

SHINE Devotional

Week 30 – Lesson 1

Churches Assemble



Scripture reading Acts 9:31

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

This passage is very significant. It is the very first time that the word *churches* (plural) is used in the Word of God. Up to this point, the term *church* is only used in reference to one particular church, which was the church in Jerusalem. Many churches have now been established in at least three areas in the land of Israel: Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. We also know that there was a church established in Damascus, because Saul went there to destroy it. Churches were being established all over the land of Israel. Jesus was the head of each one of those local churches, just as He was the head of the church at Jerusalem. The Gospel of Jesus Christ had spread throughout the land of Israel and was beginning to spread throughout the Romans Empire. As the Gospel spread, people got saved, baptized, and established New Testament local churches. The churches of Jesus Christ assembled together in obedience to Christ’s command. That is why the writer of Hebrews wrote, *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). It is very important to note that the term *church* comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means a gathering or a called out group or assembly. God wants His people to assemble. A church is not a church unless it assembles. The word *church* does not refer to a denomination, nor is it correctly used to refer to the family of God. The term *church* is always local. It is a local assembly of people who assemble together for a specific purpose. It can even be incorrect to say that we are the church, because we are only the church if we are assembled together.

God wants you to assemble together with your local church because that is the institution He has established for your growth. When you are active in your local church, you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 30 – Lesson 2

Churches Fellowship



Scripture reading Acts 9:31

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified...”

The word *edify* means to build up. How were the churches built up? How do we build up one another within our local church? One answer to these questions is through fellowship. John tells us, that without fellowship we will not have joy. When we go to church and have fellowship with our brothers and sisters and with the Lord Jesus Christ it produces joy. *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”* (1 John 1:3-4). When brothers and sisters in Christ get together in their local church, they have common worship, beliefs, purpose, and goals. They are able to encourage one another unto love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). God knew from the very beginning of creation that it was not good that man should be alone (Genesis 2:18). When He sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel in Luke 10:1, He sent them out “two and two.” Believers need fellowship. We need encouragement.

Right after I committed my life to the Lord, God allowed me to get involved in a solid, local, independent, Baptist church here in Las Vegas. Through fellowship with believers in that church, I was encouraged to accomplish the goals that God had placed in my heart. God established churches so that we can assemble together and fellowship with one another.

When you as a believer are faithful in your local church and develop fellowship within the confines of your local church, you and your church will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 30 – Lesson 3

Churches Pray Together



Scripture reading Acts 4:31

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

Our passage today takes place right after the apostles Peter and John had been threatened and warned not to preach in the name of Jesus anymore. When they were let go, they went back to their local church and gave an account of what had taken place. This was a trying situation and they needed courage to keep doing what God had called them to do. After meeting together and rehearsing the situation, they began to pray, not for deliverance, but that God would give them power and boldness to preach His truth and for His name to be glorified. God’s Word testifies that when they prayed, the place was shaken.

The early church prayed together. It is important that local churches have time of prayer together. When we pray, we recognize our Father as our head. We recognize our dependence upon Him. We invite Him into our services. We are reminded that our purpose is to advance His kingdom and to declare His holiness. We plead with Him to meet our daily needs and request from Him forgiveness in areas where we have failed. We submit ourselves to Him and resist the Devil and that causes Satan to flee. We ask Him to keep us from trials. When we pray according to His will, He hears and answers prayer. The local church must pray together and that is why it is so important that we assemble.

As you learn to pray with your fellow believers, seeking the will of God and His glory, you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 30 – Lesson 4

Churches Praise Together



Scripture reading Ephesians 5:18-19

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”

The Bible tells us that the very first church in Acts 2 met together, *“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (verse 47). A very dominate part of the church assembling together is for praising God. This is commanded by Scripture. That is why when the church assembles, there is always a time of singing. When Paul wrote to the local church in the city of Ephesus, he told them that it was essential for them to sing together. The word *praise* means to express appreciation by complimenting one’s character, demeanor, or person. Throughout the centuries of Christianity, God has given us many wonderful composers that have written songs that describe our Lord and His attributes. These are songs of praise.

God wants His church to meet together and sing these songs to Him. When a church is active and assembles for fellowship, prayer, and praise, that church will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 30 – Lesson 5



Churches Study God's Word Together

Scripture reading Acts 2:42

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine..."

The primary focus of the assembly should always be the Word of God. truly our purpose for assembling is the Word of God. Our fellowship is around the Word of God. Our prayers are in compliance with the Word of God. Our praise comes from the Word of God. The Word of God is central. Paul told the Ephesian believers that God, *"...gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [maturing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).* Any local church that is going to be spiritually strong is going to have an emphasis on the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

Teaching and preaching should be in the general assembly and in individual Bible classes and Bible studies. Large groups and small groups can get together to study the Word of God. It is interesting that God does not tell us how large or small these churches were. We know that the first church in Acts 2 had explosive growth. However, we do not see that emphasis throughout the New Testament. Acts 9:31 indicates when conditions were favorable for the church and when believers were walking in obedience to God, the churches multiplied. We don't know if that means that there were large gatherings or whether there were multiple independent small churches. It is important to know, however, that if a church is to be what God wants it to be, there will be a strong emphasis on the teaching and preaching of God's Word. *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

It is the Word of God that matures believers. When our thinking is wrong, it reproves us. When our actions are wrong, it rebukes us. When we are doing that which is right, it exhorts and encourages us to continue to live for Him. The Word of God will keep us doctrinally pure, morally pure, and practically holy. Faithfully support a local church that digs deep into the Word of God, and you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 30 – Lesson 6

Churches Multiply



Scripture reading Acts 9:31

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

These churches that assembled for fellowship, prayer, praise, and the study of God’s Word, grew because you cannot attend churches like these without getting excited about the things of God and developing a desire to advance the kingdom of God. The disciples would have heard the stories of Christ as the apostles shared how God had used their lives to reach others. Upon leaving the assembly, these disciples would go back into the community, excited about what God had done and what He was doing. They would have had a desire to share the truth with others they loved. Those that received that truth would be saved, come to church, be baptized, partake in the Lord’s Supper, and grow as Christians. This would cause the individual churches to grow. Some would feel led to establish other churches in other places, and those local churches would establish mission churches in other parts of Israel and the world. That is how churches multiply.

It is important that as a local church, we focus on telling other people about Jesus Christ. I have said that we should go where we can and send others where we cannot go. That is the focus of a true church of Christ. A church that has a burden for the lost world will multiply through personal evangelism and the support of missions. A church that becomes ingrown and focused only on its own spiritual growth will soon become useless. We should take in the Word of God like a sponge. A sponge is to be rung out and reused. It cannot take in new water unless it is first rung out.

I encourage you as a believer to get involved in a local church. Get involved in fellowship. Get involved in prayer. Get involved in praise. Get involved in God’s Word. Then take that truth you receive in the local church and share the Good News with everyone you encounter. When you do this, you, as a believer, will SHINE.