



LESSON THIRTEEN: FAMILY

FACILITATOR NOTE

This week we will discuss the elemental teachings about the church. You can safely expect lots and lots of discussion as every believer has strong opinions on this aspect of the Christian life. Do your best to keep focus on the topic and be on the look out for any rants or unproductive tangents. Feel free to adapt either in advance or in class if you think that it would be fruitful to the discussion. Your feedback is welcomed.

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer with the class. Allow for requests and center your prayer on this lesson.

FOCUS

This lesson focuses on the life practices of a believer who has entered into a relationship with God through Christ Jesus. Specifically, the lesson addresses the following: worshipping God, growing spiritually, loving one another, sharing the good news of Jesus with all people, and serving others.

Memory Verse: In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

- Our family believes the church (fellowship) of Jesus Christ (*God's family*) was...
 - Founded by Christ (Matthew 16:13-18)
 - Established after Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:14-47)
 - Consists of *all* believers (Christians) everywhere

Discussion: The term "church" is tossed around carelessly today, by Christians and non-Christians alike. What are some of the common misuses or misunderstandings of the word "church" in our culture?

LESSON

I. WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH BE?

A. The Kingdom of God

1. When God led the Israelites in to the Promised Land, he intended for them to be the most prosperous, peaceful, and just kingdom on Earth, a witness for Him to all of the nations.
 - a) He promised that if they were faithful, he would dwell among them and



call them his own (Leviticus 26:11-12). The divine plan always involved a community in fellowship with one another and God. **Discussion:** What went wrong? [**Facilitators** - Allow the class to contribute their answers. If nobody says it, point out that Israel, not content with being ruled by God through his prophets and priests, asked for a king specifically so that they could be like the other nations. This led to disaster.]

- b) When Jesus came, he established a heavenly kingdom with one requirement for citizenship: faith in him. – Colossians 1: 9-14
- c) **Discussion:** [Read John 18: 28-37] How does Jesus' kingdom being "not of this world" empower and liberate his followers?

B. The Body of Christ – 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- 1. **Discussion:** What issues in the Corinthian church was Paul addressing in this passage? [**Facilitators** - If nobody says it, explain that the Corinthians had mistaken views about spiritual gifts: those who did not have "glamorous" gifts believed that they were somehow less valuable to or less a part of the church; those who had these "glamorous" gifts believed that they were more valuable and important to the church and they had no problem letting the rest of the church know it.]
- 2. **Discussion:** Do we still make this mistake today? What do we consider "glamorous" or "more important" gifts?

C. The Bride of Christ – 2 Corinthians 11:1-3; Ephesians 5:22-33

- 1. **Discussion:** It's popular today to try to claim Jesus without claiming the church. People love to quote Gandhi "I like your Christ, but not your Christians", identify as "Jesus-followers" rather than Christians, or self-identify as "spiritual but not religious" and there is even a best-selling book called *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*. However, if the church is the bride of Christ, can we claim to belong to Jesus while treating his bride with disdain? If someone were to say to you "We can be friends but I don't want anything to do with your spouse" what would your response be?
- 2. 1 John 4: 20-21
- 3. **Facilitators** – If you have time and think it is appropriate, you may wish to share the short article "Spiritual but Not Religious? Please Stop Boring Me." at the end of these notes with your class.

D. The Family of God – 1 John 3:1-3

- 1. God is our Father, we are His children, and should treat each other accordingly.

II. WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH DO?

- A. Preach the Gospel (Acts 5:41-42, Acts 8:1-4)**
- B. Love (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-12)**
- C. Teach, Encourage, Empower (Ephesians 4:11-13)**
- D. Exemplify charity and mercy (James 1:26-27, 2:14-17)**



III. WHAT IS THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CHURCH?

- A. Love your brothers and sisters
- B. Serve your brothers and sisters
- C. Stay with your brothers and sisters even when you don't want to

REFLECTION

- How can we love one another? [**Facilitators** – if time allows you may want to share a personal experience or solicit one from the class]
- Which of the works of the church do you think the church universal does well? Which works do you think we are poorer at?
- What are distractions for the contemporary church?
- What are the greatest dangers for the contemporary church?

ARTICLE

Spiritual but Not Religious? Please Stop Boring Me.

by Lillian Daniel

On airplanes, I dread the conversation with the person who finds out I am a minister and wants to use the flight time to explain to me that he is "spiritual but not religious." Such a person will always share this as if it is some kind of daring insight, unique to him, bold in its rebellion against the religious status quo. Next thing you know, he's telling me that he finds God in the sunsets. These people always find God in the sunsets. And in walks on the beach. Sometimes I think these people never leave the beach or the mountains, what with all the communing with God they do on hilltops, hiking trails and . . . did I mention the beach at sunset yet? Like people who go to church don't see God in the sunset! Like we are these monastic little hermits who never leave the church building. How lucky we are to have these geniuses inform us that God is in nature. As if we don't hear that in the psalms, the creation stories and throughout our deep tradition.

Being privately spiritual but not religious just doesn't interest me. There is nothing challenging about having deep thoughts all by oneself. What is interesting is doing this work in community, where other people might call you on stuff, or heaven forbid, disagree with you. Where life with God gets rich and provocative is when you dig deeply into a tradition that you did not invent all for yourself.

Thank you for sharing, spiritual but not religious sunset person. You are now comfortably in the norm for self-centered American culture, right smack in the bland majority of people who find ancient religions dull but find themselves uniquely fascinating. Can I switch seats now and sit next to someone who has been shaped by a mighty cloud of witnesses instead? Can I spend my time



talking to someone brave enough to encounter God in a real human community? Because when this flight gets choppy, that's who I want by my side, holding my hand, saying a prayer and simply putting up with me, just like we try to do in church.

PRAYER