

HEBREWS

Lesson 3: The Role of the Church

Hebrews 10:19-25 and Ephesians 4:1-14

In this lesson, we will be examining the Church, its function and purpose, and our responsibilities within it. As we consider our local church, wherever it may be, we must always recognize our individual responsibilities within the body. To become a Christian and then abandon our roles within the local church does not magnify nor glorify Christ; and it does not complete the work of the kingdom that we have been charged to accomplish.

As part of this study, we will look at the things that we should do as a church, the things that we should do as individuals within the church, the message of the church, the duty of the church, the fellowship of the church, discipline within the church, the commission of the church, and the power of the church. Using these findings, we can then objectively evaluate if the local body that we are called to be a part of is faithfully and accurately fulfilling its role.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25, Ephesians 4:1-14, and the other passages noted below; and respond to the following:

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Can you list each thing that we are to do as a church? (I noted four distinct things.)
2. In Ephesians 4:1-6, how are we commanded to live and relate to one another within the church body? List some specific examples cited in these verses. Do we do this within the church today?
3. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul tells us that Christ appoints pastors, teachers, and evangelists. For what purpose?
4. In Ephesians 4:13-14, we are led by our pastors, teachers and evangelists to attain unity in faith and grow in the knowledge of God. If we are faithful in doing this, what do these verses tell us will happen as a result?
5. Can we then infer from Ephesians 4:11-14 that one of our primary individual responsibilities (as led by teachers, pastors and evangelists) is to become mature, deep-rooted, Christians who do works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up? Is it also reasonable for us to then expect these gifted ones within the church to fulfill that role, as we are commanded to fill ours? Are you becoming the type of person that these verses call us to be?
6. Read Matthew 18:15-20. Is this process followed within your local body? Is this still something that we should do today, or was it more so addressing the cultural issues in the Early Church? Is there any benefit associated with following this process?

7. Read Acts 2:38-47. In this passage, you will find the message of the church, the duty of the church, and the fellowship of the church. List what they are, and within which passage you found each of them.
 - a. The Message of the Church
 - b. The Duty of the Church
 - c. The Fellowship of the Church
8. Perhaps some of the most well-known verses about the church and our individual responsibilities within the kingdom are the verses known as the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20. There are three things that the church is commanded to do. What are they? Is your local church doing all three? Are you?
9. Local churches often get themselves into serious dilemmas when they forget the real source of their power. Christ tells us in his letters to the churches contained with the book of Revelation that he hates a lukewarm church, and that the church should return to its first love. In Acts 1:4-8, Christ personally gives the church instruction about the power of the church; and in Acts 2:17-21 we are witnesses to it. Does the church draw its power from the Pastor, its leadership team, its membership size, or the size of its budget? Of course not! The church's sole source of power is the Holy Spirit, built on the foundation of Christ's death and resurrection. Led by the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to accomplish the work of the kingdom and to worship God as we await the day when our Savior Jesus the Christ returns for us. Read the above passages in Acts, and write down some specific observations about Christ's words regarding the Holy Spirit and the role of the Holy Spirit within the church. Do you see the Holy Spirit at work in your local church today? Is he at work in your life today? If not, why not?

Christ told his disciples that salt that has lost its savor is good for nothing, and that no one can see a light hidden under a bushel basket. I submit to you that this is true of the church as well. It is only a reflection of the members who form the body of it. If we have lost our drive to spread God's word, if we have grown weary of well-doing, if we have relegated our role to someone else, then God is not pleased with us, and the church to which he called us will suffer as a result.

Today, more than ever, we are closer to Christ's second coming. We can see the signs all around us: the fields are ripe for harvest and the needs of the lost in the communities that surround our local churches are overwhelming. Christ is calling all of us to redouble our efforts, reaching out with love to meet the needs around us, to grow in fellowship and spiritual maturity, and to run the race that is set before us.

Let us pray this week for revival and a renewed desire to once again be on fire for the Lord, so that our light and our church's light will shine brightly. As Christian songwriter Bill Maxwell so aptly put it: "Light the fire in my heart again!"

Have a great week everyone, and may God richly bless you as you continue to study with us.

In Christ,

Wes