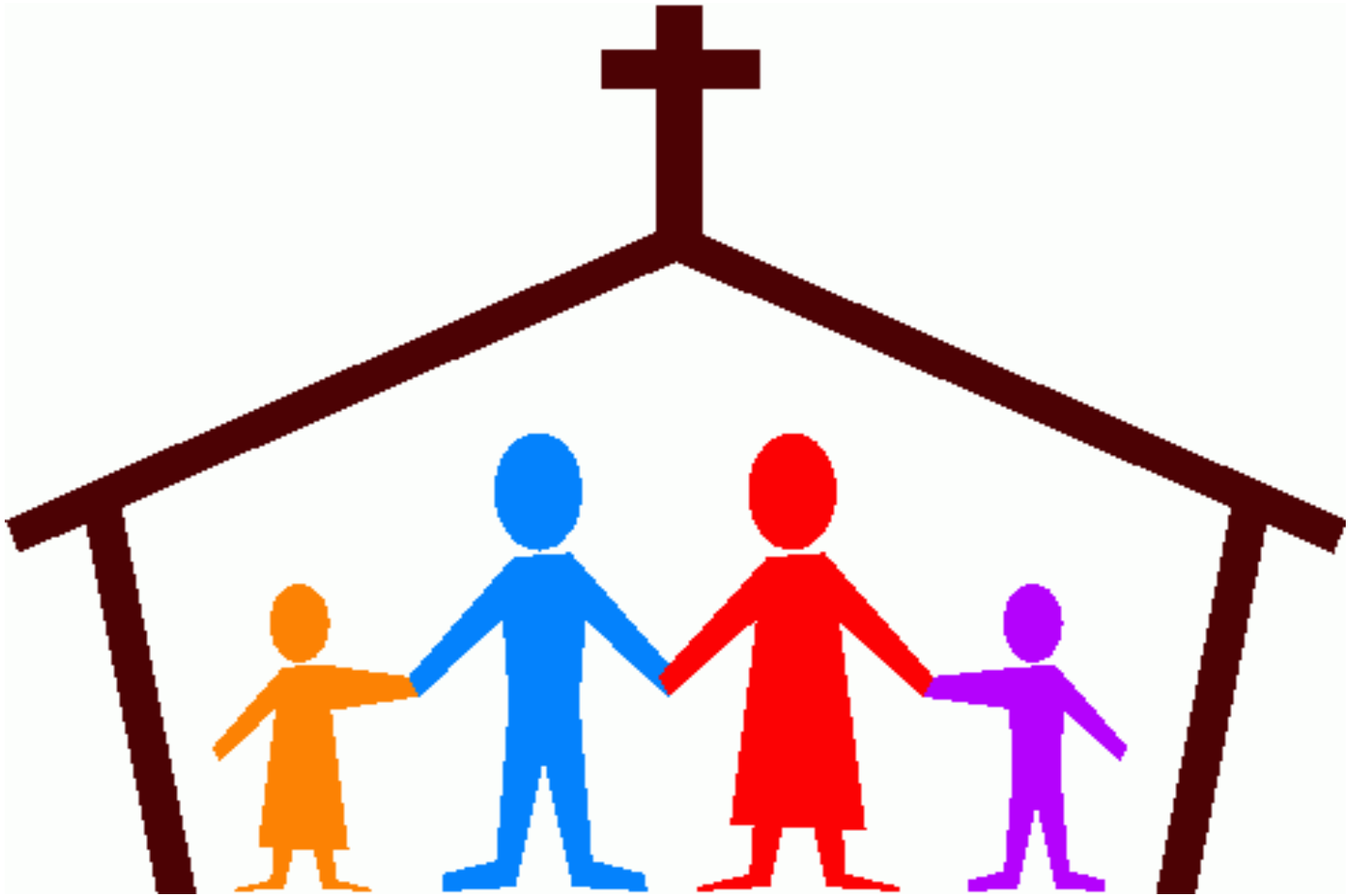


# The Church Of Christ

Lesson 8:

The Worship Of The Local Church



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

The Church Of Christ  
**Lesson 8: The Worship Of The Local Church**

Learn about the assemblies of the local church and the five acts of worship God has authorized for these times

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**Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series**

**Study Number:** DGW82

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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The Church Of Christ

# Lesson 8: The Worship Of The Local Church

God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. In John 4:23-24, Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Since God is seeking those who will worship Him, we need to be concerned with studying the subject of worship. Please notice that God is not seeking those who will worship Him in just *any* way they desire to worship Him. Rather, He is seeking those who will worship Him in *spirit* and in truth! Consider how Matthew 15:8-9 teaches that it is possible for our worship not to be pleasing to God: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

So, our worship must be “in spirit.” It must be done with the right attitude and focus. We must be focused on Him – not just going through the motions (as the passage in Matthew 15 demonstrated). Our

worship must be fully engaging – from one spiritual being to the Supreme spiritual Being!

Then, our worship must also be according to truth. Notice again that Matthew 15 demonstrates that our worship can be in “vain” when we are teaching as doctrines commandments of men rather than the things of God! So, the actions involved in our worship must also be pleasing to God. Consider that it is God who is able to dictate how He desires to be worshiped. It is not man’s role to decide how he wants to worship God. Rather, we must simply worship Him in a way that is keeping with the way of truth!

Now, as we think about the subject of “worship” in this lesson, it will prove to be beneficial to think about the meaning of the word itself. In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, the words that are most commonly translated “worship” have the ideas of bowing before and kissing toward. Thus, “worship” is an intentional act to express reverence and to praise/honor God. It is an intentional bowing of the heart before God. Worship, then, is direct and purposeful toward God – not indirect or accidental.

Certainly, worship is important both individually and collectively (as part of a local church). Again, God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Individual Christians, then, should be dedicated to worshipping God. Local churches should also be dedicated to worshipping God together. This study will be specifically focused on the worship of the local church – and what God has prescribed concerning it.

There is a pattern concerning the worship of the local church (just as there has been concerning the organizational structure and work of the local church). The Bible tells us what acts (activities) that local churches are instructed to engage in – that constitute worship. We will be considering these “acts of worship” in our study today. Local churches today must follow the New Testament pattern (blueprint) in all areas (2 Timothy 1:13). However, please note that while we do read about New Testament churches using miraculous spiritual gifts in their assemblies (see 1 Corinthians 14), those gifts have ceased to exist (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). Still, there are other things written in the pages of

Scripture concerning what the worship of the local church must consist of.

We want to focus our attention upon the things God has instructed local churches of Christ to be doing concerning their worship. Therefore, the purpose of this lesson is to go into the pages of the New Testament and discover what the Bible teaches about the worship of the local church.

## ***Assemblies Of The Local Church***

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Where is the authority for a local church even to come together? What is the purpose of these assemblies? Let's consider.

### **Local churches assembled together**

There were times in the New Testament when local churches assembled together. Notice the language in 1 Corinthians 14:23 and 26. Verse 23 says, "Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" Verse 26 says, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

While these verses deal specifically in the context of an assembly of this local church in which spiritual gifts were being used (i.e. prophesy and tongue-speaking), Paul's instructions still demonstrate that this whole church would all come together in one place. This is an assembly of the local church in Corinth.

Inference would also help us to conclude the same thing concerning local churches assembling together in one place. For instance, Acts 20:7 shows an example of a church that had assembled together for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's Supper: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his

message until midnight." Notice, specifically, that this assembly of the local church was on the first day of the week.

Another inference concerning the assembly of the local church is in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." Again, here is a time reference to the first day of the week when this collecting was done. And, implied in the collecting together of these funds would be a gathering together of individuals (namely the assembly of the local church in this context).

Also, notice Hebrews 10:24-25 to consider another inference to an assembly of a local church: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Clearly, there was an assembling together of Christians – if Christians were not to forsake that assembling together. Now, the only assembling together of Christians that would be mandatory would be the assembling together of the local church. It only makes sense that those who are part of local churches must be present for the assemblies of those churches.

Therefore, we can plainly see that the local churches were in the regular practice of assembling together. Specifically, we have seen two references to the local church assembling together on the first day of the week and involving themselves in two acts of worship that are specified to have taken place at that time (i.e. the Lord's Supper and the collection).

### **The purpose of these assemblies**

The assemblies of the local church in the New Testament had a two-fold purpose that are in harmony with God's design for the local church. Today, the assemblies of the local church must continue to fulfill these two purposes.

**(1) Worship.** First, these assemblies were for the purpose of worshiping God. As we will see, God has prescribed five acts of worship that are to be

## *The Five Acts Of Worship*

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accomplished in the setting of local church assemblies. Each one of the specific acts of worship engaged in by the local church served the purpose of worshipping God. For instance, Ephesians 5:19 says that when we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs we make melody in our hearts “to the Lord.” So, the primary focus of the assemblies of the local church is to praise and glorify God!

**(2) Edification.** Another purpose for the assemblies of the local church is concerning the edification of the church. Remember (from lesson 7) that edification is one of the God-given works for a local church to accomplish. The assemblies of the church is one of the main ways a local church can accomplish the work of edification. It should be a great encouragement for anyone who takes part in these worship services to know that they are not alone in their desire and attempt to worship God! Look at 1 Corinthians 14:26 again: “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” All things relative to the assemblies of the local church should be focused on spiritually building up others. That is Paul’s point in this passage. While this specifically addresses assemblies dealing with miraculous spiritual gifts being used, the general principle is applicable to every assembly of the local church!

Now, as you consider both of these functions of the assemblies of the local church, consider that they are both being accomplished simultaneously! Whenever a local church is focused on worshipping God in spirit and in truth, those who are present are also being spiritually strengthened in the faith. For instance, we saw how Ephesians 5:19 states that we are make melody in our hearts to the Lord whenever we sing. Now, realize that Colossians 3:16 says that we teach and admonish one another through the signing of these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs! Therefore, we don’t need to try to separate worship and edification. Instead, whenever we focus entirely on giving our worship to God in spirit and in truth, we will also be built up in the faith of the gospel!

At this point in our study (having established the authority for the local church to assemble together and the purpose of these assemblies), we now want to focus our attention directly upon the specific acts that constitute worship God has authorized the local church to engage in during these assemblies. Now, nowhere does the Bible directly label these five activities as “acts of worship.” However, they do meet the definition of worship (that we considered at the beginning of this lesson). Remember that we must always be interested in doing all things according to the authority of (in the name of) the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17). Therefore, let’s look to God’s word and discover what the Bible truly teaches about the worship of the local church.

### **Gospel preaching**

**(1) Examples.** First, consider some examples of gospel teaching/preaching being done in the assemblies of the local church.

Acts 20:7 records some things concerning Paul’s stay in Troas and his time with the church there: “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” Along with the Lord’s Supper, one of the things accomplished in this assembly of the local church was Paul’s teaching. Now, consider the fact that the language in this passage indicates a formal discourse (not an informal conversation). So, Paul was speaking before the congregation on this occasion. I believe that implication would force us to conclude that he was speaking to them concerning the word of God!

Next, consider the assembly of the Corinthian church that is referenced in 1 Corinthians 14. We have already seen that 1 Corinthians 14 deals with times when the “whole church comes together in one place” (verse 23). Furthermore, we have also identified the use of spiritual gifts (i.e. tongue-speaking and prophecy) in this chapter and in these assemblies of the Corinthian congregation. Now, I

want you to consider why spiritual gifts were even used in the assemblies of many first century churches. In the first century, spiritual gifts were temporarily provided by God (through the laying on of the apostles' hands, see Acts 8:17-18) for the purpose of confirming the word that would be taught (see Hebrews 2:1-4 and Mark 16:19-20). After all, this was prior to the completion and wide distribution of the New Testament text. So, these spiritual gifts were temporarily used by God to demonstrate that the things being taught were words of truth. However, now that we have the perfect revelation, we are no longer in need of these miraculous spiritual gifts – and they have vanished away (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). Now, simply consider that public teaching of God's word is being done in 1 Corinthians 14. Notice verse 26 again: "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has **a teaching**, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification" (emphasis mine, EMK).

As another example of public teaching in the assemblies, consider Paul's statement to the Colossians in Colossians 4:16: "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." These two letters were to be read in both of these congregations. Again, in this time the New Testament was being written, this was one way in which they could publicly teach God's word (when the apostle Paul would write a letter to churches).

**(2) How gospel preaching constitutes an act of worship.** Clearly, New Testament congregations engaged in the public proclamation of God's word in their assemblies. But, how does this constitute an act of worship in the local church?

The public teaching of God's word in the assemblies causes all who are gathered together to focus on what God's word teaches. Teaching God's word focuses on who God is, what He has done for us, what He expects of us, and what He has prepared for those who obey/disobey Him. Certainly, it should be the great desire of everyone who has assembled to learn the teachings from God's word in order to make the proper applications to his/her life and make any changes or improvements necessary. The noble

attitude of the Bereans was such that they wanted to know the truth of God's word – and they made their own diligent search of the Scriptures in order to see if they were being taught truth or not (see Acts 17:11).

As we assemble with local churches and hear the teaching of God's word, we should all be focused on becoming more of what God desires us to be. Again, the focus is on God and learning and applying His will in order that we might please Him. So, as we hear God's word, we listen with an attitude of self-evaluation in order that we might not be just hearers of God's word, but doers of His word (James 1:22-25). God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness in His word (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) – and we should all be concerned with learning it and putting it to work in our lives! The assemblies of the local church helps us to focus on God in this way.

**(3) Some notes.** Consider a few additional facts about gospel preaching as an act of worship in the local church. First, the gospel's message must not be changed or altered in any way. Galatians 1:6-9 (and other passages) condemns the practice of making any changes to the one true gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, Matthew 15:8-9 (quoted earlier) demonstrates that teaching (or, by implication, listening to) the commandments of men (i.e. the doctrines and opinions made by man) as doctrines from God will cause your worship to be in vain (worthless). Third, the public teaching of God's word necessarily implies that there are individuals who are listening to the teaching – and both are necessary elements to this act of worship. Fourth, the public gospel preaching that takes place in the worship assemblies of the local church will be led by men *only* (as we will discuss further later in this lesson, see 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

## Giving

**(1) Example.** As we saw in lesson 7, there is one passage in the New Testament Scriptures that identifies how a local church raises funds to accomplish its God-given work. This is through a freewill offering of its members. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is the only passage that gives instructions concerning when or how this is to be accomplished:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

As was demonstrated earlier in this lesson, the necessary inference in the passage is that it concerns the assemblies of the local church (particularly notice the reference to the first day of the week). Also notice that the instructions given in this passage were not only given to the church in Corinth, but also to the churches of Galatia.

**(2) How giving constitutes an act of worship.** Having established that giving is a function of the assembly of the local church on the first day of the week for the purpose of raising funds to accomplish its God-given work, let’s also consider how this constitutes an act of worship.

Those who are involved in giving should focus on the blessings God has provided. Notice that the amount that is contributed to the local church should correspond with the amount that individual has prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2). Certainly God has provided the Christian with many blessings. In fact, every good thing that you have has come from God! James 1:17 says that every “good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation of shadow of turning.” Some of the blessings God has provided us are spiritual (Ephesians 1:3) and some of the blessings are physical. Therefore, whenever we contribute to this collection of funds to accomplish the work of the local church, we should be focused on how God has prospered us and be thankful for it!

In addition, as you give financially in support of the work of the local church, you should consider that you are taking a financial part in the good works the local church is engaged in or will be engaged in collectively. Again, this collection is the only authorized means to fund the God-given work of the local church. Therefore, this work will only be accomplished through the cooperation of its members to contribute to the work (financially and otherwise). Each member, then, has the great opportunity and responsibility to do his/her part (see Ephesians 4:16). So, those who are willing to take

part in this giving can focus on the work that the local church will be accomplishing with these funds – and how they will bring glory to God (by accomplishing the works identified in lesson 7).

**(3) Some notes.** Consider a few additional facts about giving as an act of worship in the local church. First, realize that this is the only New Testament passage on the subject of how a local church gains its funding (there is no authority for a church to gain funding by a bake sale, rummage sale, or any other kind of fundraising activity). Second, this collection is only to be taken up on the first day of the week (there is no collection authorized on any other day of the week). Third, this collection is a freewill offering of the members in accordance with the prosperity of each one (there is no required percentage or amount). Fourth, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 gives additional detail concerning the attitudes and some additional principles for the collection – including the fact that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

## The Lord’s Supper

**(1) Examples.** Consider some examples of the Lord’s Supper being instituted and being observed in the assemblies of the local church.

Matthew 26:26-29 records Jesus’ instructions to His disciples regarding the institution of the Lord’s Supper: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.’” Therefore, upon the commandment of the Lord, His people must partake of this supper in memory of Him – using the two elements identified in this text.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 also provides instructions concerning the Lord’s Supper. Primarily, Paul is attempting to correct perversions that had been made to the Lord’s Supper in Corinth. They had, apparently, perverted the nature of the Lord’s Supper into a common meal – and Paul was

giving this church instructions concerning properly partaking of it. Particularly, he reminds them of the words of Jesus when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper – in verses 23-26.

As we noticed earlier regarding the teaching of God's word, Acts 20:7 records an example of the church in Troas assembling together and partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." Specifically note the phrase "break bread." This phrase is used in Scripture to identify both common meals and the Lord's Supper (see how Jesus used the phrase in Matthew 26:26-29). The context of the whole church assembling together on the first day of the week would indicate that the phrase is being used in this verse to clearly identify the Lord's Supper.

**(2) How the Lord's Supper constitutes an act of worship.** Having identified that Jesus' disciples are expected to partake of the Lord's Supper and did partake of the Lord's Supper in the assemblies of the church on the first day of the week, consider how this constitutes an act of worship.

Partaking of the Lord's Supper is designed to cause everyone who is partaking to focus on the price that was paid for their salvation. The Lord's Supper is a spiritual supper to remember the sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus said to "do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). It is, then, a time to reflect upon the great love God has demonstrated for mankind (and for you personally) to send His Son to die on the cross and for Jesus to willingly give His life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (and for you personally). It is a time to consider all that Jesus Christ endured so that we could be saved eternally from our sins!

Partaking of the Lord's Supper also provides us with the opportunity for inward reflection. According to 1 Corinthians 11:27-28, there is to be an examination with regard to how we are partaking of the Lord's Supper. Certainly, we want to be sure that we are partaking of it in a way that is worthy of the Lord. While the specific examination in this

passage probably referred to the specific way the Corinthians had corrupted the Lord's Supper, taking of the Lord's Supper and considering the great price paid for our salvation should also cause us to consider whether we are living our lives in a way that is right with God or not. We should reflect upon our lives to see if we have truly given our lives to the one who gave His life for us (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:20) or if God's grace has been shown to us in vain (1 Corinthians 15:10). This will help us to make the proper changes and live as better servants of the Lord!

**(3) Some notes.** Consider a few additional facts about the Lord's Supper as an act of worship in the local church. First, the Lord's Supper is to be taken in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27-28). The Lord's Supper is not a common meal (as the Corinthians seemed to have changed the Lord's Supper into). Notice what is said in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 34. Second, the Lord's Supper is to be taken on the first day of every week. The Lord's Supper is not just to be observed once per year/month/etc. It is to be observed weekly by those who are able (Acts 20:7). Also, there is no other day authorized for the Lord's Supper besides the first day of the week. Third, the Lord's Supper contains only two elements (as seen in Matthew 26:26-29): The unleavened bread (established by the fact that is the type of bread Jesus would have been eating for Passover) – representing Christ's broken body; and, the fruit of the vine – representing the blood of Christ (the blood of the new covenant).

## Prayer

**(1) Examples.** Consider some examples of prayer being offered in the assemblies of the local church.

1 Corinthians 14:15 (remember that 1 Corinthians 14 deals with times the whole church assembles together in one place – verse 23 and 26) says, "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."

Acts 12 also provides some points to consider concerning this. Verse 5 states that Peter was kept in



prison and “constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.” Though this passage does not necessarily mean that the church was assembled together when it was praying for him, verse 12 does help to see that “many were gathered together praying” for Peter at Mary’s house (perhaps this was when the church assembled together for worship).

Furthermore, Acts 4:23-30 at least records another example of prayer being offered when Christians come together. The context specifies that Peter and John went to “their own companions” (after being threatened for preaching Jesus to the people) and prayed together. Now, “their own companions” could refer to the church in Jerusalem – or it could simply refer to the other apostles.

**(2) How prayer constitutes an act of worship.** Other examples also continue to demonstrate the same point that that Christians prayed frequently (1 Thessalonians 5:17) – and prayed together. Specifically, 1 Corinthians 14:15 helps us to see that this was even done when local churches assembled together. Having identified these things, let’s now consider how prayer constitutes an act of worship in the local church.

Prayer addresses God with our cares and concerns. Prayer reminds us that we are the children of God and that He is our Almighty Father who cares for us. Therefore, prayer reminds us of the great care of God and the fact that He invites us to cast all of our cares and worries upon Him (see 1 Peter 5:7 and Philippians 4:6-7).

Prayer is an avenue through which we can directly praise God. It is an avenue for expressing our thanksgiving to God and for praising God for all that He is and all that He has done for us! The psalms of David are particularly helpful to see inspired examples of praise being offered to God in prayer!

Prayer is also the avenue through which God tells Christians who have sinned to find forgiveness of their sins. In addition to repentance, Acts 8:22 and 1 John 1:8-2:2 demonstrate that we must confess our sin to God and ask Him for forgiveness through prayer. Thus, we are reminded of the fact that our salvation is dependent upon God (see an example concerning David in Psalm 51).

**(3) Some notes.** Consider a few additional facts about prayer as an act of worship in the local church. First, remember that prayer is a tremendous blessing that is full of power that has been made available by God to the Christian (James 5:16). Second, consider the blessing of joining in prayer with brothers and sisters in Christ. Third, our prayers are to be offered/addressed to the Father (i.e. Matthew 6:9). Fourth, our prayers are offered through the name of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate with the Father (Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2). Fifth, our prayers must be offered in faith in order to be effective (James 1:5-8).

## Singing

**(1) Examples.** Consider some examples concerning the place for singing in the worship of the local church.

1 Corinthians 14:15 (in the same context we have discussed previously) says, “What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”

Ephesians 5:19 (notice the “one another” aspect of this passage – which would apply to the singing in the assemblies of the local church) says, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Similarly, Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

**(2) How singing constitutes an act of worship.** This is just a sample of New Testament passages specifying the type of music that we use to worship God (vocal music). But, how does singing constitute an act of worship to God?

Some of the songs that are sung are directly sung to praise God. Some songs focus on praising Him for the things He has done (i.e. His love, mercy, and grace demonstrated through Jesus Christ). Some songs focus our minds on His nature (i.e. His holiness, power, etc.). All of these songs are

beneficial to focus our minds directly upon God and praise Him accordingly!

Some songs teach and warn us concerning spiritual truths God has revealed. Colossians 3:16 demonstrated that this is one of the benefits of singing these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Some songs remind us of Bible passages and Bible truths that we need to consider and apply to our lives. Some songs teach us truths from God's word we may have never considered before. Some songs directly warn us about things we need to be preparing for (i.e. our deaths, the Judgment Day, etc.). All of these spiritual songs are beneficial to focus our minds directly upon truths God has revealed in His word and to encourage and warn us to live our lives accordingly!

**(3) Some notes.** Consider a few additional facts about singing as an act of worship in the local church. First, all of the passages in the New Testament (the law we live under today) on the subject of how we are to worship God show the action of singing – never playing a mechanical instrument of music (read Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; Hebrews 13:15; James 5:13). Second, the only instrument that is to be used is specified in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 – the heart! Third, there is *zero* authority to use a mechanical instrument in worship to God (either in public or private worship)! The Scriptures are silent with regard to such – and we must not violate the silence of the Scriptures. Fourth, the songs we are authorized to sing are psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs – not secular or popular culture songs.

## ***Important Principles Related To The Worship Of The Local Church***

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Having established some things God has said about the worship of the local church, let's also consider some important principles related to the

worship and assemblies of the local church so that we can make sure that we are pleasing to God in this area. Consider 5 principles with me.

### **Prepare for true worship**

Think back to the things we discussed in the introduction to this lesson. God wants us to worship Him. He is seeking true worshipers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Also, remember that worship (by its very nature) does not just happen by chance. Instead, it is a purposeful thing!

Therefore, we should all desire to prepare ourselves to worship God in the way He is seeking to be worshipped in. We would do well, then, to give consideration to our worship before we actually begin worshipping. Here are some suggestions. (1) Clear your mind of worldly things. (2) Be rested and alert (if possible). (3) Consider the significance of your worship – before you worship. (4) Prepare both your body and your mind to be as reverent to God as possible. (5) Work to eliminate as many distractions as possible.

### **Attend**

One of the most basic and fundamental responsibilities of Christians who are members of local churches is to attend all the assemblies of the local church you are capable of attending. In fact, Hebrews 10:24-25 directly identifies that it is sinful to willingly absent yourself from these assemblies, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Consider what it says about you and your desire to worship and serve God if you willfully forsake/neglect *any* of the assemblies of the local church! Consider what it tells God about you (though He already knows your heart). Consider what it tells your brethren. Consider what it tells others who are around you (who may not even be Christians). Realize that if you know that you should assemble with the local church – and choose not to, you sin (James 4:17)!

## **Worship in spirit and truth**

You must not consider yourself as a “spectator” at a public worship service! The purpose of the assemblies of the local church is not for your entertainment! Instead, true worship will involve your active participation. Again, John 4:23-24 demonstrates that God is seeking true worshipers who will worship Him in spirit (a heartfelt and sincere way) and in truth (according to the truth He has revealed)!

Therefore, you should be focusing on the gospel teaching, on the importance of the collection and the blessings you have been given, on the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, on the words of the prayers, and on the words of the songs (and singing along, if possible). Furthermore, if you are participating in the worship, you will not be a distraction to others who are trying to worship God.

## **Observe the God-given gender roles**

Although every Christian (male and female) should be participating in the worship assemblies (as we’ve just seen), God has defined some specific gender roles which must be observed. Consider the following two passages.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35: “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” Remember that 1 Corinthians 14 deals with the context of the whole church assembling together (verses 23 and 26). In this setting (i.e. in the assemblies of the church), then, women were forbidden to speak (although women are permitted to sing along with the entire congregation – as seen from the passages we’ve consider about singing).

1 Timothy 2:11-14: “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” A woman’s role is clearly limited in this passage to a role of

submission to men. She is not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man. Rather, she is to be quiet. Paul then explains the two reasons why this is so: (1) Because Adam was formed first, then Eve; and (2) Because Eve was the first to be deceived.

Consider, then, some conclusions and applications from these passages to the assemblies of local churches. (1) Women cannot take leading roles in the assemblies of the local church – like public teaching before the whole congregation. (2) None of God’s instructions or reasoning is limited to the specific time in which Paul was writing. We must not allow our culture to cause us to change what Paul has said. God gave His reasoning in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 – as well as His commandments in the passages we’ve considered.

## **Do things decently and orderly**

Finally, understand that God wants the worship assemblies of the local church to be orderly. He does not want chaos and confusion. This is why Paul presented all of the instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40! He wants people to realize that God is “not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Therefore, Paul simply told the Corinthians, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). He wants people to focus on the spiritual activities He has prescribed (as we’ve been discussing throughout this lesson) instead of being confused by chaotic activity! This same principle is true for local church assemblies today as well.

## ***Conclusion***

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What a wonderful opportunity we have: To come together as God’s people (as members of a local church) and worship our Creator, Lord, and Savior! We are truly blessed to be part of Jesus’ church – which He has purchased with His own blood. Therefore, let us seek to do everything by the authority of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17) – including in the way we worship Him!

As we close this series of lessons, I hope that you have a better understanding of the church of Christ you can read about in the Bible. I hope you are determined to be part of Jesus' one true church (in the universal sense) and that you will be part of a local church of Christ that follows the Bible pattern in all areas. Then, I hope you will faithfully serve the Lord every day as a member of His body – and contribute your part! Always remember to seek Bible authority in every area that you might help the church give glory to Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

## ***Study Questions***

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What does John 4:23-24 say about our worship?

What is worship?

### **1. Assemblies Of The Local Church**

Is there authority for local churches to assemble together? Give specific examples.

What was the purpose of these assemblies?

### **2. The Five Acts Of Worship**

Discuss the act of Gospel preaching as worship.

Discuss the act of giving as worship.

Discuss the act of the Lord's Supper as worship.

Discuss the act of prayer as worship.

Discuss the act of singing as worship.

### **3. Important Principles Related To The Worship Of The Local Church**

Discuss the following principles related to the worship of the local church:

1. Prepare for true worship –
2. Attend –
3. Worship in spirit and truth –
4. Observe the God-given gender roles –
5. Do things decently and orderly –