

GROWING IN GRACE & KNOWLEDGE

Topic: **THE CHURCH**

Lesson: **EPHESIANS 2:11-22**

Goal: to define the word “Church”

1) Read Ephesians 2:11-18

- Circumcision was a minor physical difference between Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s time. What does Paul consider to be the biggest difference between the Jews and the Gentiles? (verse 12)
- Paul calls the Gentiles “foreigners to the covenant of the promise.” Underline this phrase and write “See Genesis 12:1-3, Isaiah 54:10, Ephesians 3:6” in the margin. What covenant promise is Paul referring to?
- In what ways has Christ united all people, Jews and Gentiles? (verse 14-18)

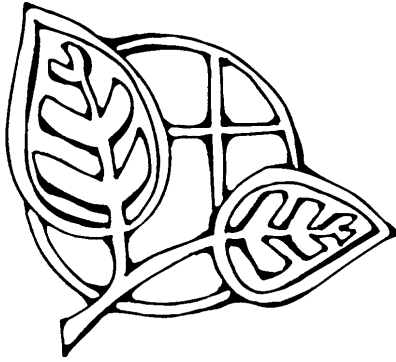
2) Read Ephesians 2:19-22

- Underline the phrase “no longer foreigners and aliens.” Put a double underline under the “no longer.” Paul tells us we are now “fellow citizens with God’s people” and “members of God’s household.” Those two phrases stress two relationships that are now possible through Christ’s death. What are those two relationships?
- In what sense are those relationships “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”?
- What is a cornerstone? How is Jesus the cornerstone of our relationship with God and our relationship with other Christians?
- Look at the last part of verse 18 and the last part of verse 22. Who is responsible for creating the bond between God’s children?

3) Applying what you’ve learned

- Complete the following statement: “The Church is _____”

_____.”



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Lesson: **1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-31**

Goal: to see that the Holy Spirit gives each member of the Church spiritual gifts

1) Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

- Why do we have faith that Jesus is Lord? (verse 3)
- Why do we serve the Lord? (verse 6)
- In verse 11 underline the phrase “each one.” What does that phrase tell us about who is responsible for serving in the Church?
- Double-underline the phrase “just as he determines.” What does that phrase tell us about the way the Holy Spirit gives out spiritual gifts?

2) Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

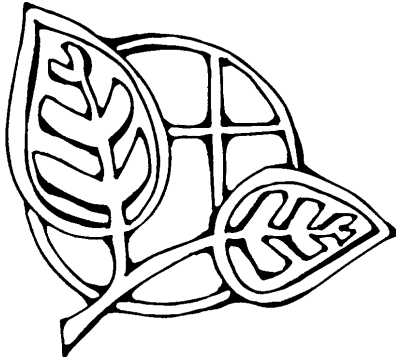
- What does Paul cite as evidence that we are all members of one body? (verse 13)
- Can a body function without a left arm? Without functioning ears? Without big toes? Does it function *as well* without those items? What, therefore, is Paul’s point in comparing the Church to a body?
- Underline verse 26. What can we expect to happen when someone doesn’t make use of their spiritual gifts? What can we expect to happen when all use their gifts faithfully?

3) Applying what you’ve learned

Imagine the following two people belong to your church. Karen is very knowledgeable about the Bible. She has no problem sharing her faith with friends and even strangers. In fact, about a dozen people have joined the church as a result of Karen’s witnessing. Bob is terrified talking about the Bible because he doesn’t feel he knows enough about it. He volunteers his time regularly at church, doing things like cutting the lawn and raking leaves. But he feels bad that he can’t do as much as people like Karen.

What does this lesson have to say to Karen?

What does it have to say to Bob?



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Topic: **THE CHURCH**

Lesson: **MATTHEW 13:47-50**

Goal: to understand the difference between the Church and visible churches

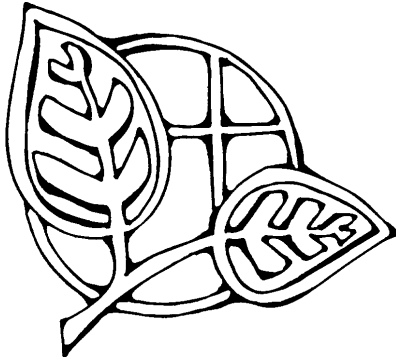
1) Read Matthew 13:47-50

- A parable makes a comparison between an earthly story and a heavenly truth. In this parable, Jesus is comparing people with fish caught in a net. What is the point of comparison?
- Is it possible that some members of Christian churches would be among the “bad fish”? What does the term “hypocrite” mean?
- Compare this lesson with Ephesians 5:25-27. Is any member of the Church going to go to hell? What, therefore, is the biggest difference between the Church and visible churches (I.E. — congregations, synods, etc.)?
- Underline the phrase “good fish” in verse 48. In the margin write “true believers.” Underline the phrase “bad fish.” In the margin write “unbelievers & hypocrites.”
- Look up 1 Samuel 16:7. Can we see faith? Why or why not?

2) Applying what you’ve learned

- In the Apostles’ Creed we confess that we believe in “the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.” Are we talking about the Church or visible churches? Why?
- On the basis of what we’ve learned in this lesson, please fill out the following chart.

	The Church	visible churches
How does one become a member?		
How do we know who’s a member?		



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Topic: **THE CHURCH**

Lesson: **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

Goal: to learn the mission of the Church

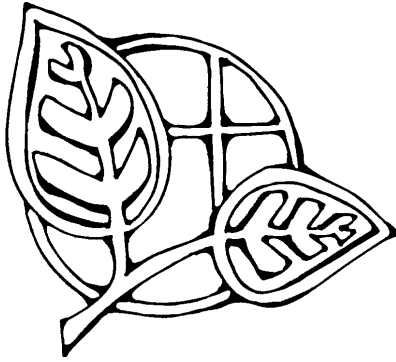
1) Read Matthew 28:18-20

- Why can and does Jesus direct the work of the church? (verse 18)
- Put an asterisk next to verse 18 and in the margin write “see Colossians 2:9-10.” How do Colossians 2:9-10 and Matthew 28:18 relate to each other?
- What does the word “go” in verse 18 tell us about the mission of the church?
- Double-underline the phrase “make disciples of all nations” and in the margin write “This is our mission.” Then underline the words “baptizing” and “teaching” and write “These are the only tools that can accomplish that mission.”
- Do you think it’s possible to build a congregation by using other tools than God’s Word and Sacraments? Do you think it’s possible to build up the Church by using other tools than God’s Word and Sacraments?
- How does the last sentence of verse 20 assure us that this is our mission, and not just the mission of the apostles? How does the last sentence of verse 20 encourage us to carry out the mission of the Church?

2) Applying what you’ve learned

- At a congregational open forum, one of the members gets up and says, “We don’t do enough for the needy in our church! Every year we send so much money off to synod to do missions. Why don’t we cut back a little and use some of that money to open a food pantry. After all, if we aren’t caring for the needy, we really aren’t acting like a church, are we?”

Does this person have a point? What might you say to them?



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Topic: **THE CHURCH**

Lesson: **2 PETER 2:1-3**

Goal: to see why there are so many different visible churches

1) Read 2 Peter 2:1-3

- What is heresy?
- Is there such a thing as non-destructive heresy? Why or why not? (Look up 2 Timothy 2:16-17 if you need help.)
- What does the word “secretly” tell us about heresy? Is it possible that sometimes even the false teacher doesn’t know he’s teaching heresy?
- What happens if we allow heresy to remain in the church? (verse 2)
- Since heresy is so destructive, the Bible gives us very clear instructions about how to deal with it. Look up each of the following passages and write down what it adds to our understanding of our lesson:
 - a: Romans 16:17 —
 - b: 1 John 4:1-3 —
 - c: 2 John 10,11 —

2) Applying what you’ve learned

- A friend says to you, “There are so many problems in society today: drugs, pornography, violence! The only way we’re going to stop this is if churches forget about little doctrinal differences and get on to dealing with what’s truly important!”
Is your friend right? What would you say to them?
- Agree or Disagree — Christians should not judge each other’s faith.
- Agree or Disagree — It is impossible for someone to be saved if they belong to a church that teaches false doctrine. (Look up Isaiah 55:11 for help.)