

Church Formation Resources

by Steve Smith

Notes on CPM Churches

The Lord's Supper

A key component of any church is the Lord's Supper or Communion. It is a key piece in any group becoming a church, including CPM churches. Jesus uses the two ordinances to solidify and purify His church. If baptism is the "never again" ordinance, the Lord's Supper is the "ever again" ordinance.¹

Regular observance of the Lord's Supper keeps a church focused on the centrality of the faith: the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus and the redemption that comes only through Him. It has a wonderfully purifying effect on the church when observed regularly in a biblically-appropriate manner.

This lesson was driven home to my heart at a missionary conference in which Dr. Ralph Covell was the main speaker. I did not write down all of the details, but remember the basic gist of a story he told. He and a number of missionary colleagues were kicked out of China in the Communist revolution. One of his colleagues had just preached the gospel to a remote people group that was previously unreached. He didn't have much time after their conversion before the Communists came through the areas and drove him out.

From my recollection, the missionary was not able to leave them a Bible in their language. But before he left, he taught them to observe the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper ceremony, he taught them to do three things:

- Focus on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as a sacrifice for you sins
- Confess your sins to Jesus and renew your commitment to Him
- Confess your sins to offended brothers and sisters, and be made right with them.

He taught them to practice this weekly. Then he left. This missionary fled to Taiwan with Dr. Covell where he served another people group for many years.

Forty years later, he returned to China to see if any believers remained among this remote mountain tribe. When he found the valley, he was startled by what he found: the believers still existed. They were not very **mature**, but they were very **pure** in their devotion to Christ. They had resisted persecution and false teachers because each week they focused again on the sacrifice of Jesus and their salvation in Him. They renewed their commitment to him weekly.

They had not matured much because they had no Scripture to know how to progress. That was understandable. But the fact that they had stayed pure spoke to the power of the ordinance of Communion.

When I heard that story, I resolved to make the Lord's Supper a regular (often weekly) part of the early Hun churches. I can attest to the purifying power of this ordinance. It keeps believers focused on the right things: the Lord, and their life of devotion to Him.

¹ Thom Wolf was the one who taught me this phrase.

I encourage you to make the Lord's Supper a regular part of your churches. You can include the Lord's Supper in the church lesson, or add it as a separate lesson.

Two or Three Gathered – Matthew 18:19-20

The question is often raised: "What is the minimum number needed for a group to be called church?" Jesus makes a startling statement about His church:

"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." (Matt 18:19-20)

There is power in two or three, beyond the power within one. There is a special presence of Christ when two or three are gathered in His name. In the context (vv 15-18), Jesus is talking about church discipline: 1) start by going alone in private to confront a sinning brother; 2) take one or two others with you if he doesn't repent; 3) take it to the larger church gathering if he still refuses to repent. So, obviously, in this context the church was probably larger than the two or three confronting the sinning brother.

The ideal size for a CPM church is usually defined by its context: How many can fit in a house or under a tree? How many can meet securely away from the eyes of persecutors?

But the question is how many does it take to start a church. Jesus states that with two or three, His special presence becomes a reality. If all you had were two or three new believers in a remote village, could you help them become church? Yes. But their very smallness would drive them to reach their *oikos* so that the church would inevitably grow larger in time.

Two or three is a starting point from which to build. It's impossible to have a church of one.

Examples of T4T Church Lessons

In the pages that follow are two examples of lessons used in early discipleship to help a group become a church. One is literate (T4T Classic) and one is oral (Training Rural Trainers). They should give you ideas of how to structure your own lesson(s).

T4T Classic - Lesson 4 – The Church Meeting

When you become a Christian, you are a member of God’s family. God is your heavenly father, and all Christians are like brothers and sisters of the same family. “...this household is the church of the living God...” (1 Timothy 3:15). The household is not a building, and the “church” is not a place of worship, but is a body of believers.

I. What is the relationship between Jesus and Christians in the Bible?

(1) (Romans 12:5) _____

(2) (Ephesians 1:22-23) _____

II. What is the position of Christ in the church?

(1) (Ephesians 5:23) _____

III. The Function of the Church:	Your Needs:
1. Worship: “ _____ God, sing to the Lord a new song , his praise in the assembly of the saints.” (Psalms 149:1)	to worship
2. Fellowship: “ And let us consider how we can spur _____ on toward love and good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:24)	to share
3. Teaching: “and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...(Matthew 28:20)	to learn
4. Discipline: “ to prepare God’s people _____ so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Ephesians 4:12)	to serve
5. Live and work in the power of the Holy Spirit: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1:8)	to spread the gospel

IV. Can Christians today not attend church?

___ Yes ___ No ___ It Depends

Do you have difficulty attending church? _____

V. Why should you attend church?

- (1) Refer to part III above
- (2) This is God’s command - “And let us not _____ our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25) NLT
- (3) Avoid deviating from the truth of the Bible.
- (4) In church there are mature Christians to help you.

VI. Rights and Obligations We Have in Church

1. Righteousness we need to fulfill -- **Baptism**
 - a. Jesus calls baptism "righteousness". (Matthew 3: 15)
 - b. Baptism is to show, to witness and admit in front of people that we are baptized into Christ Jesus. (Romans 6: 3)
 - c. Baptism is to show that we are dead, buried and resurrected together with the Lord. (Romans 6: 4) "We were therefore _____ with him through baptism into _____ in order that, just as Christ was _____ through the glory of the Father, we too may live a ____ life."
 - d. Baptism is to confirm the decision of our faith. We are freed from the dead old person, and live a new life of resurrection. (Romans 6: 6-14)
 - e. Baptism is a witness, and it has no power to forgive sins. Salvation comes totally from confessing with the mouth and believing in the heart. (Romans 10:9)
2. Observance we need to keep – **the Lord's Supper**
 - a. Jesus Himself established it, to be in remembrance of Him, of His death and shedding of blood for our sins. (Matthew 26: 17-19; 26-30)
 - b. Whenever we take the Lord's Supper, it helps us to think and to thank God's grace again. "The _____ that brought us _____ was upon him, and by _____ we are _____" (Isaiah 53: 5)
 - c. Whenever we have the Lord's Supper, it helps us to examine our action and faith. (1 Corinthians. 11: 23-29)
3. Sacrifice we need to give – **Offering**
 - a. Offering is thanksgiving people give to God, and it is also worship to God. It could be categorized as: living sacrifice of the whole person, life offering, time offering, gift offering, and money offering.
 - b. Money offering is a requirement and trial God gives to believers, it has three kinds:
 - (1) Tithe -- it is a requirement of God. It belongs to God. It is actually not an offering, but what we need to give. (Leviticus 27: 30 – 31)
(Mal. 3: 8) "You _____ me in tithes and offerings."
(Mal. 3: 10) "_____, says the Lord Almighty." This is what we need to offer. We could use the nine tenths of what we have, but the one tenth belongs to God, which we should return back to Him.
 - (2) Offering of gift –
This is real offering, according to the sincere heart and mind. It is your personal decision how much gift you want to offer.
We could not worship God without gift and empty-handed every time.
 - (3) Love offering -- This is offering given to others according to their needs or other usage. Gift and love offerings can't be replaced by tithe.

Training Rural Trainers #5: The Church – *The Early Church*

Section 1: Praise, personal care, accountability, review and vision-casting

1. **Praise:** Sing the songs from the previous trainings and teach a new song. Pray for your time together.
2. **Personal care:** “How are you doing? What are you learning from God’s Word? What is God teaching you as you pray?” – Give biblical counsel and pray for needs.
3. **Accountability**
 - Question: “Did you obey the previous lesson?”
 - Question: “Who did you share with? Did they believe? Any ways I can help you?”
 - Question: “Who are you training in what I trained you?” (Who did you teach the previous lesson to?) “How can I help you?”
 - Question: “Among those you are training, who is now witnessing? How are they doing?”
 - Question: “Among those you are training, who is training others? How are they doing?”
 - Pray for needs that come up.
4. **Review:**
 - As needed, go over the C2C story and the person’s testimony helping them to become *more proficient and accurate in the telling*.
 - Review previous lessons (especially stories and memory verses).
5. **Vision casting:**
 - **Call to Multiply Trainers:** In the book of Acts, we see how believers trained one another to be trainers of others. One of the first followers of Jesus was a man named Barnabas. He found a new believer named Paul and encouraged him. He believed God could change Paul’s life to make him into a great apostle in the church. Several years later, Paul was preaching the gospel in another country. He found a young man named Timothy who believed in Jesus. Paul believed that Timothy could be useful servant in God’s kingdom even though he was a young Christian. Paul took Timothy with him to share the gospel in many places leaving him in one. Later, Paul wrote to Timothy and told him that he should train these faithful men to find other younger Christians to train.
 - God wants each believer to be a trainer of other believers who will train more trainers. In this way the gospel spreads rapidly!

Section 2:

1. **Story** (Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:37-47):

Jesus taught his disciples the importance of meeting together as fellow believers. He said, “I will build my church and all the powers of hell will not be able to defeat it!”

After Jesus ascended to heaven, his followers began to meet regularly with other believers as a church. They also spread the good news to many people.

On one occasion three thousand people heard and accepted the gospel and were baptized. These believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching which Jesus had given to them and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe, and the apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They gave sacrificially, even selling some of their possessions and goods, in order that they could help and give to those who were in need. They continued to meet together daily in the temple courts.

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord blessed the believers by bringing more and more people to them who became saved.

Questions:

1. What is this story saying?
Everyone practices retelling the story until they can do so confidently.
2. What does it teach you about God?

3. What should you obey?

2. Memory Verse:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

Questions:

1. What is this verse saying?
Memorize the verse together until everyone can say it perfectly.
2. What does it teach you about God?
3. What should you obey?

3. Teaching:

The Bible tells us that believers should meet together regularly (at least weekly) as a body called the church. There can be more than one church in a village.

- **Who** is the church?
 - The people of God gathered together in one place is called a church.
 - The church is made up of people who have repented of their sins, believed in Jesus Christ and followed him in baptism.
 - The church is a group of who have agreed to be a family of God together—they see themselves as a church and they also function as a church. (They can also give their church a name.)
- **When** does the church meet?
 - The church meets regularly (at least once a month) and eats the Lord's Supper together. We will learn more about this later.
- **Where** does the church meet?
 - A church can meet anywhere and at any time that is convenient (e.g. a home or a shop).
- **What** does the church do?
 - As a body, the church meets together to praise God, love and serve one another. They do this by being unified in worship, fellowship, teaching, prayer and ministry. This can be easily remembered with the following phrase: "Love God, Love People, Make Disciples."
- **Why** do we need to be church?
 - When you meet together as a body, Jesus (as the head of the body) is there and he builds you!
 - We need to encourage one another, help one another and love one another.

"This lesson is about what we've been doing all along as we've been meeting together!"

- If there is no church in their village, they can commit to starting a church with other new Christians.
- If there already is a church in their village, they can join, but the best is for them to begin another church with new Christian friends.
- When the church grows too big, they may want to start a new church so they can continue to meet safely and intimately in homes.

4. Trainer Testimony:

Share about how God has used your meeting together regularly with other Christians in His church to encourage, strengthen, and challenge you.

5. How to Obey:

Today, how do you need to obey God? [Let the group members share.] I would like to discuss with you an important way to obey.

Become a church

Pray together as a group about becoming a church.

Give the believers a very concrete format for church:

- Help the new believers decide on a meeting time to start and a name for their church.

- Commit to meet with other believers at least once a week, but more often if possible, in a home.
- As churches begin to grow, God raises up men who are growing in character to lead the church. Each church should strive to have at least 2 male leaders. However, every Christian is to participate and can help by serving in some way in the church.
- In the story we just heard, there are some important things that every church should do. Even if a church has only a few people, it can do these things.
- *Use a format such as:*
 - **Fellowship:** Spend time with other Christians. Open your heart to them and share your needs and concerns (one way you do this is by asking how each person is doing). Hear their needs and care for them. If there are physical needs, you as a part of the church can serve one another by meeting their needs and taking care of them.
 - **Prayer:** Pray together about things that concern you, especially for any needs that surface
 - **Review:** Last week's lesson (Bible story, memory verse, application), witnessing opportunities, training opportunities.
 - Include time for accountability about obeying the last lesson and your witnessing to and training others
 - **Praise:** Worship God in your singing of praise songs and while giving thanks to Him together. Always try to write new praise songs in your own language using your own musical style.
 - **Word:** Regularly read or hear God's Word, the Bible. Discuss what it means and how to obey it. Every Christian should obey the Bible. When they read or listen to a new passage, they can answer these questions:
 - What does it say?
 - What does it teach you about God?
 - What should you obey?
 - **Memory Verse:** Memorize a verse together.
 - **Lord's Supper:** Eat the bread and drink from the cup that represent the body and blood of Jesus. Confess your sins to one another and recommit yourselves to follow Christ. This is so important that we will talk more about this later.
 - **Baptism:** If someone in the group is a new believer and has not been baptized, set a time for them to review the baptism lesson and be baptized.
 - **Offerings:** Sacrificial giving to meet the needs that arise.
 - **Evangelism:** Commit to obey and to witness to more and more lost people to help them know Jesus and become a part of churches.

Section 3:

- *Remember this is the most important section. Never omit it!*
 - The trainees should now teach the entire lesson back to the trainers. If the group is large, you may need to divide the trainees into multiple groups with each group training one trainer.
1. **Practice re-teaching section 1.**

Trainees should imitate the entire first section with each other.

 - Praise
 - Personal care
 - Accountability
 - Review
 - Vision casting
 2. **Practice re-teaching section 2 (lesson):**
 - Story
 - Memory Verse
 - Teaching
 - Trainer Testimony
 - How to obey?
 3. **Who will you share with? Prayer time!**
 - Pray together with the new believer. Ask him: "Whom is God telling you to share this with?"

- Pray for the new believer to have boldness to witness to 5 people this week.