

LEAD 360
Christian Theology

Study Guide for Session 4
Part I: “The Christian Belief in the Church”

1. Questions to prompt thought and discussion:

- (1) What could you say to someone who claimed to be a Christian but who refuses to have a relationship to any kind of Christian congregation?
- (2) How is the biblical concept of “covenant” applicable to the N.T. church?
- (3) Identify three key images of the church in the N.T. which have a trinitarian reference.
- (4) How does the local church relate to God’s Kingdom?
- (5) What is the mission of the N.T. church according to the Jesus?
- (6) How does the nature of the church to glorify God relate to its mission?
- (7) How important is worship to the life and vision of the local church?
- (8) Of the several ways to the church in the N.T.—all Christian believers of all ages, all contemporary Christian believers worldwide and the church in its localized perspective—which one of these is the most prominent in the N.T.? What does this tell us?
- (9) How does the N.T. concept of “priesthood of all believers” relate to building up the body of Christ?
- (10) Why is it important not to separate evangelism and social ministry in the outreach efforts of a local church?
- (11) What could you say to someone who claims that church membership is not important, that only spirituality is essential or belonging to Christ is what matters most?
- (12) How is baptism related to church membership in a congregation according to the N.T.?
- (13) What are the two ordinances given by Jesus and what do they signify? Which one is the first to observe in the Christian life? Which one is

repetitive? Are they “merely” symbolic or do they have greater significance?

(14) Is it possible for a local church to be autonomous AND interdependent with other congregations?

(15) How were Christian leaders in local churches selected in the N.T.? What major problem or challenge do we have in identifying N.T. church leaders? Is there a “pastoral office” in the N.T.? What focus is given to leadership functioning within a local congregation?

(16) What is taught about “ordination” in the N.T.?

2. Recommended resources for further study:

(1) Basic level resources:

- Grenz, Stanley. *The Baptist Congregation: A Guide to Baptist Belief and Practice*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1985.
- McCall, Duke. ed. *What Is the Church?* Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958.
- Posterski, Donald C. & Irwin Barker. *Where's a Good Church? Canadians Respond from the Pulpit, Podium and Pew*. Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1993.
- White, James Emery. *Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in an Age of Transition*. rev. & exp. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.

(2) More advanced resources:

- Basden, Paul & David Dockery. eds. *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991.
- Bloesch, Donald. *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Carson, D. A. *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Dawson, Scott. ed. *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.
- Gibbs, Eddie & Ryan Bolger. *Emerging Churches; Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Karkakainen, Veli-Matti. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- McManus, Erwin Raphael. *An Unstoppable Force*. Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, Inc., 2001.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. & Shawn Wright. eds. *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2006.
- Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Church: An Insider's Look at How We Do It*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.
- Viola, Frank. *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2008. This is a strong appeal to consider house churches.

3. Personal & Group Activities:

- (1) Log in your journal the very first meaningful worship experience you had. What made it so significant? Did it have anything to do with your desire to glorify God?
- (2) Log in your journal your earliest impressions of church. Compare those impressions with the ones you have now.
- (3) Symbolic gestures can be found in every culture. Japanese and Koreans bow deeply from the waist with hands behind their backs. Filipinos raise their eyebrows to acknowledge another's presence. In your journal list symbolic actions and activities which are a part of your church experience. Examples may be: a meaningful handshake, heads bowed in worship, hands raised in praise, and most significantly, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- (4) Discuss with an active Roman Catholic his or her understanding of the Mass. Interview a Protestant pastor about his understanding of the Lord's Supper.
- (5) Explore why the concept of believer's baptism mainly stands in contrast to the baptism of infants. Why is a personal commitment through faith and repentance so important?
- (6) Attend a Pentecostal worship service and observe the style of worship. Interview the pastor or another church leader to learn about growth of Pentecostal churches in Canada (they are the fastest growing evangelical group in Canada).