



**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup> – PART 3 OF 3**

**Series Title:** Loving Strong

**Lesson Title:** Loving God's Church

**Key Scriptures:** Hebrews 10:24-25, Psalm 122:1

**Homework Instructions:** This series will cover three weeks of lessons for the month of February (February 4th, 11th and 18th) and includes homework for each week.

You should complete the homework assignment for each week before class. However, you are welcome to go ahead and complete all homework assignments in advance if you would like to.

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**Lesson Overview**

"I love my church!" This is more than a slogan – it is a way of life for those with understanding of this powerful life system God has provided. When God established His plan to redeem, establish and empower mankind - He set in place the local church. The local church is the central place where God receives, develops and sends out His disciples for the extended ministry of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

The English word "church" found in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word "ekklesia" which refers to that group or assembly of people who belong to God as a result of being redeemed from sin through the death of Jesus Christ. God provided local churches in specific regions so that these assemblies could be spiritually nurtured properly. Today's lesson will provide insight concerning the significance of the local church – and you will see some of the reasons why you should love God's church as an institution and love your local church.

**This week we will cover:**

- 1. Why Is the Local Church Important?**
- 2. What Does the Bible Say About the Local Church?**
- 3. The Results of Being Connected to the Local Church**

# 1. Why Is the Local Church Important?

What's so important about your local church? At a time when there's more access to Biblical teaching than ever before through radio, television, and the internet, why should it matter where and how you get the Word of God and fellowship? What's wrong with virtual, web-based congregations for the digital-age church? Why can't your iPod be your worship leader, your iPad or tablet be your pastor, and your friends and Christian acquaintances come from social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram? The answer is simple: that's not the way God designed it.

The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the importance of local assemblies and face to face interactions, with real people. In fact, it was the pattern of Paul's ministry to establish local congregations in the cities where he preached the gospel. Hebrews 10:24-25 commands every believer to be a part of such a local body and reveals why this is necessary.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** *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; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

It is only in the local body to which one is committed that there can be the level of intimacy and interaction that is required for carefully stimulating fellow believers "to love and good deeds." And it is only in this setting that we can encourage one another faithfully and biblically. Furthermore, there is chemistry at the local church that God not only ordains, but chooses to participate in. Jesus stated in Matthew chapter 18:

**Matthew 18:20** *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

**Revelation 3:22** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

With the right spiritual environment, God can effectively carry out His plan to develop the believer for their assignment and mission here on the Earth.

## 2. What Does the Bible Say About the Local Church?

The examples throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testament, suggest that a local congregation with appointed leaders is God's preferred method of addressing His people. Whether it was a gathering, tabernacle, temple, synagogue or church – it was in these forums and venues that God communicated His will.

The New Testament teaches that every believer is to be under the covering, protection and nurture of the leadership of the local church. These assigned pastors can “shepherd” the believer through encouraging, admonishing, and teaching. **Hebrews 13:7** and **17** help us to understand that God has graciously granted accountability to us through godly leadership.

**Acts 2:42** shows us what the early church did when they met together: “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” They learned God’s Word and how to live in righteousness concerning it, they joined to carry out acts of love and service to one another, they commemorated the Lord’s death and resurrection through Holy Communion and the breaking of bread, and they prayed.

Of course, we can do these things individually, but God has called us into the “unity of the faith” (**Ephesians 4**) at the local church!

### **The following are some of the works of the Local Church:**

1. A place that is specifically focused on your spiritual needs.
2. A place where you can give your life to Jesus Christ through salvation.
3. A place you will hear the Word of God.
4. A place where you can worship God freely.
5. A place of prayer, spiritual connection and restoration in Christ.
6. A place that is positive and Christian-oriented concerning family and children.
7. A place where you receive Pastoral Leadership concerning your life.
8. A place where you can learn how to break personal habits and/or addictions.
9. A place of relationships and fellowship.
10. A place where you can be equipped to reach the lost.
11. A place to serve the social needs of the community.

12. A place to grow individually and in leadership.
13. A place to participate in world missions – touching the world with God’s love.
14. A place to be a part of God’s mission and vision.
15. A place to invite others to come.
16. A place to develop your relationship with God.
17. A place to tell others about what God has done for you (testimony).
18. A place to give in tithing and offering to support the Kingdom of God
19. A place to be a part of something “bigger” – such as supporting the construction of the new worship center.

### **3. The Results of Being Connected to the Local Church**

**Psalm 122:1** *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*

There was a time when coming to Christ meant coming to His church. As far back as the New Testament, salvation brought you into union with the visible, “gathered” Body of Christ (Acts 2:47). Becoming a Christian meant entering into fellowship with the people of God at the local church.

Today’s society challenges this model and formula. When was the last time you heard or read a presentation, on television, the internet or otherwise, that connects having a strong relationship with God and the local church? At best there is a very low emphasis on church involvement, church membership, and being a part of the family of God in the visible, gathered household of saints.

But we know and the Bible teaches us that there is real power in coming together at the local church. It is designed to strengthen your relationship with God and establish real spiritual stability in your life. Active involvement at your local church is imperative to living a godly life without compromise.

It is only through the ministry of the local church that believers can receive the kind of teaching, accountability, and encouragement that is necessary for them to stand firm in their convictions. God has ordained the local church to provide an environment where a Christian can grow spiritually, be empowered and thrive. Having a good local church will have a direct impact in your daily living, spiritual growth and your success in the Lord.

**Acts 20:28** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Here are some practical benefits of being a member of the Local Church:

1. Being a member of the local church pleases God.
2. Being a member of the local church helps you to grow spiritually.
3. Being a member of the local church helps you to understand yourself.
4. Being a member of the local church builds your relationship with God.
5. Being a member of the local church enhances your spiritual satisfaction, joy and peace.
6. Being a member of the local church gives you a place to belong, worship and fellowship.
7. Being a member of the local church gives you purpose and assignment.
8. Being a member of the local church gives you a place to serve.
9. Being a member of the local church helps you to grow in wisdom and spiritual experience.
10. Being a member of the local church allows God to speak to you through pastoral instructions, preaching and counsel.
11. Being a member of the local church gives you opportunities to participate in your church's vision and build the Kingdom of God.

**Acts 14:27** *And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.*

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Wow! God is doing great things through the local church! He has set up an infrastructure designed to bless you and your family in many ways. And before today, maybe you didn't realize just how blessed you are to be part of God's church – but now, loving your church should be even easier – and what this lesson covered is just the tip of the iceberg!

One last note: when you love your church, you don't let ANYONE speak negatively about your church or your pastors. Just like you wouldn't stand for anyone talking against your child or your parents – you will defend what you love. Love gives you the backbone to stand up to people who try to spread lies or downplay what God is doing through your church...and through you. As a matter of fact, take a moment right now to just thank God for bringing you to Harvest Life Church – your local church!

## SUNDAY SCHOOL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup> – PART 3 OF 3

Loving Strong: Loving God's Church

### Why Is the Local Church Important?

- 1. Circle the Correct Answer.** According to the lesson, what did God design as the primary source for you to receive your teaching and training of the Word of God?
  - a. Social Media
  - b. Radio programs
  - c. Bible Study at your job
  - d. The local church

- 2. Write out the scripture, Hebrews 10:24-25**

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- 3. True or False –** The examples throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testament, suggest that a local congregation with appointed leaders is God's preferred method of addressing His people.
  - a. True
  - b. False

### What Does the Bible Say About the Local Church?

- 4. True or False –** The New Testament teaches that every believer is to be under the covering, protection and nurture of the leadership of the local church.
  - a. True
  - b. False

**5. List 5 works of the local church – Harvest Life Church**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

**The Results of Being Connected to the Local Church**

**6. True or False** – Psalm 122:1 says, I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

- a. True
- b. False

**7. Fill in the Blanks** – The Bible teaches us that there is \_\_\_\_\_ in coming together at the \_\_\_\_\_.

**8. Fill in the Blanks** – It is only through the ministry of the \_\_\_\_\_ that believers can receive the kind of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ that is necessary for them to stand firm in their convictions.

**9. List 5 practical benefits of being a member of Harvest Life Church**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_