

CLASS 6: THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY AND GRACE HOUSE CHURCH

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- The student would understand the Universal Church – the purpose and functions of the Church through its individual members
- The student is well informed about the ministry and the leadership structure of the ministry.
- The student has a better understanding of the Cell/ Life Group System as it integrates with the universal church.
- The student should understand his/her role and what it means to give one's life a meaning; understanding of the vision of the ministry, his/her role in outreach programs and our emphasis on training at all levels.
- The student is at home with what we believe and preach in this ministry as summarized in our statement of faith.

INTRODUCTION

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” Ephesians 1:22-23. The scripture lets us know that the church is the body of Christ. He is the head, while the church is his body. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” Ephesians 4:11-12.*

1. WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE BODY OF CHRIST?

It is very important that you get to understand what the universal church is and also know how one becomes a member. It must be understood that the church is one. The universal church therefore comprises every member of the body of Christ in the whole world round. This is the whole family of God that meets in every part of the world from Christ to date. Ephesians 3:21. We find that Christ Himself being the head of the Church, appointed (or gave) the five ministry gifts. (i.e. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers) for the perfection, building up (edifying) of the church. The church is God's peculiar treasure. Colossians 1:18, 24.

The church is the God's peculiar treasure. The Word of God declares in Psalms 16:3 *“But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight”* The church is God's delight. The NKJV reads “and to the excellent ones”. It's great to belong to the church (i.e. the body of Christ).

I Corinthians 12:18 God Himself sets His children into the particular local assembly they should belong. You are not here by chance. God positioned you in this particular local assembly in line with His predestined purpose for you and I. The Universal body of Christ needs you. Romans 12:4-5

2. HOW DO I BECOME A MEMBER?

To become a member of the universal church (or the church precisely), one has to be born again. This is the only pre-requisite for becoming a member of the church. To be born again is to appreciate for yourself the salvation that Jesus brings. All you have to do is to act on the Word of God as it is in Romans 10:9-10.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”

By reason of this proclamation or declaration one is baptized into the body of Christ through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. This is being born again (i.e. Holy Ghost baptism).

3. EVERYONE SHOULD BELONG TO A CHURCH

It is very important that every Christian belongs to a church (i.e. local assembly). We had seen in Hebrews 10:25 that the Apostle Paul admonishes that we should not forsake the gathering of ourselves together as the bad manner of some is. We should not make ourselves church supervisors, going from one church to another under the pretext that God spoke to us, for there is no such thing as that. We should be committed to a local assembly. The only time God will speak to you to leave a church for another according to the scriptures is when His Word is not taught there. He would now (by the Holy Spirit) direct you to a proper place. See Acts 2:42; Hebrews 2:13. Also, going from church to church would not allow you to be built up. It rather helps to raise questions, doubt and suspicion.

It was the custom of Jesus to go the temple, same also with the disciples. They are our examples. We should follow after them; also it is important that we go to church to be built up too. Finally, we go to church to worship God, to pour out our heart to Him, to praise and glorify Him. Luke 4:16

That is why we need local assemblies; it enhances fellowship and causes every member to contribute his or her own part in the work of the ministry. Also the unity of the brethren is adequately enhanced. I Corinthians 12:12, 18-27; Ephesians 4:16 The whole body is fitly joined together and compacted as each one of us supplies our own expected (ordained) quota to the work of the ministry.

Secondly, local assembly enables brethren to identify what office or role they can perform.

Romans 12:4-5 The Universal body of Christ needs you. We depend on one another just as God depends on us. That is why we must care for one another and honor one another.

4. PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

Primarily the purpose of the church can be seen to be three-fold

Firstly, to glorify God, Secondly, to witness to the world Thirdly, to build up the saints

To Glorify God, Ephesians 1:9-12, Ephesians 3:20-21

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself. That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ”

God’s plan and desire is for the church to glorify Him and to show forth His glory, (i.e. His Excellency, His perfection).

- To Witness to the world
Apart from glorifying God, the church should also be involved in witnessing to the world our Lord Jesus Christ. This talks of soul winning and it is God's number one job. It is God's heartthrob. Every Christian should make soul winning a priority. Involvement with witnessing is not negotiable both singularly and corporately, the church should evangelize and disciple the world for Jesus. See Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, 2nd Corinthians 5:17-19, and Mark 16:15-16.
- To Build up the saints
Every member of the church is called to be saints (1Cor. 1:2) and we all have the responsibility of contributing to the building or edification of the body of Christ. The things that we are taught by the ministry gifts (i.e. Pastors, Prophets, Evangelists, Teachers, and Apostles) and the Holy Spirit, should also be used to teach others and bring them up in the faith. As Christians, we should take up our appropriate responsibilities; soul winning and soul development. It is not enough to witness to somebody of Jesus but adequate follow up should be mounted to win and develop him to the level that he also becomes involved in winning and developing others. See Ephesians 4:11-16.

5. WHO BUILDS THE CHURCH?

- 'UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH'
In Matthew 16:13-19, you will discover that many people have erroneously interpreted Jesus' statement or words to mean that Peter is the rock. We must get it right and this can only come as we take this in context. You see after Peter answered that "*thou art the Christ the son of the Living God*" and Jesus acknowledged his answer by saying *flesh and blood hath not revealed it to you but his father which is in heaven*"
He went further to tell Peter that upon this rock I will build my church. The rock Jesus referred to there is "the revelation that Peter received, that Jesus is the Christ" So we find that Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the church is built. Other scriptures reveal this clearly; 1st Corinthians 3:11. "*for other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ*". See Ephesians 5:23-25, Ephesians 2:18-20 and 1st Peter 2:4-7.
When the Lord would have built up Zion, then He will come in His glory. We have seen that Jesus is the rock which the church is built on Matthew 16:18. Jesus therefore is the builder of the church. He is the head of the church, Ephesians 5:23. He is the author and the finisher (or perfecter) of our faith, Hebrews 12:2.
- Also, every member of the church is equally building the church. In Ephesians 4:12-16, you will find that the reason for which Jesus gave the ministry gifts for equipping and perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up (edifying) of the body of Christ (i.e. the church). This therefore makes us partners with deity. God is building His church through us. The Word of God declares that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.
Ephesians 2:10, importantly also we find in 1st Corinthians 3: 9-10 "*For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's buildings. According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon*".

There is a reward waiting for us for how we build on the foundation; for our work in the ministry. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Then we shall receive our eternal reward. **1st Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 4:8.**

6. YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LEADERS

Christianity is a Life of Submission- submission to the Word of God. When we submit ourselves to one another or to authority (both spiritually and earthly) we are submitting to the Word, because it is the Word that admonishes us to live in submission. There are three levels of authority that the Bible asks the Christian to recognize and submit to.

(Refer to “Christianity is a Life of Submission” in Class 5).

- *The Bible says we should obey our spiritual leaders and submit to them (Hebrews 13:17)*
- Loyalty: **1Cor. 16:15-16:** We all like the house of Stephanas should be addicted to the ministry of the saints. It is a decision that has eternal rewards in this world and the world to come. This loyalty is demonstrated in our obedience to our leaders **1Chron. 20:20**
- Submission: Your spiritual leader has been given the charge by God to watch over your welfare. The leaders in the church have the responsibility of training people who are under them, to full maturity. This responsibility could be a lot easier when the followers humble themselves in obedience to their leaders. Your attitude should be such that your leaders would give your report with joy and not with grief.
- In **1st Samuel 15:22-23**, this scripture like many other places clearly explains that “*obedience is better than sacrifice*”. This is one of the very important required characters of a Christian in his relationship to his leader. In other words, rebellion and stubbornness are serious sins. Scripture equates them to WITCHCRAFT and IDOL WORSHIP, sins worthy of death. Refer to **Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 20:6.**
- Also **Numbers 16**, we read how Korah who was a Levite, and already one of the leaders rebelled against Moses and was punished. God does not take insurrection lightly.
- *Can You Speak Against Your Leaders Even If He Does Something Wrong? (Numbers 12:1-6)*
- As Christians, it is not in our position to speak against our leaders even if they do something wrong. This is because they are ordained by God and are answerable to Him or their leaders, and not to you who is under them. **(Romans 13:12)** says “*let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power that be but God’s; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist the powers shall receive to themselves damnation.* Just like the example of Miriam and Aaron in **Numbers 12:1-6.**
- Another example of bad leadership is the Scribes and Pharisees, whom Jesus still admonished the people to still obey what they say and not what they do. **Matthew 23:2-3**

What Do You Do?

- **Pray for the leader. 1st Timothy 2:1-2**
- **Paul urges us to pray for people, particularly for our leaders. This is not when they have been good to us but even at times when things are not well.**
- **Speak to someone senior to him in love, not complaining.**
- **Forgive him in love.**

QUESTIONS

What is the church?

What do you understand by the universal church? How can one become a member of the church?

a. What is the purpose of the church?

i. Is Apostle Peter the Rock?

ii. Who is the Rock and give two scriptures to back up your answer.

GHC STATEMENT OF FAITH

This is the statement of Bible doctrine as believed and taught by Grace House Church. This statement of faith has its source in the Bible and is in total agreement with the foundational principle of the doctrines of Christ.

1. We believe that the Bible contains the inspired and infallible Word of God. (**2Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21**)
2. We believe that there is only one God eternally existent in three (3) persons; God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. (**Eph. 4:5-6, 2 Cor. 8:16; Gen. 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17**)
3. We believe in the deity of Christ: (**John 1:1-4; John 10:30; Heb. 1:1-5**) (a) He was born of a virgin; (**Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-35**) (b) He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; (**Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-35**) (c) He died; (**John 19:30-35**) (d) He rose again from the dead bodily; (**John 20:25-29; Luke 24:36-40**) (e) He ascended into heaven bodily; (**Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:16**)
4. We believe in the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ. (**1 Thess. 4:16-17; Matthew 24:29-30**)
5. We believe that the only means of being cleansed from sin is repentance and faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. (**Acts 3:19; Luke 24:47; Eph. 1:7**)

6. We believe that regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God is essential for personal salvation. (**Titus 2:5; John 3:3-5; Eph. 5:25-27**)
7. We believe that the redemptive work of Christ on the cross provides divine healing for the body and salvation for the soul of everyone that believes. (**1Peter 2:24; Acts 3:16; Acts 9:32-35**)
8. We believe that when an individual receives the Holy Spirit, he receives divine enablement for Christian service and witness. (**Acts 1:8; 2:4; 3:1-26; 4:5-12**)
9. We believe in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11**)
10. We believe in the final resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the former to eternal life and the latter to eternal judgment. (**Rev. 20:11-15; 1 Cor. 15:12-23**)

OUR STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

1. We are convinced that the gospel is God's only saving power [Romans 1:16-17; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:15].
2. We are convinced that the gospel is the answer to all human problems [John 3:16; 1 John 4:18].
3. We are convinced that the gospel is committed to our trust [1 Timothy 1:11; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2].
4. We are committed to the gospel.
5. We are convinced that Jesus Christ is the only way [2 Corinthians 5:11a; John 14:6].
6. We are convinced that the gospel is the power of God [2 Timothy 2:4; Mark 16:17-18; Romans 10:13-15a; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Timothy 1:15].

TENETS OF THE GOSPEL

These are basic principles that the gospel of Jesus Christ holds for every Christian in the New Testament.

They are the present day possessions of the Believers in Christ Jesus.

- I. Eternal life (Zoë) is ours in the new birth [John 3:16; 1 John 5:11-12; Romans 6:23].
- II. Righteousness is ours through faith in Christ Jesus [Romans 5:1; Romans 5:17].
- III. Deliverance is ours in the gospel [Colossians 1:12-13; Psalm 107:2].
- IV. Healing is ours in the gospel [1 Peter 1:24].
- V. Peace is ours in the gospel [Romans 5:1; John 14:24; Philippians 4:6].