**DISCIPLESHIP LESSON #6**

**The Church**

After studying a great deal of theology it is now time to look at this church. Why is it called a Baptist Church? What makes this church different from a church of another denomination? These questions will be answered in this lesson. We want you to become familiar with our church, the mission groups we support, the doctrine we uphold, and how this church operates. Let us begin with our association of churches and see what it is and what it does.

O’Brien Baptist Church is a part of the Suwannee Baptist Association of churches. The SBA is a part of the Florida Baptist Convention which is a part of the Southern Baptist Convention. However, being a part of these conventions does not mean that they tell us what to do. Rather, we are autonomous which means we do what we sense the Holy Spirit directs us to do as we read the Bible. The two conventions can and do make suggestions but they do not send down orders to tell us what to do or how to do it. We are our own entity but we cooperate with the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. This is our choice and it makes for a good combination for many churches can do more than just a few. We give each month to the Cooperative Program which joins all SBC churches together so that we all take part in mission endeavors all over the world.

**WHAT IS A CHURCH?**

What is a church? According to the Bible, a church is a called out assembly. In the case of a church that follows Jesus Christ, it is a called-out assembly of followers of Jesus Christ. This makes the church a unique place. Our course, the church is made up of people, not buildings. A church building is where the church meets for worship and other activities. Prayer meetings, youth meetings, special meetings (Christmas programs or Easter programs) all take place in the church building.

**REVIEW**

1. Describe a congregational church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What is a church according to the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. What is the purpose for the church building? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Church Government**

As has been mentioned before, we are a congregational church. We have monthly business meetings where the business of the church is discussed and approved. It is here that new ministries are discussed and plans are made for the future. We also discuss the past and how we might learn from it so that mistakes are minimized in the future. When a member of OBC moves away and finds another SBC church, their new church sends a letter requesting their membership. In business session our church approves the request and sends a letter to that effect to the other church. In this way, members are only members of one church at a time. No one person can make decisions about what to do without permission from the church body in business session. That includes the pastor. He is the leader of the church but must appeal to the church for approval in starting new ministries, planning future events that are not on the church calendar, and general items that come up from time to time. He does have authority but that authority is given him by the church. He is not to act independently of the church for that takes away from the congregational rule. As Baptists, we believe that God speaks in and through the church not just the leadership of the church.

**REVIEW**

1. What kind of government does OBC use? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**MEMBERSHIP**

How can one become a member of FBC? First, we must realize what the Bible says about church membership. Church membership is not explicitly stated in Scripture but it is implied in many places. This tells us that it is a good thing to be a member of a church. Let us consider some places in Scripture that imply church membership. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes this: (1 Cor 5:12-13: "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.") Paul is instructing the church on church discipline. The question is how can one tell outsiders from those inside the church? There must have been some way that the two groups could be differentiated. On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached, 3,000 people were saved. What good comes from counting those who were saved, if some method of separating them from those who were not saved was not used? Obviously, some means of keeping track of those in the church was used. We call that church membership.

Back to the original question: How does one become a member of OBC? All applicants for church membership must be baptized believers in Jesus Christ. If not, then steps must be made to insure that an applicant is baptized and a believer in Jesus Christ. Then, they are presented to the church for approval and they become a member. The usual method is that one comes down to the front of the church during the time of invitation. Pertinent information is taken about the applicant and if they are a baptized believer in Jesus Christ, the church approves them immediately. If they are not a baptized believer in Jesus Christ, the pastor will counsel them to discern if God is working in their heart. At this point, the pastor must discern whether or not the person is a believer and steps will be taken to insure the faith of the applicant and then they are presented to the church.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH**

We come now to the purpose of the church. What is a church supposed to do according to Scripture? The main purpose of the church is to glorify God in everything that is done. (1 Cor 10:31: Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.) However, there are subordinate purposes in Scripture that come under the main purpose. How do we glorify God in the best way possible? We follow what Scripture says and when we do we find there are two subordinate purposes for the church. They are evangelism and discipleship. Let us consider each of these.

**EVANGELISM**

How does the faith spread to others who do not know Jesus Christ? That is the job of the local church. Evangelism is the act of taking the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ. How that is done is the subject of this segment of this study. The church is to be involved in many different areas of evangelism. Everything we do is to be centered on either evangelism or discipleship. Jesus said in (Matt 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.") That is our job as a church and as individuals. We are to be about fulfilling this passage for it is how the church grows.

Jesus refers to His people as sheep and Himself as the Good Shepherd. We see this in John 10. There are interesting parallels between sheep and people, especially those apart from Christ. Let us consider some of these parallels and it will become clear that we are very much like sheep.

Turn to Isaiah 53 and let us consider this chapter. It is called the Suffering Servant chapter in the Old Testament. Consider verse 6. (Isa 53:6: All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.) Notice what the verse tells us. We have all like sheep, gone astray. In other words, we have all did our own thing instead of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We have all turned to our own way instead of following His way. What happened because of our straying and turning to our own way? God caused our sin to fall upon Jesus. Jesus took our sin upon Himself and died with them, and in the process, gave us His goodness or righteousness. Because of Him, we can now be accepted by God the Father. At one time we were hostile towards God and the things of God. Now, we are children of God.

We see that men and women are like sheep and have wandered far from the design for their creation. Man was created to serve and worship God. But man rebelled against god and now is estranged (separated) from Him. We can try as we might, but there is nothing we can do to bridge the gap between God and us. Only Jesus can reconcile (bring back two opposing groups or individuals) us to God. That is the first job of the church, to bring men and women, boys and girls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20 calls this “making disciples.” That is what this ministry is designed to do, to make you desire to grow more and more in the grace of God. So, the first purpose of the church is to make disciples, and teach them to obey all that Jesus has told us in the Bible.

**DISCIPLESHIP**

The next purpose of the church is to minister to the saved. Even though we are to make disciples of those who are apart from God, once we do that the real work begins. Discipleship is a long-term commitment. Evangelism is getting people into the kingdom of God but discipleship is causing them to grow in grace. The church is to take care of its members spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Of course, the church is limited in some ways because of the size, but we cannot escape from the command to minister to the church. Jesus died for the church and we are to live for the church. There are times when church members need financial help and the church is to provide it. There are times when the church needs to help members grieve the loss of someone close to them. There are other times when the church is to help members deal with emotional issues like marriage, family issues, rebellious children, etc. However, the primary ministry of the church is teaching and preaching. This helps members grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we become more like Him in our attitudes and actions. Worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, prayer, Bible study, and other means are to help us grow and become more like Jesus as we walk on this earth. The more we study and read the Bible, the more we will become like Jesus and the more we can handle the problems we face, just like when He faced the cross. When we know that we are not left to ourselves, we can live a more productive and fulfilling life. Thank God for the church, the body of Christ!

**MEMBER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

What is expected of church members? In a church like ours, each member has responsibilities that make church life a lot easier. When we are all working together to build the kingdom of God that makes the church a dim picture of what Heaven will be. Of course, nothing on earth can show us the glory of Heaven perfectly, but when the church is working in accordance with the Word of God, it is a bit like Heaven, for God approves of what we do when we do it for His glory. Let us consider some responsibilities that church members can and should do so that the church honors and glorifies God.

**Giving**

No one likes to talk about money in the church. Yet, it is money that allows the church to meet its needs and do the job that God has called us to do. Some churches teach that members should give 10% of their income to the church. There is nothing wrong with this type of thinking except it is not the New Testament principle. Giving 10% is an Old Testament principle rather than a New Testament principle. Giving 10% is not commanded the church in the New Testament. Rather, the principle is that those in the church give as the Lord has prospered them. In other words, you give as you sense God has directed you to give. He may direct you to give a certain amount this Sunday and more or less next Sunday. We need to pray and ask Him what we should give. In (1 Cor. 16:1,2,) Paul is urging the church in Corinth to set aside money every Lord's Day, as they had been prospered by God. This was to be given to men who would take the gift to the Christians in other areas who were in great need. The principle is simple. As God has blessed you, so give. He knows what the church needs and if you will ask Him, He will tell you what to give. If you do not sense Him telling you an amount, give what you think would please Him.

**Attendance**

Many today think they attend worship for the pastor or to keep God from being angry with them. Worship attendance is not for us, it is for God. We are not to attend because the music appeals to us, or we like the preacher, or because our family attends. We are to attend because we want to honor and worship our great God and Creator. We want to give Him the honor He deserves because it is He that has made us and not we ourselves. Worship is for Him, even though we get much out of worship. We must remember that we are there to focus upon God and any other reason is displeasing to Him. It is sure that others will notice when we are not present in worship and we could become a means of making them stumble.( Heb 10:23-25: Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.) This passage tells us that we are to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. We cannot do that if we do not attend. We are also not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in worship. Therefore, it is necessary that we take time to worship with the church as Scripture says.

**Music**

Music is an important part of most people's lives. Now, there is satellite radio along with different CD players that can keep us company while we drive. In and outside the church, music has been a part of worship from the very beginning. We are told in [(Job 38:6-7: "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?] We see in this passage from the oldest Old Testament book, that the angels sang praise to God at the creation of the earth. Praise and worship are two sides of the same coin. We may worship in different ways, but most churches sing their praise to God by means of hymns, choruses, and spiritual songs. Hymns are songs that actually praise God for something. The Doxology (from the Greek doxos, meaning praise) is sung in many churches. This hymn tells us something about God. Choruses are usually Scripture put to music. Some choruses say little about God even though they are in Scripture. Choruses need to encourage or in some way give us hope as we walk through this life. Spiritual songs are songs that may tell us life experiences and how faith is able to help us cope with our circumstances.

**QUESTIONS**

1. How does one become a member of OBC? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What are the two purposes of the church mentioned in this study? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is the definition of evangelism? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. What is the definition of discipleship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5. What is the primary purpose of the church? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. Is the preacher of a church supposed to tell you how much you should give of your money? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

How much are we supposed to give? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

7. Why are we to attend church worship services?

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8. What kind of music is to be used in worship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

9. What is the difference between a hymn and a chorus?

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**OTHER RESOURCES**

Spiritual Disciplines In The Church, Don Whitney.

The Master's Plan For The Church, John MacArthur, Jr.

Life In The Father's House, Wayne A. Mack and David Swavely.

Memory verse: Col 1:18: He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. NASU