

Lesson 4

A History of Acting for God

Last summer my family and I took a vacation into northern New Mexico. During our trip we came to a high mountain pass. At the very top of the pass we stopped to eat lunch near a small creek. It was a very peaceful spot. Only the wind blowing among the trees and the sound of the creek could be heard.

Soon we started down the mountain. We noticed that the creek ran alongside the road. The narrow dusty road soon became a highway and the creek became a stream. Many miles farther down, the stream became the Rio Grande, a mighty river which empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

The life of the church is like a stream—it is a stream of continuous events. Sometimes it seems like a small stream of activities and at other times it is like a mighty river, rushing through time and space. This is the history of the church.

We have just seen how God has chosen the church to carry out His redemptive plan for the world. This lesson takes you through three important periods of the history of the church. You will see God acting through real and ordinary people as they represent the church. You will find that the history of the church is a history of living conflicts and victories through different times and ages.



lesson outline

Introduction

The Early Period—Living the Faith

The Middle Period—Joining the World

The Modern Period—Discovering Freedom

lesson objectives

When you have completed this lesson you should be able to:

- Recognize conditions in the church which would weaken its redemptive ministry to the world.
- Identify key persons and events in the three periods of church history discussed.
- Discuss changes which took place in the church which led to the Reformation.

learning activities

1. Study the lesson according to the procedure given in Lesson 1. Read all Scripture texts given in the lesson, and answer all study questions before checking your answers.
2. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson and check your answers.

key words

ambition	council	reformation
artificial	imperial	secular
basilica	oral traditions	temporal
cathedral	pagan	written traditions
complex	persecution	

lesson development**INTRODUCTION**

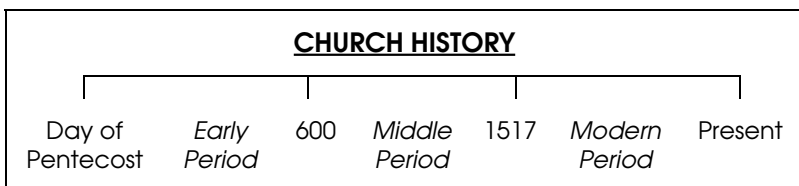
The history of the church is the story of men and women acting for God. It is the story of God's people continuing the ministry of Christ in the world. It includes the activities in the life of the church and the promotion of the Christian faith through time. It provides lessons for the present and directions for the future.

For our purposes in this lesson we will simply highlight some of the more general events of church history. It is our intention to briefly trace the practice and promotion of the Christian faith in the life of the church through worship, service, and witness. Of course, in such a brief study we will not be able to give a full history of the church. Perhaps you will want to study more about church history at another time.

To help you picture the action of the church during these periods we will use some charts. These will simplify the general ideas which will be presented.

Dividing history into periods seems very artificial, but it is necessary in order to get a clearer picture of events. You must understand that one period does not end suddenly, with another beginning the next day or the next year. History has a flowing movement, and like the wind it is difficult to know where one part ends and another begins. These movements of the church have been divided into three periods.

The Early Period	Day of Pentecost–A.D. 600
The Middle Period	A.D. 600–1517
The Modern Period	A.D. 1517 to present



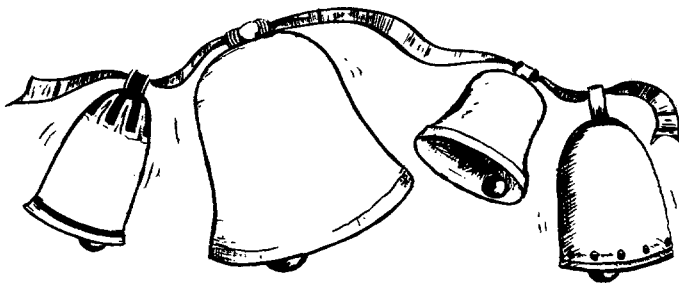
THE EARLY PERIOD—LIVING THE FAITH

The Church in Jerusalem

Objective 1. *Describe the condition of the church in Jerusalem from the Day of Pentecost to A.D. 64.*

The church began in Jerusalem. It rose out of the life and work of Christ. Soon after His death and resurrection, Christ gave the command to His disciples to go and preach the gospel to all nations. It was in Jerusalem that the disciples were to wait for the power which would help them carry out Christ's command. The church came into existence through the work of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. You can read about this in Acts 2.

The early church was in continuous worship to its Lord. We read that Peter and John were going to the temple to pray, and on their way a lame man was healed through their prayer. "The people there saw him walking and praising God" (Acts 3:9). As a result, many believed. So did others who continually saw the mighty works of God through the disciples. The miracles have been called "bells to call people to worship." Miracles were very common to the early church.



The early church enjoyed fellowship. There was a unity of spirit and a concern for the needy members of the body of Christ. The beliefs of the church were simple but strong concerning the person of Jesus Christ. A strong faith and testimony, a purity in character, and an attitude of love were present in the church daily.

At that time the church existed mainly in Jerusalem. It had not yet extended itself into Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth as the Lord had commanded. It was not until after Stephen was killed that the church began to spread into other areas to witness (Acts 7). Persecution broke up the church in Jerusalem and its members were scattered abroad. But wherever these members went, they preached and many believed. Even those who were not Jews were accepted into the church according to the agreement at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). The entire book of Acts is a history of the early days of the church, both in Jerusalem and in other areas. It covers the period up to approximately A.D. 64. This is also the date when the church came under heavy persecution from the Roman emperor Nero. This period of persecution continued under successive Roman emperors for nearly 300 years.

1 Place an **X** in front of each of these terms which describes the condition of the church in Jerusalem to A.D. 64.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| a Growth | h Spirit-led ministry |
| b Discouragement | i Selfishness |
| c Continuous worship | j Simple beliefs |
| d Few miracles | k Purity |
| e Many miracles | l Strong witness |
| f Strong fellowship
among believers | m Concern and love |
| g Lack of unity | n Fearful |

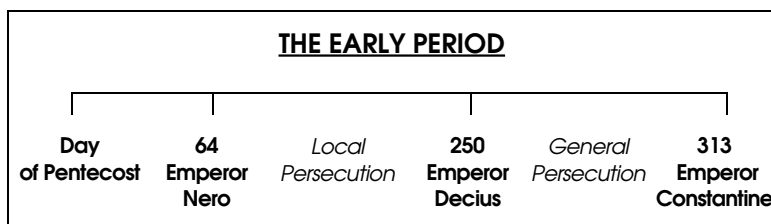
2 Which of these terms describes the condition of your local church?

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The Church Under Persecution

Objective 2. *Explain how the church was affected by events which tested its faith and unity prior to A.D. 312.*

Following the death of Stephen, persecution of the church increased. In fact, for nearly 300 years the unity of the church and the faith of its members were tested through persecution. In the beginning, these persecutions were mild and local, but at times they were very harsh. About A.D. 250, during the reign of the Emperor Decius, persecutions became more general, spreading throughout the Roman Empire. In spite of this, by the end of the period Christianity had spread throughout the empire into England, Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.



The forces which tested the unity and faith of the church during this period were:

1. *The deaths of the apostles.* The living voice and authority concerning what the gospel meant was stopped with the death of the apostles. The church was left with oral and written traditions to explain what Jesus had said and done. The leaders of the church held councils to make decisions and set down rules of faith.

2. *The false doctrines of some teachers.* False teachers threatened the church from the inside. Some teachers raised questions concerning the nature of God, the person of Jesus, and the doctrine of salvation. However, some great leaders defended the true teaching of Jesus. Early church leaders such as Tertullian, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine had much good influence on the thinking and beliefs of the church during its first 400 years.

3. *The persecutions by the state.* Persecution threatened the church from the outside. Persecution came when the church refused to worship the emperor. The church also rejected the gods that the Romans thought had brought greatness to Rome.

The persecutions failed to destroy the church. Instead, it continued to grow in spite of persecution. The faith of believers was strengthened and their dependence on their Lord was increased. Men, women, and children gave their lives for their Lord and Master.

3 How was the church threatened from the *inside*?

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4 How was it threatened from the *outside*?

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5 Why was the church persecuted?

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6 How did it react to persecution?

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7 In what way were the deaths of the apostles a test of the unity and faith of the church?

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The Church Recognized

Objective 3. *Analyze changes which took place in the church between the time of Constantine and A.D. 600.*

Constantine became emperor of Rome in A.D. 306, and in the year 313 he gave the church freedom to worship openly, own property, and govern itself. The church had received the favor of the Roman government.

This was the beginning of many changes in the church. So great were the changes in its worship, service, and witness that the church at the end of this period was very different from the early church. The following chart will help you to see the differences between the early church in Jerusalem and the recognized church in Rome.

THE EARLY PERIOD—A.D. 64-600		
	During Persecution	After Constantine
	64 250	313 600
THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP		
THE PLACE	A house	A basilica or cathedral
THE FORM	Inward and spiritual, practical	Outward and ceremonial, artistic
THE MESSAGE	Edifying and understood, Spirit-led	Ceremonial and complex, man-made
THE APPEAL	To all the people	To the upper class
THE CHURCH IN SERVICE		
THE CONCERN	Spiritual matters	Political matters
THE DOCTRINES	A simple theology	Council creeds
ADMINISTRATION	Matters settled by the church	Matters settled by the state and the church
THE CHURCH IN WITNESS		
STATUS	Clergy and laity equal	Clergy ranked on higher levels than laity
GOVERNMENT	Independence and self-government Local	Governed by the church council Imperial (under control of the emperor)

The church that began by the power of the Holy Spirit came to the end of this period with imperial power. The church had received acceptance by the Roman Empire. But changes were continuing to take place in the church.

8 Compare the two columns *During Persecution* and *After Constantine* in the preceding chart, and write a statement of your impressions concerning the changes in the church over these two periods, in the following areas:

a The church in worship:

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b The church in service:

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c The church in witness:

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After A.D. 300 the Roman Empire slowly fell into decay. Political and social changes were common. But even during these years of spiritual weakness there were faithful leaders among the believers. They were great defenders of the Christian faith during this period. We will list only some of the most outstanding ones in the order they appeared in history.

1. Athanasius (A.D. 296–373), a great debater who became bishop of Alexandria.
2. Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 340–397), a bishop, writer, and defender of the faith.
3. John Chrysostom (A.D. 345–407), a bishop and perhaps the greatest preacher of the period. He did much to correct the faults of the church in the fifth century, and died for his faith.

4. Jerome (A.D. 340–430), the most educated in this list of great spiritual leaders. His greatest contribution was the translation of the Bible to common language.
5. Augustine (A.D. 354–430), the greatest writer on doctrinal matters of the faith during the period.

THE MIDDLE PERIOD—JOINING THE WORLD

Objective 4. *Identify conditions in the church which led to the Reformation.*



This period begins with Gregory I, who became pope of the church in the year A.D. 590. He introduces a time during which the church obtained great power as an institution. The period ends in A.D. 1517 with the Reformation, which corrected some of the abuses and reordered the affairs of the church in accordance with biblical teaching.

There are two important areas that we want to talk about in this period. Both areas are involved with the ministry of the church. The first is the union of the church and state. The other is the power given to the pope and church leaders.

A Worldly Church

During this nearly 1000-year period there were many political events that affected the church, which we do not have space to discuss here. The most important fact of the period as far as its effect on the church is concerned was the rise to power of the church and its union with the state. It also proved to be the period when the church lost its spiritual influence in the world. The world dominated the church, rather than the church transforming the world as Christ had commanded. For example, some emperors thought they had the right to settle church issues.

Between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. there were no strong governments. The nations and their rulers were going through many changes. Western Europe had no permanent or strong leadership. The city of Rome had a weak civil government. Public services were badly neglected. The pope was the only representative of permanent government. The people and their rulers came to the church for help. The church began to voice its opinion concerning secular world matters. So it was that the church grew in power.

The Roman Empire and the church had united when Christianity was adopted as the religion of the empire. The church became universally accepted. It became known as a catholic (universal) church. For this period of nearly 1000 years the western (Latin) church had its seat of authority primarily in Rome. The church in some areas became supreme over the state during this time. This was the beginning of what is now called the Roman Catholic Church.

The church became a political machine. It neglected its mission to continue the redemptive plan of God. Its primary concerns were temporal or worldly matters, and it devoted little time to the more important matters of the Spirit. The church had failed to present a strong spiritual force.

9 Read John 18:36, Matthew 6:33, and Romans 14:17, and explain what the main purpose of the church is.

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10 Which of these statements are TRUE concerning the worldly condition of the church during the Middle Period?

- a** As the church rose to power its political involvement became greater.
- b** The church received help from the civil government.
- c** The spiritual strength of the church increased as it united with the state.
- d** The church became more and more involved with secular matters and less involved with spiritual matters.

An Earthly Leader

Along with the growth in power of the church grew the power of its leaders. This was especially true of the head of the church, the bishop of Rome, who was given the title of *pope*. He claimed authority over all the Christian world.

The tradition arose that Peter had been the first bishop of Rome. There is no evidence that this was true. Two texts used to claim this authority for Peter and his successors are Matthew 16:18-19 and John 21:16-17. As bishop, Peter is said to have been the first pope. As the chief of the apostles, Peter supposedly had authority over the whole church. The Roman church strongly supported this. The church in the eastern part of the world did not.

The church leadership became stronger. Even after the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, the church remained strong. Its leaders became filled with personal ambition, but failed to give spiritual leadership. The church began to accept pagan superstitions and customs.

As the power of the church grew politically, the church grew weaker spiritually. Many years had passed since the time of the early church. Great changes had taken place in the worship, service, and witness of the church. Here are some of the changes within the spiritual ministry of the church:

The church in worship:

1. A formal religion replaced a spiritual one.
2. The worshiper was told he could not pray directly to God.
3. A priest had been placed between God and the worshiper.
4. The language of the church was no longer common to the worshiper.

The church in service:

1. The traditions of the church, not the Bible, were the rule of faith and practice.
2. The church claimed final authority in all areas of life.
3. The church was above the Bible in questions of faith.
4. The Bible was not to be read by the common people.

The church in witness:

1. The primary concern of the church was earthly.
2. Temporal matters were given more importance than spiritual or evangelistic efforts.
3. People were brought into the church who were Christian in name only.

The Monastery

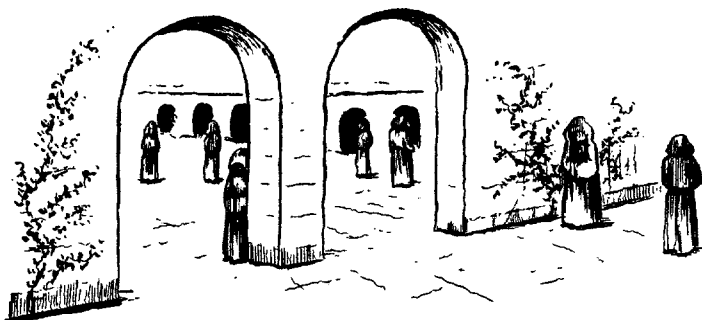
A force that helped fight the spiritual decline of the church was a movement toward the *monastic life*. By this we mean that some religious men called *monks* chose to separate themselves from all other people and live in special quiet places called *monasteries*. The *nuns* were religious women who lived apart from other people in places called *convents*. There were no monks or nuns in the early church. The Christians lived in families and remained as members of society. But the new conditions of the church and the world made many seek the monastic way of life.

Men became monks because they had a desire for salvation. In two ways the life of monks seemed a surer way of salvation than that of other men:

1. *By separation from the world.* It was a life separated from the world and free from those things which made Christian living difficult. The monks knew there was sin in the world and in the church. They believed that removing themselves from the general life of men would help them lead better Christian lives.

2. *By self-denial.* The monastic life gave them opportunity to seek holiness. They believed that to be holy they needed to refuse to satisfy the needs of the body. So they gave up their

possessions. They dressed and lived poorly. They did not marry. They ate very little and slept little. They put their bodies under much suffering.



The number of monks and nuns increased greatly. They formed communities throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, organizing themselves in *orders* or groups. Four of the most famous orders during the Middle Period were 1) the Benedictines, 2) the Cistercians, 3) the Franciscans, and 4) the Dominicans. They were a benefit to society because they became centers to protect people during wars, and to receive tired travelers. They were also centers of agriculture and learning. Many monks and nuns were teachers and missionaries.

But these communities also had some evil results. They grew in wealth through the taxes of the people. They removed some of the best men and women from society. The monks and nuns were regarded as having a higher position before God than other believers had.

11 Read Matthew 5:13-16 and John 17:14-16, and explain the Christian's position in society.

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Some of the significant church leaders during the Middle Period were:

1. Patrick (387?–461?), who took the gospel to Ireland
2. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), evangelistic leader of the movement to strengthen the monasteries
3. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the most influential theologian of the period
4. Raymond Lull (1235–1315), evangelist to North Africa and to the Muslims

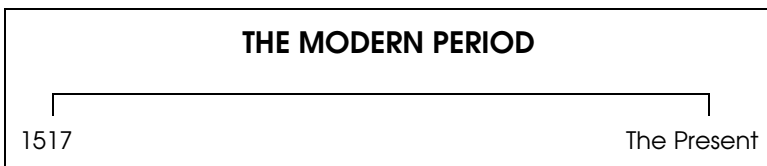
12 Which of these statements are TRUE concerning leadership in the church and its effect upon the church during the Middle Period?

- a The pope considered himself the head over all of the Christian world.
- b Peter was the first pope.
- c As the leaders of the church gained political power, their spiritual effectiveness became weak.
- d The church became more formal, and the believers were not permitted to pray directly to God or read the Bible.
- e Monasteries and convents were established for religious people who chose to separate themselves from the world.
- f Monks and nuns who practiced separation and self-denial were able to be better Christians than those believers who remained in worldly communities.

THE MODERN PERIOD—DISCOVERING FREEDOM

Objective 5. *Explain changes brought about by the Reformation, and their effect on modern church history.*

A Changing World



Formal worship and the repeating of a creed could not satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people. A political and worldly

church could not meet the needs of believers. The middle class wanted to stop the constant flow of money to Rome. People in the church wanted changes.

The most important reason for wanting a change was because the people did not accept the pope’s claim to universal power. Many religious leaders saw sin in the lives of members of the clergy. They saw the decline of religion and the neglect of the people. So it was a religious movement called the *Reformation* that helped bring about the change.

The Reformation was a reform, not a revolt. The goal was to correct the abuses and errors of the church. It was also an effort to return to the Bible. The church had become the authority over the Bible. The reformers, like Martin Luther, believed that the Bible is the authority over the church. They believed that God’s Word was the authority for the early church of the New Testament.

13 Read 2 Kings 18:1-8 and 23:4-22; Mark 11:15-18. How do these events compare with what took place during the Reformation?

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During the Reformation there were two major changes in the church:

1. *There were changes in church government.* The Reformation meant the end of control by the Roman Catholic Church. Nations began to have their own church governments. National churches came into existence. They were independent of Rome, and they understood the needs of the people.

2. *There were changes in the teachings of the church.* Some of the teachings were not changed. For example, teachings concerning the Trinity, Christ, the Bible, the fall of man, original sin, and the need of a moral life for the believer were not changed. Some teachings that were renewed from New Testament times were:

- a. Salvation is by faith alone, that is, belief in Jesus Christ.
- b. The Scriptures are the only rule of faith and life.
- c. The believer can approach God directly without the need of a priest or church leader as a go-between.
- d. Salvation is by the grace of God, and not by works.

Freedom in the Church

The Reformation brought a new freedom. The power and authority that influenced the church for 1000 years was finally weakened. Uniformity had been replaced by freedom. It was a new world.

Along with freedom came variety. Freedom brought differences between church groups. Believers started opening their Bibles and reading. Differences of opinion about what the Bible really said led to different teachings. New groups of churches came into existence, which began to show a variety of ways to worship. These new groups, or *denominations* as they are called, gave themselves names such as *Methodist*, *Presbyterian*, and *Baptist*.

A *denomination* is a group of people or believers who hold a particular set of beliefs. Since the Reformation, denominations have multiplied. They are the result of the freedom of conscience to read the Bible and believe in a particular way. They are the results of God’s people seeking for the truth. They are never free from the dangers of error in knowing what the Bible says. It is important that you know your group, however small, and the beliefs of your group.

14 Describe the group you meet with to worship. How does it compare with the New Testament church?

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The Modern Period in church history is marked by freedom. This freedom has resulted in differences, both in some beliefs and in some forms of worship and church government. There is need for Christian unity within the body of Christ. We must

allow for freedom or differences, but at the same time seek Christian unity.

Here is a list of some of the changes within the church during the Modern Period:

The church in worship:

1. Much variety in forms of worship
2. Congregational participation greatly increased
3. Stress on personal morality of individual believers

The church in service:

1. Many inter-denominational service agencies such as hospitals and orphanages
2. Sunday schools started by many churches

The church in witness:

1. The development of the missionary movement
2. Large evangelistic campaigns in major cities
3. Much gospel literature distribution

It would be impossible in this brief space to list all of the church leaders who have had major roles from the Reformation to the present time. We will only mention several who represent the leaders of this period:

1. Martin Luther (1483–1546), German theologian who successfully led the Protestant Reformation
2. John Wesley (1703–1791), English preacher who founded the Methodist Church
3. David Livingstone (1813–1873), missionary explorer in Central Africa
4. Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), founder of the mission program to evangelize China
5. Billy Graham (1918– —), modern-day evangelist

15 Compare the condition of the church before and after the Reformation, and summarize the major changes in these three areas:

a In church government:

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b In church teachings:

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c In church freedom:

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16 What were some of the results of these changes?

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Future of the Church

Objective 6. *Compare the situation in your own part of the world with universal trends that affect the church.*

What about the future of the church? This is a great and exciting time that God has provided for the church. God is present in the body of Christ through His Holy Spirit. Ours is a world much like the world of the New Testament. Harold A. Snyder, in his book, *The Problem of Wineskins* (Intervarsity Press, Downer's Grove, Illinois, 1977, pp. 27-33) says the present world compares with the time of the early church in the following ways:

1. Populations moving to the cities
2. Unity bringing political peace
3. Spreading of one culture and language
4. International travel bringing better communication
5. A feeling that mankind is essentially one

6. Mixture of ideas and views about the world
7. Decline in morality of people

The redemptive plan of God can still be presented to the whole world. There is need for Christian unity to fulfill the eternal purposes of God. Many more people will be joining the body of Christ.

The signs also point to a renewal of the body of Christ. There are four movements which indicate that the church is moving forward in its mission for the Lord. These are:

1. The movement for personal evangelism
2. The movement for fellowship within the church
3. The movement to reach out to the world and make disciples
4. The movement for the renewal of spiritual gifts within the church

17 In your notebook, write a statement comparing the situation in your own area with the description outlined in the first list in this section. Do you agree with this description?

18 Now look at the list which describes renewal of the body of Christ. Are you experiencing the same thing in your church?

self-test

1 MATCHING. Match the descriptions to their period in church history.

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|---------------|---|--|
| a | The Reformation brought changes in church government and teaching, and brought greater freedom in worship. | 1) The early church (to A.D. 64) |
| b | Unity and faith of the church were tested by the death of its leaders, false doctrines, and suffering from abuse. | 2) The church during persecution (A.D. 64–313) |
| c | The church became involved in political, worldly matters more than spiritual matters. | 3) The church after Constantine (A.D. 313–600) |
| d | The bishop of Rome was called the <i>pope</i> and he became head of the official church. | 4) The church in the Middle Period (A.D. 600–1517) |
| e | During this period the church came under the power of the emperor and its worship became ceremonial and formal. | 5) The church in the, Modern Period (A.D. 1517 to present) |
| f | The church experienced great growth, many miracles, strong fellowship, and a Spirit-led ministry with world-wide concern. | |

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter in front of the one best answer to each question.

2 Which of these men was considered the greatest writer on doctrinal matters during the period A.D. 313–600?

- Athanasius
- Constantine
- Augustine
- Bernard of Clairvaux

3 What German theologian was the leader of the Protestant Reformation?

- a) John Wesley
- b) Ramond Lull
- c) Hudson Taylor
- d) Martin Luther

4 Thomas Aquinas was known as

- a) the first missionary to North Africa and the Muslims.
- b) the theologian who had the greatest influence during the Middle Period.
- c) a monk who started the first monastery.
- d) one who opposed the faith and persecuted Christians.

5 Persecution of the early Christians resulted in

- a) a weakening of the church which led its members back to sin and idolatry.
- b) the spread of Christianity to all parts of the world as Christians were scattered everywhere.
- c) a movement to limit the church to small secret meetings in Jerusalem.
- d) all of the leaders being placed in prison or killed.

TRUE-FALSE. Place a **T** in the blank space in front of each TRUE statement which describes a condition of the church that led to the Reformation. Place an **F** in front of each FALSE statement concerning this period.

.... **6** The world dominated the church, rather than the church ministering to the world.

.... **7** The Roman Catholic Church became the official Christian church.

.... **8** There was freedom for all believers to read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

.... **9** The doctrine of faith, rather than works, was emphasized by church leaders.

.... **10** The worshiper could approach God only through the priest.

- **11** The church claimed final authority in all areas of life.
- **12** The church's spiritual influence in the world was very strong.

answers to study questions

- 10 a** True.
b False.
c False.
d True.
- 1** You should have an **X** in front of **a, c, e, f, h, j, k, l,** and **m.**
- 11** The believer is to be an example in the world and influence the world for Christ.
- 2** I hope you were able to say that **a, c, e, f, h, j, k, l,** and **m** describe your local church.
- 12 a** True.
b False.
c True.
d True.
e True.
f False. (There were problems even in the monasteries and convents. Living in the world helps the believer to be an example and influence. Separation from other people or self-denial alone are no guarantee that one is a better Christian than others.)
- 3** By false teachers who did not teach the truth about Jesus Christ.
- 13** In 2 Kings the two kings removed from the temple all the abuses (evil practices or customs), and there was a renewal of worship. In Mark 11 Jesus removed the abuses from the temple. During the Reformation there was a removal of abuses and a renewal of worship. (It is important for you to see that God does want to clean up His house from wrongdoings.)
- 4** By persecution.
- 14** Perhaps you included the name of your group or denomination and its beliefs. Hopefully its teachings include the major teachings of the Reformation.

- 5** Because it refused to worship the emperor or gods of the Romans.
- 15** (Any of these)
- a** Many churches became independent of the church in Rome, and established their own church governments in their own countries.
 - b** The believer was given direct access to God, and freedom to read the Scriptures. Salvation was declared to be by faith alone, and by the grace of God, not works. The Scriptures became once again the only rule of faith and life, and not the church.
 - c** Because of freedom, people began to read the Bible. Freedom resulted in differences in some beliefs (because of different interpretations of what the Bible said), in forms of worship, and in church government.
- 6** The church grew, faith was stronger, and the believers learned to depend more upon the Lord.
- 16** More variety in worship forms; more stress on personal morality; Sunday schools; more service agencies; greater missionary outreach.
- 7** Their deaths left the church with no one who had actually seen or been with Jesus. They had to rely on oral and written traditions—reports that had been passed down from the apostles.
- 17** Your answer. Think about the effect of each of these trends on your own church.
- 8** Perhaps your answer is similar to this:
- a** The church changed from Spirit-led, simple worship by all the people to ceremonial, formal worship directed to the upper classes.
 - b** The church went from concern for the spiritual welfare of its members to a political and complex organization.
 - c** The church changed from a fellowship of believers totally involved in witness to a place of position and authority for a select few.

18 I hope you can see these things taking place in your church.

9 The main purpose of the church is to spread the gospel of the kingdom of God. (It is *not* the church's major purpose to bring solutions to economic, social, or political problems.)