

# **The Local Church and Living Faith**

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    1. The body of believers around the world (Ephesians 2:19-22)
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## **What Is the Local Church All About?**

There's a lot of talk out there about what the church is and what the church isn't. You may find yourself trying to figure out the difference between Methodist, Catholic, Pentecostal, and a whole host of other denominations. It can be very confusing!

The church is not about denominations or other labels. It's about people! There are clear examples in the Bible about what the church is and how it is to function. When we get this understanding and begin to operate as the Bible has laid out, we will see the church advance to a place it has never been in all of history. And we get to be a part of it!

### **From the Bible...**

“And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need.

They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”

*Acts 2:44-47 (New Living Translation)*

## **What Is the Church?**

“Hey, have you been to the new church on the corner of Main Street?” You may have been asked a question like this before. The fact is, unless there are people standing on the corner of Main Street, you haven’t! The reason is that the word “church” literally means “called-out ones”. So, if you’ve given your life to Jesus, YOU are the church!

The church is a body of believers who live their lives in the name of Jesus Christ and are “called out” to fulfill the purposes of God. Although the word “church” is used rather generically, there are certain distinctions.

### **The local church**

The local church is a localized body of believers that gather together for worship, sharing, and teaching. A local church may meet in a building, but the building is not the church. Wherever the people of God gather is where you’ll find the church.

Acts 2:44-47 says: “And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”

The Bible describes how these few followers went from Jerusalem and spread out across the entire known world sharing Jesus with people and having them accept Him as Lord. Wow!

### **The universal church**

The universal church is the body of all believers spread across the globe. They may be businessmen in London, missionaries in Guam, computer technicians in Japan, “Soccer Moms” in America, etc. They may speak hundreds of different languages and dialects. They may not share many habits or customs. But one thing they do have in common is their love for Jesus. They each worship, share, and teach in their local churches. Each of these “cells” makes up the overall “body of Christ”.

Ephesians 2:19-22 says: “So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family.”

Although we are strangers in the natural, and may never meet on earth, we are intimately connected in the spirit!

## **What is the Purpose of The Church?**

When Jesus walked on the earth, He set the pattern for what the church would do after He went back to heaven. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He commanded demons to flee. He spoke the words of Father God. And He told us we could do the same!

Matthew 28:18-20 says: “Jesus came and told His disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Let’s look at some of the core purposes of the church.

## **To encourage one another**

One of the major components of being part of a church is to encourage others and be encouraged by them. Who doesn't need encouragement?

It's important for us to encourage others to stick with God when we see them falling away. By doing this, we will help them get back in the right direction so they can be an encourager to others. Hebrews 10:24 says: "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works."

Another way of encouraging each other is to stay connected. The verse right after the one above, Hebrews 10:25, says: "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near." When we fail to gather together, we risk falling away from God and the church, as a whole, suffers.

When each person is doing his part in the "body" it functions properly and fluidly, and much gets done! Ephesians 4:16 says: "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."

When we stay connected, there is peace and unity. Ephesians 4:3 says: "Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace."

Sunday morning services and weekly Life Groups are great opportunities to connect on a regular basis. As the "Body of Christ" we need to stick together as a team... the greatest team on the face of the earth!

## **To reach out with the Word of God**

As wonderful as encouraging each other is, if that's all we're doing we're missing one of the most important aspects of being part of His body – reaching out to others and sharing His love with them.

Acts 6:7 says: "So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too."

We have experienced the greatest love the world has ever known. Isn't it wonderful that we can share that love so others can experience it, too?

Just as cells in the natural body must multiply to avoid death, the church must also multiply to survive. This multiplication begins with one person reaching one person. Then that person reaches someone else. Before you know it, the whole world will be turned upside down... Make that right side up!

## **To support and submit to local church leadership**

Church leaders are put in place by God, not man. He has put pastors and other church leaders in our lives to protect and watch over us. Submission to spiritual authority is essential if we are to move forward in God.

Hebrews 13:17 says: "Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit."

Remember, church leaders are not always perfect, but they are there to watch over our souls, and they will be held accountable for whether or not they do so.

We can make the job easier by honoring and praying for them. We need to esteem them highly and submit to their direction and leading for us personally, as well as for the church as a whole.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 says: “Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.”

One great way to be an encouragement to church leaders is to be aware of their needs and support them in any way that will make their job easier. It could mean something as simple as seeing a need in the church and taking care of it before they even have to think about it.

It’s also important to never gossip about or slander spiritual authority. 1 Timothy 5:19 says: “Don’t listen to a complaint against a leader that isn’t backed up by two or three responsible witnesses.”

If you disagree with a spiritual leader, go to God about it. There may be something in your life that God is using them to help correct. If there is still an issue, go to another spiritual leader and talk it over with them. They may be able to bring understanding to you. If there is still an issue, then go (with reverence and honor) to the person who caused the disagreement. Be open to hearing the voice of God through what they say to you. That’s where the blessing of God is!

## **What Is Living Faith All About?**

Now that you know what the church is all about, let’s look specifically at Living Faith World Outreach Centre.

### **Living Faith’s History**

Pastors Jerry and Nancy Schwartz were called out of Baltimore, MD to begin a church in Chester County in 1990. Pastor Jerry left his job as captain in the Baltimore City Fire Department to obey God’s calling. The church began in Lionville, but after a few years, moved to West Chester.

After looking for a piece of property to become available, the Lord opened a door to purchase property at 910 South High Street (the site of the current church building).

While waiting for God’s timing to begin construction, the church met in several schools, the Holiday Inn, and even the engine garage of the Fame Fire Company!

Construction on the original building was completed in 1997 – just one day before pastors’ daughter’s wedding! Later an addition was added in 2011 that features the Higher Ground Café and Conference Rooms.

Throughout this entire journey, the Living Faith family continued (and still continues) to reach out the community (and the world) with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

## Living Faith's Vision Statement

The vision of Living Faith World Outreach Centre is:

"To bring freedom to those who have been enslaved and held captive by religious and traditional teachings of men.

We will build foundations of freedom in their lives by declaring, line upon line, the principles of the Word of God, repeating them over and over in simple terms until they are free.

We will demonstrate to all, and in all that we do, a real Jesus and a living faith."

## Living Faith's Mission Statement

The mission of Living Faith World Outreach Centre is to:

- Preach the gospel to the poor
- Proclaim release to the captives
- Proclaim recovery of sight to the blind
- Set free the downtrodden
- Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord

This information (and more) about Living Faith can be found on Living Faith's website at [www.faith-alive.org](http://www.faith-alive.org).

## Core Values for Supernatural Ministry

The following "Core Values for Supernatural Ministry" are key values that we believe at Living Faith.

1. **God wants to speak to us more than we want to listen.** After all, how can One named "The Word of God" not want to talk to people? This core value creates an expectation in our hearts to hear Him at any moment. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27)*
2. **All things work in our favor when we serve God, no matter what the circumstances look like.** This core value trains us to look for and focus on God's redemptive purposes more than problems. *"We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)*
3. **God loved us before we loved Him, and He never stops loving us. We never have to earn His love through good works.** This core value trains us to focus on His love more than our lack, and to trust that we have an unlimited source of love to give every person we meet. *"We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)*

## Core Values for Supernatural Ministry

4. **Fear is not a part of God's love and therefore it shouldn't be a part of our supernatural ministry.** This trains us to respond rather than react to any kind of intimidation of the enemy. *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."* (1 John 4:18)
5. **God has plans for our welfare and blessing. He has no plans for calamity in our life.** This trains us to see difficulty as an opportunity for God to bless us and bring us more fully into His purposes for our lives. It also creates an expectation for God to bless us richly so we can be a blessing to others. It prevents us from coming under a poverty mind-set. *"For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope."* (Jeremiah 29:11)
6. **We are a special, holy & royal people.** This core value trains us to value others and ourselves as the precious possessions of God, for whom He sacrificed His only Son. It fosters a culture of honor in which we treat others as royalty because we are royalty. *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9)

## Core Values for Supernatural Ministry

7. **We are to overcome and overpower any evil that is against us.** This core value prevents us from thinking of ourselves as victims of circumstance and frees us to think from a perspective in which nothing is impossible. It enables us to look for creative and extravagant solutions to problems. *"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37)
8. **The devil is evil and behind all the bad stuff in the world. Jesus is always good and does all the great things.** We are called to destroy the works of the devil with our supernatural ministry. This core value keeps the lines of battle clearly drawn so that we are not directing judgment at people, but instead are bringing them the justice that Jesus purchased for them on the cross. *"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."* (1 John 3:8)  
*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* (1 John 10:10)
9. **We were born to rule through the power of the Kingdom & the love of God.** This core value enables us to perceive the authorities and kingdoms of the world from an eternal perspective so our faith and intercession are founded firmly on the dominion of Christ. *"Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."* (Daniel 7:27)

## Core Values for Supernatural Ministry

### 10. **We are God's friends and He tells us His secrets.**

This core value reminds us that God wants us to live in intimacy with Him far above obedience. He is calling us to move beyond slavery and co-reign with Christ. *"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."* (John 15:15)

### 11. **Signs & wonders follow all believers, not just a few special people.**

This core value trains every member of the Body of Christ to think of themselves as carriers of the power of God who are available for miraculous assignments. *"These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."* (Mark 16:17-18)

### 12. **We have inherited the divine nature & grow in the fruit of the Spirit as we hang out with God.**

This core value trains us to embrace the journey of maturity as a process of yielding to the work of God within us and keeps us from a striving mentality. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."* (Galatians 5:22-23) *"For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."* (2 Peter 1:4)

## What Else Can I Do?

1 Corinthians 12:12 says: "The human body has many parts, but they many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ." Every one of us has a gift, talent and ability given by God to do something extraordinary as part of the body of Christ. One of the ways we develop our giftings is by getting involved in our community of faith.

Here at Living Faith there are numerous ways for you to develop your giftings and talents such as:

- Audio/Video/Camera Ministry
- Café Ministry
- Greeting and Ushering Ministry
- Groundskeeping Ministry
- Prayer Ministry
- Men's and Women's Ministry
- Nursery, Children and Youth Ministries
- Website and Media Development
- World and Local Missions
- Worship Ministry

**Notes**

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