

Lesson 2

Christian Growth and Local Church Life

The Christian life entered through the "new birth" is just that - a life. A new Christian is compared to a "baby" (see I Peter 2:2), and is commanded to grow in grace (II Peter 3:18), to maturity. God has ordained the local church be the place where Christians learn to live the Christian life (I Timothy 3:15). Christian growth activities connected with the local church are baptism, church membership and attendance, the Lord's Supper and stewardship.

I. Biblical Baptism

Various men and religious groups have a multitude of conflicting ideas about the meaning, importance, and way of baptism. It should not be important to the believer *what men believe*, but rather *what the Bible says*. God's Word certainly is an infinitely better authority than men's ideas, no matter how good and sincere the men.

A. What is baptism in the Bible?

1. It is the believer's identification with Jesus Christ - a public testimony that the Christian has accepted Christ as his Saviour (Colossians 2:12).
2. It is a picture of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It symbolizes what happened to me *when I was saved --I died to sin (its guilt, power, and penalty) and was raised to new life in Christ* (Romans 6:3-6).

B. Now that I have been saved, why should I be baptized?

1. Because of my example, who is _____ (Matthew 3:16).
2. Because _____ commanded that believers be baptized (Matthew 28:19,20).
3. Because it was the normal practice of the churches in the New Testament (Acts 2:41).

C. Can an infant meet the Bible prerequisite for baptism? (Acts 2:41; 8:36,37).

D. That baptism does not save is shown by the following.

1. According to Matthew 3: 13-16, did Jesus need to be saved or have His sins forgiven? _____ !
2. According to Luke 7:37-50, was this woman baptized? _____ !
3. According to Luke 23:39-43, was this man baptized? _____ !

E. How should I be baptized?

1. The word for baptism used in the original Greek language of the New Testament means to *dip* or *immerse*.
2. As when Jesus' baptism was recorded (Matthew 3: 16, "...went **up...out of** the water...").
3. As when New Testament believers' baptisms were recorded (Acts 8:38, "...they went down both *into the water*...").
4. In the only way that adequately pictures Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to save me (Romans 6:4, "...we are **buried** with Him by baptism...").

F. Is it proper to wait for a period of time after I am saved before I decide to be baptized? (Acts 2:41; 16:31-33) _____ !

G. Therefore, if I have been saved and I am going to be obedient to my Saviour and His Word, what should I do? _____

II. Church Membership

- A. Who may join a church? There are two things that must come before a person is added to a church.
1. _____ (Acts 2:41)
 2. _____ (Acts 2:41)
 3. The _____ adds to the Church those that are being saved (Acts 2:47).
- B. Why should one join a church?
1. The Bible teaches it. “Not forsaking the _____” (Hebrews 10:25).
 2. Believers in New Testament times were automatically added to the _____ (Acts 2:47).
 3. It provides growth and fellowship.
 - a. They continued in the apostles’ _____ and _____ (Acts 2:42).
 - b. Pastors given for the _____ of saints, for the _____ of the _____, for the _____ of the body (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- C. The Mission of the Church (Matthew 28:19-20)
1. To evangelize the lost
 2. To immerse believers
 3. To teach converts
- D. Ministry of the Church
1. To edify its members (Ephesians 4:16)
 2. To educate in Biblical doctrine (II Timothy 2:2)
 3. To fellowship in attendance (Acts 2:42)
 4. To pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17)

III. The Lord’s Supper

This is the only other ordinance other than baptism that is performed by the local church.

- A. Its Significance
1. It is a table of remembrance. “This do in _____ of me” (I Corinthians 11:24).
 2. It is a table of obedience. “This _____ as oft as ye drink it” (I Corinthians 11:25).
 3. It is an act of examination. “But let a man _____” (I Corinthians 11:28).
- B. Who should partake?
1. What took place in verse Acts 2:41 before they broke bread in verse 42? _____
 2. Believers must be spiritual (I Corinthians 11:29).
- C. Its Example
1. “Jesus took _____ and blessed it” (Matthew 26:26).
 2. “He took the _____ and gave thanks” (Matthew 26:27).
 3. The disciples came together in the early church to _____ (Acts 20:6).
- D. How often should one observe it? *Only as often as the local church sees fit to observe it* (I Corinthians 11:26).
- The bread is symbolic of His broken body, broken for us in His death. The cup symbolizes His shed blood through which we have redemption and cleansing.*
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Christian Living Series

IV. Stewardship

It takes money to operate the church and its programs. God has a plan for financing His program. Giving is a Christian grace and helps one to mature spiritually.

A. God's pattern for giving is tithing.

1. Personal "Let _____ lay by him in store" (I Corinthians 16:2).
2. Periodic "Upon the _____ of the _____" (I Corinthians 16:2).
3. Proportional "As God hath _____ him" (I Corinthians 16:2).

B. God's Plan for Giving

In the Old Testament, the Jew began by giving one-tenth of his increase to the Lord. To hold this back was to rob God (Malachi 3:8). The New Testament plan goes beyond the one-tenth for here we are told to give.

1. _____ (II Corinthians 9:7)
2. _____ (II Corinthians 8:12)

C. God's Pre-requisite

1. They first gave _____ (II Corinthians 8:5).
2. There be first a _____ (II Corinthians 8:12).

D. Notice what God has said throughout the Bible about giving.

Abraham started it Genesis 14:20
Jacob continued it Genesis 28:22
Moses incorporated it Leviticus 27:30
Nehemiah restored it Nehemiah 13:11,12
Malachi commanded it Malachi 3:8-10
Jesus commended it Matthew 23:23
Paul commended it I Corinthians 16:1,2
God ordained it I Corinthians 9:13
Paul explained it I Corinthians 16:2; Hebrews 7:8

Remember your Scripture – Malachi 3:8-10
