

The Basics of Grace

Part 8

Your Local Church Home

The local church is where the Body of Christ functions practically. It is here, with fellow believers, that we put into practice the truths of God's Word—specifically the Grace Life. Perhaps you have seen church disasters—splits, hypocrisy, strife, backbiting, etc. These things clearly are not right. In previous lessons we discussed the Grace Life in general; now we want to focus on the local church (assembly). How is the local church supposed to function?

I. Relating to each other

- a. Functioning as members of one body. We are on the same team, part of the same plan of God (I Corinthians 12:12-14, Ephesians 4:4)
- b. Sharing in all things. Just like a family. We share in the joys and sorrows (I Corinthians 11:25-26, Galatians 6:2).
- c. Kindness and love. These qualities should characterize everything we say and do in the local assembly. Love should permeate everything we do. Just as Christ deals with us on the basis of love, so should we with one another. This is the most important issue and the most difficult (Romans 12:9-10, 13:9-10, Galatians 5:13-14, 22, Ephesians 4:2, 32, 5:2, Colossians 3:12-14, I Thessalonians 3:12, and many others).
- d. Responsibilities
 - i. Older teaching younger (Titus 2:3-5)
 - ii. Judging sin. This is described as a formal church function, but important to note that dealing with each other in love does not preclude discerning right and wrong (I Corinthians 5:1-7 then see II Corinthians 2:6-8).

II. Functions of the church

- a. Teaching the Word of God. This is the primary function of the local church. The Apostle Paul speaks of this issue throughout his epistles but says the most to Timothy (a bishop) (I Timothy 4:13, II Timothy 1:13, 2:2, 3:14, 4:2).
 - i. To the saints
 - ii. Evangelism
- b. Guarding against false teaching. The Apostle Paul says more about this issue than just about anything else; clearly it is important. (Romans 16:17-18, Galatians 1:8-9, I Timothy 4:1-7, 6:3-5, II Timothy 2:23, 4:3-5, Titus 3:9-11)
- c. Judging sin (I Corinthians 5:1-7 then II Corinthians 2:6-8, I Timothy 5:20)
- d. Judging issues between the saints (I Corinthians 6:1-8)
- e. Caring for the destitute (Romans 12:13, I Corinthians 16:1-3, II Corinthians 9:1-7, I Timothy 5:3-9). Note this issue is an individual function as much as it is a formal church function.
- f. Role of Social Events—to support the edifying of the saints.

III. Roles in the church

- a. Elders (bishops). Primary responsibility for teaching (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).
- b. Deacons (I Timothy 3:8-13)
- c. Volunteers. The church is not a business nor a social organization. Its effective functioning depends on the efforts of those truly dedicated to each other and the work of the ministry (I Corinthians 16:15, I Timothy 5:10). The Apostle Paul makes mention of many of those who helped him in the ministry (Philippians 4:3, Colossians 4:7, 12, II Timothy 1:16-18, Philemon 24 and others).

IV. Distinguishing characteristic. Many churches focus on how sophisticated they present themselves, how nice and big their building is, how many programs they have, etc. Are these things important? No. The best church is the one which teaches the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 2:1-7).