

New Testament Church

Lesson 5:

Importance of the Local Church Relationship

What happens when one is baptized?

- Using **Crispus** as an example (Acts 18:7–8).
 - He was baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26–27) and therefore “added to the Lord” (Acts 11:24) or “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor. 6:17).
 - He was “baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13), because he was now joined **together** with everyone else who is “joined to the Lord.”
 - This ONE body is the church prophesied in the O.T., the church Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18)—what we describe as the universal church—a group which includes the redeemed in every place and in every age.

What's next for Crispus?

- Did Crispus' baptism automatically make him a member of a local church?
- Did he join one?
 - “To the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2).
“I thank God that I baptized none **of you** except **Crispus** and Gaius” (1 Cor. 1:14).
 - What Crispus did in joining a local church, is that God's plan—is that what He expects all His people to do?

Do we see early evidence of this plan?

- “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).
- What did these approximately three thousand people do next? Do we see evidence of them meeting together and working together?
 - Acts 2:42–47 (meeting together to worship, working together to provide for the needy among them, using a common fund or treasury).

More evidence

- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matthew 28:19). Let’s see what happened as they fulfilled this commission.
 - Disciples scattered from Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1–4). Result: more **churches in Judea** (Galatians 1:22–24).
 - Disciples preached the gospel in Antioch, where many turned to the Lord (Acts 11:19–21). Result: a **church** soon began to assemble in **Antioch** (Acts 11:26).
 - Paul and Barnabas travel through southern Galatia preaching the gospel (Acts 13–14). Result: Disciples in different cities form various **local churches** (Acts 14:21–23).

Local Churches Established Throughout the Roman Empire



God's plan, then, is clear!

- Disciples must join themselves together with other disciples in a local church (like Crispus did; like Paul did—Acts 9:26).
- DO NOT forsake what, according to Heb. 10:24–25?
 - “Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place” (1 Corinthians 14:23).
 - If Crispus remained faithful to the Lord, that's exactly where he was.

How were these churches described?

- Sometimes simply “the church” (e.g., Acts 5:11).
- By **location** (e.g., church in Cenchrea—Rom. 16:1).
- By **composition** (e.g., “churches of the Gentiles”—Rom. 16:4)
- By their **relationship to God and His Son** (e.g., “churches of Christ”—Rom. 16:16; “churches of God”—1 Cor. 11:16).
- By a **combination** (e.g., “church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”—1 Thess. 1:1; “churches of Judea which were in Christ”—Gal. 1:22).

What descriptions do we NOT see?

- Most of the present day denominational names (Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Wesleyans, etc.).
- Can you explain the origin of least some of these names?

Relationships with one another

- In what should we be united?
 - “endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit**” (Eph. 4:3).
 - “till we all come to the **unity of the faith...**” (Eph. 4:13).
 - “striving **together** for the **faith of the gospel**” (Phil. 1:27).
 - “To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in **truth**, and not only I, but also all who have known the **truth**, because of the **truth** which abides in us” (2 John 1:1–2).

Relationships with one another

- How many of our fellow-Christians in the local church should we love?
 - “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith Christ Jesus and of your love for ALL the saints” (Col. 1:3-4).
 - May be closer to some, but must not exclude anyone.
 - Might those expressions of love be different for some, depending on their spiritual condition? (1 Thess. 5:14).

Relationships with one another

- Using 1 Peter 1:22, describe the love we should have for one another.
 - “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a **sincere brotherly** love, love one another **earnestly** from a **pure heart**” (ESV).
- “All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing” (1 Pet. 3:8–9).

Relationships with one another

- How did Jesus define greatness in Matthew 20:20–28?
- To properly serve our fellow–saints, how should we regard them? (Philippians 2:3).
- “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).
 - Do we always learn their “interests” in the times we meet together?
 - What practice **commanded** in Romans 12:13 and 1 Peter 4:9 can help us better learn their needs AND serve those needs?