



Part 2: Lesson 10

Cultivating the Good Soil: You and the Church

Fertile Soil: Starting Your New Life with Jesus



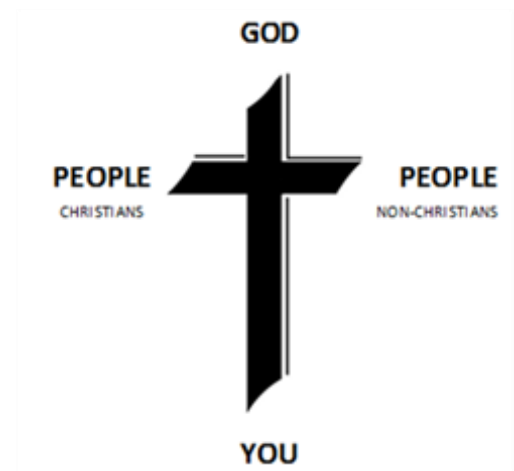
In Haiti, almost everyone cooks with charcoal. As you know, to start a cooking fire, you place several pieces of charcoal closely together and ignite them. The hot charcoals spread their fire to all the pieces creating enough heat to cook a meal. What would happen if you removed one piece of charcoal from the pile of hot charcoals? Soon, its fire would cool and stop burning.

As you live your relationship with God, you must also live in a relationship with other Christians. Like a single piece of charcoal, your spiritual life will die if you separate yourself from the Church. Your faith will eventually grow cold and stop burning.

The Bible says, *“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25).”*

This Scripture tells us to hold firmly to our faith and to encourage one another to do good things. But it also observed that some believers stopped meeting with others. Unfortunately, some Christians believe that they can grow in their spiritual life alone, without the Church.

You are not only a Christian for your sake, but also for the sake of others. Fellowship with other Christians is essential for your relationship with God. This is the **horizontal growth** of a tree as its branches reach outward.



YOUR GROWTH GOAL



In this lesson will understand:

- 1) How the Church is essential for spiritual growth
- 2) What the Church of Jesus Christ is
- 3) How the Church is to live together.



Before you go any further, stop and ask God to help you understand His Word, to help you experience His presence, and to become the person He wants you to be.

A PICTURE OF THE FIRST CHURCH (Acts 2:41-47)



The Book of Acts is the history of the early Church. This short story describes the gathering of the first Church and its characteristics.

*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*



What are four things the early believers devoted themselves to?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

How would you describe their attitudes of worship and social interaction?

How do you think the early Church helped the new Christians to grow in their faith?

What kind of effect did this interaction have on their community?

1 John 1:7 says, *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

How does our relationship with Christ and our relationship with others interact together?

Your fellowship with Christ and your fellowship with others are connected. The word “**fellowship**” means “**to share in common.**” Our interactions work together to purify us from sin. God designed you to live in meaningful fellowship with others, not in isolation. Your fellowship with Christ’s people will reinforce your relationship with Christ.



DIGGING DEEPER: YOU ARE THE CHURCH



Many people think that “church” means a building or a worship service, but it means something much deeper than a place or event. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in the city of Corinth, he identified them this way.

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

1 Corinthians 1:2 defines the “Church” two ways:

- 1)
- 2)

* *“Sanctified” means to be made holy, dedicated to God, a special sacrifice to God.*

You are the Church. The Church is the people of God—everyone who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere in the world. The Church is holy and sacred. It is not a building or an event; the Church is God’s people.

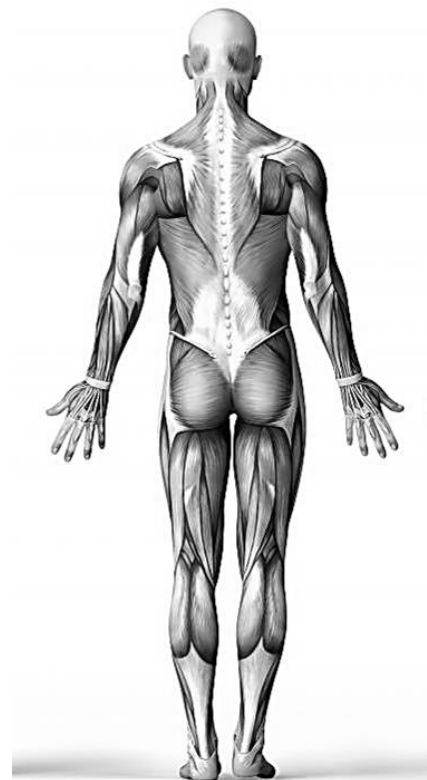
THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

You are an essential part of the Church. To help you understand this 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 gives a helpful illustration.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the



contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

How is the image of the body used to describe the Church?

In the first paragraph, what are three ways that we are unified as believers?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

How is each part to be treated and why?

How has God designed the Church to live and work together?

How would you describe yourself as part of the Church?

Again, ***“you are the body of Christ.”*** Colossians 1:18 tells us, ***“He [Jesus Christ] is the head of the body, the church.”***

GROWING OUTWARD: LIVING AS THE CHURCH



Interacting with other people is not always easy. But Christ calls us to live as one. The phrase “one another” is used repeatedly in the Bible. Each of the verses below contains a command on how we are to live as the “Body of Christ.” Read the following verses and make observations. **Write the command that is given in the boxes. See the example.**


I. ONE ANOTHER

- ❖ *He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1 Thessalonians 5:10-11).*
- ❖ *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Peter 1:22).*
- ❖ *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8-10).*
- ❖ *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).*
- ❖ *Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you (2 Corinthians 13:11).*
- ❖ *I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Corinthians 1:10).*
- ❖ *Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved . . . Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Colossians 3:12-13).*
- ❖ *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16).*
- ❖ *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Galatians 5:13-14).*

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11 encourage one another build each other up	1 Peter 1:22 1 Peter 4:8-10	Ephesians 4:32	2 Corinthians 13:11
1 Corinthians 1:10	Colossians 3:12-13	James 5:16	Galatians 5:13-14

2. REFLECTING ON THESE TRUTHS

Consider parts of your body.



Look at your hands. Think about how important they are to you. Imagine what you could not do without them. Look at your feet. Think about how important they are to you. Imagine all the things you could not do without them. Touch your ears. Think about how important they are to you. Imagine what you could not do without them. Close your eyes. Touch your eyes. Imagine how difficult life would be without your sight.



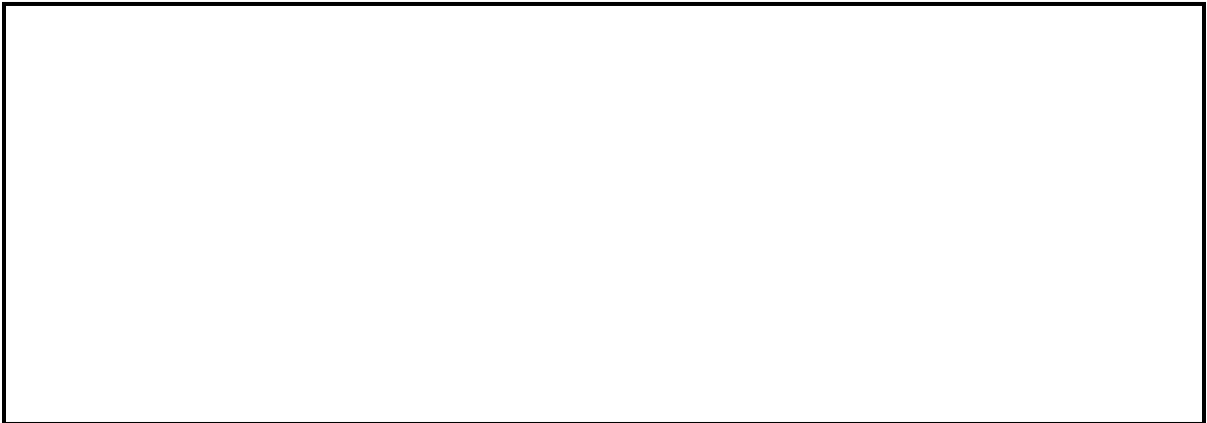
Now, think about how difficult your it would be for you to grow in your spiritual life without the encouragement, instruction, prayers, and help of others in the body of Christ. Also, consider how others need your contributions—your encouragement, instruction, prayers, and help.

3. COMMITTING TO THESE TRUTHS

Psalm 133:1 says, *“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”*

You are an essential part of the Body of Christ. Your presence and contributions are needed, and you need the encouragement of the Church as well. Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us, *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

Take some time to think about how you can support others in the Body of Christ. Write three or more ways that you can do this in the space on the next page. Share with others in your group.



With your mentor and other followers, pray together, asking God to guide your steps, to strengthen and protect you, to provide for your daily needs, and to be an encouragement to others.

