

# FIRST STEPS

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*Your personal guide to understanding the essentials of following Jesus.*

5 | NEW RELATIONSHIPS



# FIRST STEPS | Book 5 – “New Relationships”

When God created the world he made some animal babies capable of taking care of themselves shortly after they are born. But not human babies. Without care, feeding, and protection we would have quickly died. This is why God places us in families. In a similar way, this is why Jesus established the church (Matthew 16:18).

He knew that without care, feeding, protection and development we wouldn't make much progress on our own. **The church isn't a building or an organization but God's family here on earth** (1 Timothy 3:15). It consists of every Christian regardless of their gender, race, color, education, culture or income. Churches may meet in different places around the world but they are united by the fact that God is their Father, Jesus is their Savior, and the Holy Spirit lives within them as their helper.

## **Even the Lone Ranger Had Tonto**

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**There are many things that we can do alone but being a healthy Christian isn't one of them.** Most of the analogies that the Bible uses to talk about the church, such as family, stones that make up a building, a flock, a holy nation, and a part of the Body of Christ are all plural.

1. According to Hebrews 10:24-25

What shouldn't we do?

What should we do and *why*?

It is easy to get discouraged and distracted from Jesus, especially when we neglect getting together with other Christians. There is an old story that illustrates this. A man had become discouraged and quit attending church. He was visited by another man from the church who had followed Jesus for years. The two sat in front of a fire in the living room. The visitor didn't say much but he took the fire-place tongs and lifted a red hot coal out of the fire and set it by itself. Soon the glowing ember began to cool and lose its glow. Then he picked it up again and put it back into the fire. After a short time it began to glow again. The lesson wasn't lost on the discouraged believer. **A Christian who isn't regularly meeting with other Christians will quickly lose their fire for Jesus.**



To go it alone, doesn't just go against the grain of how God designed you to grow and thrive as one of his children, it is incredibly foolish. If you've ever watched a nature show you've witnessed that predators rarely attack the herd. They tend to key in on the one that has strayed away.

**2.** How does 1 Peter 5:8 describe this?

## What are Some of the Benefits of Church?

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We see a great example of the benefits of church in Acts 2:41-47. Put a checkmark here \_\_\_\_\_ when you've read those verses.

- **GROWTH** (vs 42a) Just as the people devoted themselves to Biblical teaching so should we! God equips certain members of the church to help us understand and apply the truth of the Bible to our lives.

3. According to Ephesians 4:11-13 what are several ways Biblical teaching helps us grow?

- **WORSHIP** (vs 42b-43) They gathered not only to learn and grow but also to worship. God designed us to be worshippers: to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Since worship is giving love back to God, we can worship anywhere and at any time. We can worship in the shower or in the sanctuary. That being said, there is something dynamic about Christians worshipping together. That is why the first church and every church since has emphasized both individual and group worship.

4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:26 & Hebrews 13:15-17. What are at least 4 ways we are to worship together?

- **MINISTRY** (vs 44-45) They understood that they had a higher purpose than to just look out for their own needs. Children are naturally selfish but God saves us to be givers, not takers. He saved us for service to others. **He wants to continue His ministry here on earth through you and me.** The church equips, encourages, and provides opportunities for us to make a difference. God uses our time, abilities, and finances but a crucial part of that is our attitude.

5. According to Acts 20:35, what kind of attitude is God looking for when it comes to ministry in the church?

- **FELLOWSHIP** (vs 46) Not only did they meet together to worship as a large group in the temple, but they met in small groups in people's homes. They had all been given a common gift: new life in Jesus! That is a gift that is best shared. Large groups are great for worship & teaching, but small groups are where life is shared and relationships developed. The first church met in small groups. They studied the Bible together, ate together, helped one another with practical needs, encouraged one another, and they were filled with joy. Christians truly are better together rather than living isolated lives.

6. What are some of the benefits of fellowship mentioned in Hebrews 10:24-25?

- **OUTREACH** (vs 47) They didn't have the mentality of "us four and no more" - they wanted everyone to know Jesus and find new life in Him! Although this verses doesn't give us man details, it implies that they worked together as a church to help others come to Christ. There is no other group that has the power to impact the world the way that the church can. What a privilege to be apart of what God is doing!

7. According to Romans 1:16 what should be our attitude toward outreach?

### **Beware of the Porcupine!**

Porcupines are naturally loners but when they get cold, they slowly find other porcupines to get close to. The warmth they share feels really good. But it isn't long until one of them "needles" the other and they pull back only to end up back out in the cold. This is often the story of new Christians. Through God's grace they leave the cold of the world and are adopted into God's family. They begin to get close to some other Christians & it's wonderful for a season. But then the inevitable happens: they discover their brothers & sisters in Christ aren't always perfect. They feel "needled" or annoyed or offended and begin to pull away. They end up on the outside looking in and missing all of the benefits of being connected to the church: God's family.

8. Rather than going the way of the porcupine how should God's children respond to being needled? See Ephesians 4:31-5:1

## **Putting It All Together**

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**9.** Can a Christian *thrive* spiritually when they are not vitally connected to church? Explain.

**10.** On a scale of 1 to 10 (ten being high) how would you rate your involvement in a local church? Explain.

**11.** What small group could you check out this week? If you need help in connecting, head to [www.faithcommunity.church/small-groups](http://www.faithcommunity.church/small-groups)



## **Bible Verses Used in this Lesson**

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**Matthew 16:18** | And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church & the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

**1 Timothy 3:15** | If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** | And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love & good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

**1 Peter 5:8** | Be alert & of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

**Acts 2:41-47** | Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes & ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**Ephesians 4:11-13** | So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.



**1 Corinthians 14:26** | What then shall we say, brothers & sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

**Hebrews 13:15-17** | Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

**Acts 20:35** | In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

**Romans 1:16** | For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

**Ephesians 4:31-5:1** | Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children.

**We want to resource you in any way we can!**  
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