

100 BIBLE LESSONS

Give these lessons to people you visit, youth groups, hospital patients, church visitors and new members. Use them in Sunday School, bus ministry, jail services, nursing homes, Christian schools, small discussion groups and many other places. God's Word will answer your questions and help solve your problems.

LESSON 72 – HOUSE CHURCHES

Several days ago a writer said he used to have great home meetings which may have been “church.” Yes they were, I believe.

The tremendous reality here is that Jesus Himself will build His church. No one needs to start one or plant one because its already been done once and for all. He did it and did it right.

The Divine arrangement is: (1) to preach the gospel to all and then (2) to meet AS the church.

God has always been jealous for His own sovereign glory. Jealous is His name. Man's mind-set says that the harvest is great, the laborers are few – therefore it must be up to us. God says, “no – pray to Me that I will send forth laborers into MY harvest.”

Jesus, in whom all power is deposited, has commanded us to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The saving faith that they exercise is from God, too – lest anyone should boast. Eph. 2.

God has so ordered all events that all glory goes to Him. No wonder Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” No wonder He commands us to do all to the glory of God.

Unshackled home church Christians can easily implement these earthshaking ideals. Let us arise and give Him glory for all things!

- still intrigued -

In a previous memo I wrote to the effect that I was unaware of any first century Christians going out to “plant, start, or organize churches” according to such terminology. Rather, they sought first to preach the good news then to encourage the new converts to meet as the church or, if you will, as a church.

Very simple, is it not? We thus read:

Acts 8:4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 11:19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

(This is why the Roman churches, which Paul said he had not yet visited were ALREADY in existence. Attendees at Pentecost just took the message back home.)

AND:

1 Cor. 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye COME TOGETHER ...

1 Cor. 11:18 In the first place, I hear that when you COME TOGETHER as a church ...

1 Cor. 11:20 When ye COME TOGETHER therefore into one place...

1 Cor. 11:33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye COME TOGETHER to eat...

1 Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole church be COME TOGETHER into one place...

1 Cor. 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye COME TOGETHER, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

(To this list could be added the many texts that speak of gathering together and gathering in Jesus' name and forsaking not the gathering of ourselves together.)

Furthermore, if we were ordered to "start" churches, surely there would be minimum requirements or specific instructions as to what this would entail. Surely there would be some mention of a "core group" somewhere waiting to attain "real church" status. Most assuredly would someone, somewhere be referred to as a church planter.

The modern plan for "starting churches" is, I believe, from the same factory that gave us the clergy, written creeds, and church buildings. When they speak of starting churches what they actually mean is starting a –parish- where everything will essentially be centered around the pastor, "officers", and the building.

It should also be noted that no one in Biblical history is ever said to have "joined a church." WOW! This is because membership goes into effect at conversion. Yet "starting churches" and "joining churches" is just about all that I hear about these days.

I realize that this may just sound like technicalities or trivialities but I believe that we often put the cart before the horse in these pursuits. It is a bit like a woman who is in turmoil about wanting a family but hasn't yet found a husband.

All of us desire the same thing – to see more conversions and to see Christians meeting as the Church. My question is “What does it take and who does it take?”

I am in search of the lowest common denominator when it comes to the Kingdom’s advancement strategy. To add to God’s prescription is to put myself in bondage and become a stumbling block to others.

This plan that I have proposed, of course, does not preclude a specialist or many specialists who could expedite matters. One may construct a house or he may employ professional builders (or both).

Whatever you want to call them – church planters or apostles, etc – there just doesn’t seem to be enough of them to go around. But, if one should happen to come along to assist that would be wonderful. My problem is that I do not know of a single “church planter” who is able to immediately travel around the country to help churches “get started.” (This is not to imply that such persons do not exist.) Yet we receive hundreds of letters from folks desiring to immediately start home churches. Not very good odds, huh?

In summary: (1) Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) Assemble in His name. (3) Exercise your gifts for the good of others. (4) Preach the word and let this wonderful cycle begin again.

- 2 or 3 gathered -

A church, we have observed, simply means a gathering, group, or an assembly. A church we learn from the Scriptures, consists of believers statedly assembling together to enjoy the benefits of association. These benefits are not limited to any number. Even two can associate together. They can mutually assist, admonish, or reprove each other. When the Lord commands His disciples not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, He requires that they should associate as far as they have opportunity, and no farther. The precept is as binding on two as on two hundred. These can co-operate, and continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers; and the abundance of the one may be a supply for the other’s want. It is, I believe, generally admitted, that two or three disciples residing in the same place should meet together, and observe every ordinance.

No good reason then can be given why two or three believers, who have not an opportunity of meeting with a greater number, should not statedly assemble as a church, to observe the Lord’s supper, as well as to continue in the apostles’ doctrine and in prayers. Indeed it is their bounden duty to do so. It certainly cannot be shown that elders or deacons are essential to the existence of a church while we find the apostles returning to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, and ordaining elders (i.e. appointing

elders or older ones to be the shepherds or pastors) in every church, Acts 14:21, 23, which they had previously gathered. Indeed, from the very nature of the case, churches must exist before elders, out of which they arise.

Instead of starting things, the focus was upon proclaiming Christ to all, by all.

Christians, then, were to be welcomed wherever any other Christians were. They were also forbidden not to forsake such regular gatherings.

Someday, I predict, the plain truth of this matter will no longer be a subject of debate and confusion. Much of it has already become a hindrance to the progress of the truth, in my opinion. Needless embarrassment, too, as heads drop and something like this is uttered: "Well we're just a Bible study with several others." Maybe you are the church and have never realized it.

The elegant simplicity of the kingdom of Jesus Christ – why would anyone want to tamper with it?

To sum up, what does it take? God – unless He builds all will eventually fail and fall.

Adapted from the ministry of David Anderson

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your concept of Church?
2. List differences between the New Testament Church and the Church today.
3. List reasons the believers "came together."
4. How many people make a Church?
5. What questions arise from this information?
6. What are the pros and cons that you see in this information?