the _____ sign of _____ cleansing of sin in preparation for God's presence in His _____.

(external, internal, Kingdom)

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples in all the world. The two participles—baptizing and teaching—are related to the command to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). In the making of disciples, the believers were to be baptized and taught. Baptism is profession by an external symbol of the new relationship to Christ established in faith. Paul described baptism as a burial of the old life and a resurrection from the watery grave to a new way of life (Rom. 6:4-6). Paul also described it as a ritual of purification at the time of regeneration (Titus 3:5). Baptism does not bestow saving grace, but it is an expression of faith in Christ. A person cannot be saved by simply undergoing baptism no more than the Pharisees could be prepared for the Kingdom by being baptized without repenting. Baptism is an important expression of one's commitment and identification with Jesus Christ. It is the proper act of the new Christian who expresses his internal faith by an external ritual.

Profession of the new relationship to Christ established in faith is symbolized by _____.

(baptism)

Few would deny that the New Testament mode of baptism was immersion. The word 'baptize' means 'to put under water'. Paul's description of baptism as a burial can point only to immersion.

'To baptize' means 'to _____'. Paul described baptism as _____'. (Compare your answers with the text.)

There is no evidence in the New Testament that anyone was baptized other than those who repented and received Christ. The practice of infant baptism arose several centuries after New Testament times. The practice can in no way be justified by New Testament teachings or apostolic practices. The practice is contradictory to the doctrine of justification by faith. Believers' baptism means that those who have been justified by faith are baptized to symbolize their new relationship with the resurrected Christ.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper was inaugurated at the conclusion of the Passover meal and has replaced it in the Christian Church. The Passover signified the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. This deliverance was the great act of the birth of the nation. Israel observed it annually as a memorial to the fact that her existence as a nation was not accomplished through her own efforts but was by a mighty act of God. Israel owed her existence to God's deliverance.

At the conclusion of the Passover meal, Jesus used a cup of wine and a loaf of bread to symbolize his shed blood and broken body. After giving it to His disciples, He instructed them to observe it in remembrance of Him—hence a memorial ordinance. The eating of bread symbolizes participation in the body of Christ. The cup symbolizes the blood of the New Covenant in which God is merciful and forgives the sins of His people. The shed blood of Jesus makes possible the remission of sins. Paul added another dimension to the Lord's Supper. He stated that the one loaf symbolizes the unity of the fellowship and the participation of the believer with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16f.). He also indicated that the eating of the bread and drinking from the cup proclaims the Lord's death and expresses faith in His return (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's Supper means to the Christian Church that its life and existence come from Christ who died, who was raised from the dead, and who will return. Apart from the crucified and resurrected Lord, the Church has no meaning or hope.

The meaning of the Lord's Supper is that it is a symbolical participation in the _____ of _____ and in the _____ Covenant.

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember His _____ as the means of man's redemption and to proclaim hope in His _____.

(body, Christ, New, death, return)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Why is the word 'church' not necessarily the best term to describe God's people? _____

2. What is the meaning of fellowship? _____

3. How is one made a part of the Church? _____
4. Give two teachings concerning the Church as the body of Christ. _____

5. What concept is conveyed by the Church as the body of Christ? _____

6. What is the basic meaning of *ekklesia*? _____

7. What is the relation of the inner reality to the external expression of the Church? _____

8. Briefly describe three types of church authority. _____

9. How should the Church as the body of Christ be governed? _____

10. Why is worship an important function of the Church? _____

11. How are Christian worship and service related? _____

12. In addition to worship, what three types of service must the Church render? _____

13. List four reasons a theology of ministry is difficult. _____

14. What did Jesus emphasize concerning ministry? _____
15. Name the types of ministry listed in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, and Ephesians 4:11. _____

16. How did the role of the Apostles differ from that of the modern-day pastor? _____

17. Support with Scripture the position that bishop, elder, and pastor refer to the same office.

18. How much authority did the leader have in the New Testament Church? _____

19. What is the major responsibility of the pastor? _____

20. According to the Catholic Church, what is the purpose of sacraments? _____

21. What is the purpose of baptism? _____

22. Give two reasons baptism is known to be by immersion. _____

23. What is the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 350-373 in Christian Doctrine by Shirley C. Guthrie.
2. What is the twofold purpose of the Church's coming together? (p. 353)
3. What are the weaknesses of Guthrie's discussion of the subject "God creates the Church"?
4. Why does Guthrie state, "To be a Christian is by definition to belong to the Church"?
5. What is meant by the statement "The Church is holy"?
6. At what points do you agree and disagree with Guthrie's discussion of "a united, Catholic people"?
7. How does Guthrie define the apostolic nature of the Church?
8. Is it more important to minister to the souls or bodies of people?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Do the assignment for Level 2.
2. Read pages 268-280 in The Gospel of Redemption by W. T. Conner.
3. How does Conner define the nature of the Church?
4. What is the function of the Church as the body of Christ?
5. Why is worship the most important function of the Church?

Seminar Discussion

1. Give a definition of the Church.
2. Why is fellowship basic to the inner nature of the Church?
3. How is the inner life of the Church expressed through its organization?
4. Describe the government and authority of the Church.
5. Describe the functions of New Testament leaders and their authority.
6. What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper and baptism?

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1

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2

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3

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5

The doctrine of stewardship is often neglected. This book offers a fresh emphasis on stewardship. It approaches the study of this doctrine from its biblical base. The basic question it seeks to answer is: What does the Bible say about it? The author stresses God's purpose for possessions, the Father's plan for reclaiming His world, and the grace of Christian giving. Practical suggestions are included for promoting stewardship in local churches.

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