

LESSON 6 What the Church Does for Itself

In the last lesson we saw how the church is like a body. We saw that people can be different from each other and still have unity. We finished the lesson by considering what we can do for others.

This lesson carries on the same theme. We have a duty to other believers. If we do not share with others, or strengthen others, we are hurting them. We can rob them of the help they need. This lesson should help you to do your part in the body of Christ.

This lesson is personal. It is for you to apply. You must find and do your duty. You might learn a great deal about the church. But it does not profit you or others if you do not apply what you learn. Ask God to help you do this.

The Plan

- A. The Sharing Church
- B. The Strengthening Church
- C. The Sanctifying Church

The Goals

1. Discuss how you can practice biblical fellowship and edification.
2. Define *sanctification* and explain our responsibility in the sanctification process.

A. THE SHARING CHURCH

Goal 1. Discuss how you can practice biblical fellowship and edification.

The first Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). The word *fellowship* means “friendship, helping, and sharing.” This sharing is deep and personal.


When Paul was in prison, he did not have this fellowship. In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul talks much about fellowship and partnership. He speaks of partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:5), fellowship with the Spirit (2:1), fellowship in suffering (3:10), sharing in troubles (4:14), and sharing in giving (4:15).

Application

1 Look over this discussion of fellowship. List the ways that the early Christians had fellowship.

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2 Make another list. This time list ways that you can help others through fellowship. Be specific. Use the names of those Christians who need help. Write your list in your notebook.



B. THE STRENGTHENING CHURCH

The terms *fellowship* and *edify* are related. The first term stresses the idea of “being together.” The second word means “to build or to strengthen.” Believers are not only to be together; they are also to help each other.

Although believers are responsible to build themselves up in faith (Jude 20), they must also build up others. When Christians meet, each must contribute something of help (See 1 Corinthians 14:26.). This process of building up is never finished. Peter warned, “Be on your guard. . . But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:17–18).

Speaking of the church, Paul said “each one should be careful how he builds” (1 Corinthians 3:10). Sometimes Christians try to build the church by pride or ambition, but each person’s work will be tested.

So how can believers help to build up the church? The Bible suggests some answers. One way is to “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19). Another way is to encourage and love one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Ephesians 4:16). Perhaps the best way is to reflect Christ, “being rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith” (Colossians 2:7).

Application

3 Study Ephesians 4:11–16 and answer the following questions:

a) What contrast does Paul make in verse 13?

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b) Why does Christ give the gifts (v. 11) to the church?

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4 Ask God what you can do to build up the church. Let us promise to help the church.



C. THE SANCTIFYING CHURCH

Goal 2. Define *sanctification* and explain our responsibility in the sanctification process.

The word *sanctify* is related to the word *saint*. It means “to be set apart for God.” Those who have been sanctified have been set apart for God. They are to be holy just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). The church is called a “holy temple” (Ephesians 2:21), and the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the church (1 John 2:20).

In one sense, the church is perfect in Christ. In another sense, it is moving to perfection. Sanctification is not a single experience nor a ceremony. It is Christ preparing the church. As the letter to the church at Ephesus says:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25–27)

Paul advises that we should do all we can to make ourselves pure or clean: “Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

On the other hand, it is God who purifies us. If we judge ourselves we will not be condemned by the Lord. This means that if we examine our lives and correct sinful actions, God will not condemn us for those actions. (See 1 Corinthians 11:31–32.)

Application

5 Choose the best answer of each two given in parentheses and write it in the blank.

a) Sanctification is a
(ceremony) (continuing process)

b) Who purifies believers?
(only the Lord) (both the believer and the Lord)



Hebrews 12:5–11 tells us that God’s correction should be an encouragement. It teaches us to respect God our Father (v. 9), and it is for our growth in holiness (v. 10). Therefore, we should submit to God’s correction.

If our brothers or sisters in Christ err, we should try to help them. We should not talk about them to others, but speak to them personally, and treat them as God treats us.

Sometimes unbelievers will not accept Christ because they see sin in the church. This should not be! Paul applied Christ’s instruction on this matter to the church at Corinth. (See 1 Corinthians 5:6–8, 13.) Every believer must do his or her part to keep the church free from sin.

Application

6 Choose the best answer of each two given in parentheses and write it in the blank.

a) Fellowship means
(sharing) (to make holy)

b) Edify means
(to build up) (to make holy)

c) The church is being prepared as a bride for
(its own beauty) (Christ)

d) If a believer sins, you have the responsibility to
(tell others about it) (talk to him or her alone)

7 Look back over this lesson. Notice your answers to questions 2 and 4. Now is the time to use your gifts for the church. Remember that Christ loved the church. Ask God to give you that same love for the body of Christ. Then it will be easy to share, to build up, and to help others be sanctified.



Check Your Answers

- 7** After you have done this, you are ready for the next lesson.
- 1** Your list may be different from mine but I listed:
in prayer
in meals
in travel
in helping
in sharing during trouble
- 6** **a)** sharing.
b) to build up.
c) Christ.
d) talk to him alone.
- 2** Your own answer.
- 5** **a)** a continuing process.
b) Both the believer and the Lord.
- 3** **a)** A contrast between babies and mature people.
b) To help it grow.
- 4** Your prayer.