

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Exploring Nazarene
History and Polity



SESSION 1

Nazarenes and the Church

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Nazarenes and the Church

SESSION OVERVIEW

Christians Belong to the Family of God

Christians Are a New Testament Church

We Belong to a Particular Church

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand and explain the place of the Church of the Nazarene within the Christian community
- understand what it means to be a member of a particular church
- explore what is distinctive about being a member of the Church of the Nazarene
- understand the the core values of the Church of the Nazarene that form its identity

INTRODUCTION

It is important to see that you belong to both a specific denomination and the universal Christian Church. You should understand that any Christian belongs to a real community of believers like the Church of the Nazarene.

CHRISTIANS BELONG TO THE FAMILY OF GOD



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The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene affirms that one sole condition makes every Christian; regardless of their denominational affiliation belong to the universal church: “We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God Made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.” (*Manual* 11)

Whatever the time in history or wherever the locations on the globe, Christians are Christian on the same basis. Being a Christian means we are regenerate and are being transformed by the grace of God. We have a common identity that creates a bond with other believers. Nazarenes belong to the family of God. At the same time, when we affirm ourselves as Christian, we also indicate we are not something else. We do not belong to the other religious groups in the world. We are Christian, but we are not Muslim. We are Christian, but we are not Buddhist. We are Christian, but we are not Hindu. The one belief that normally separates Christians from these other groups is that salvation comes only through the name of Jesus, the Christ. Being part of the family of God means we do not belong to the other religious families in our world. More importantly, being part of the family of God means our salvation comes through the life and resurrection of Jesus.

A rich diversity exists in the many different families of Christians. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican are the primary main divisions of Christians. Protestants can be broken down further into Reformed, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Anabaptist and many others. The differences in Christianity emerge when we begin to consider the various groups of Christians. Nazarenes identify themselves with Protestants and Wesleyans.

When we think about our connection with Christian groups, we must reflect on both history and geography. When we baptize believers or participate in the Eucharist, we are joining with Christians around the world and throughout history. We are not alone. So, we must think about the world and history when we consider what it should mean for ourselves to be a Christian. Christianity is not limited to our own particular cultural understanding of the faith. Our faith is not new; we are connected to those in the faith who have gone before us.

The Church of the Nazarene views itself both as part of this larger family of God and as having its own distinctive identity and mission within that family. Being part of the larger family of Christians means we understand ourselves to be working together with other Christians to save a lost world. We join together in projects with other Christian groups.

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Being part of the larger family of Christians also means we recognize these denominational differences to be temporary and for the purpose of accomplishing the tasks of building the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, our identity and mission provides the reason for our own existence as a distinct organization. Our own identity and mission also provides the basis for unity within our own fellowship.

CHRISTIANS ARE A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH



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Christians understand themselves as inheriting the promises given to the people of the Old Testament and to those of the ancient faith of Judaism. We see ourselves as the continuation of God's chosen people. The foundation of the Church rests in God's desire to work with particular people in history. In the Old Testament, God chose the Jews as His specially called people.

The coming of Jesus the Christ changed who would receive the promise. Today, He works with real people within specific churches to accomplish His will. He has called Christians to live in tangible communities of faith like Southern Baptists, United Methodists, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and the Church of the Nazarene.

Christians claim to be a New Testament Church, for the New Testament records the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, salvation has been provided. Personal salvation is the basis for membership in the Church. Jesus established His Church through the work of His disciples who carry His message throughout the world to all people. The Great Commission in Matt. 28:18-20 commands the Church to translate the gospel into all cultures so everyone can respond to the message of salvation.

In the Book of Acts, the Jewish Christians discover the gospel is to go to all races, to all people, and not merely to be contained within one race. Christians took the gospel throughout the Mediterranean world. The Apostle Paul established local churches in various cultures. A New Testament church is one that focuses upon evangelism. The mission of evangelism becomes the prime characteristic of the church.

In reading the New Testament, we also get a glimpse of an institutional structure coming into existence. In his letters, Paul refers to leaders within the congregations and their respective offices. The New Testament shows a church taking physical shape. The church is more than some abstract concept; it is real people organizing themselves so they can better worship God and present the gospel.

Nazarenes are Christians who have organized themselves on the pattern of a New Testament church. We understand salvation to be only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and envision its mission to be to take this message to every culture in the world. A New Testament church is a mission-driven church.

WE BELONG TO A PARTICULAR CHURCH



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Just as churches in the New Testament existed in diverse cultures like those found in Corinth, Rome, or Ephesus, when we worship in a church we find ourselves in some particular location with its own cultural setting. We unite with real people who are discovering the meaning of being a Christian in a real world. We find ourselves in one of the families of churches. We call our family the Church of the Nazarene.

The Nazarene *Manual* again addresses this issue of what it means to be a particular Christian called Nazarene:

“The Church of the Nazarene is composed of those persons who have voluntarily associated themselves together according to the doctrines and polity of said church, and who seek holy Christian fellowship, the conversion of sinners, the entire sanctification of believers, their upbuilding in holiness, and the simplicity and spiritual power manifest in the primitive New Testament Church, together with the preaching of the gospel to every creature.” (*Manual* 19)

See: http://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN_manual_2013-17.pdf

What is there in the *Manual* statement that would provide the Church of the Nazarene a distinctive identity or mission? A publication distributed during the 2001 General Assembly discussed the core values of the Church terms: Christian, missional, and holiness. These core values are clearly found in the statement from the *Manual*. (708)

In the early part of this session, we looked at how Nazarenes are part of the family of God. We are Christian as we share a common understanding that we become a Christian through the grace of God responding to our repentance. We share a common belief to call Christians to witness through baptism and the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. We are Christian when we share common beliefs as expressed by the Early Church in the Apostles' and Nicene creeds.


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THE APOSTLES' CREED

*I believe in God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth;
 And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, dead, and buried;
 He descended into Hades;
 and the third day He rose again from the dead;
 He ascended into heaven,
 and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy Church universal,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting.
 Amen.*

NICENE CREED

*I believe in one God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth,
 and of all things visible and invisible;
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of His Father before all worlds,
 God of God, Light of Light,
 very God of very God,
 begotten, not made,
 being of one substance with the Father,
 by whom all things were made;
 who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven,
 and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary
 and was made man,
 and crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
 He suffered and was buried,
 and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures,
 and ascended into heaven,*


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*and sitteth on the right hand of the Father,
and He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and Giver of life,
who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy universal and apostolic church;
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
and I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.*

We are missional when we witness to this message in the world in which we live. This is seen in our global vision of the Church, which existed from the early desire of Nazarenes to do mission work. This is also seen in the aggressive evangelism that has been a part of our past heritage. Our mission has also been expressed in our focus on social and compassionate ministries. We are committed to being disciples of Jesus Christ and to making Christlike disciples in the nations.

We reflect holiness when we encourage a disciplined Christian life through spiritual development and through our focus on entire sanctification. We join all Christian groups in affirming spiritual growth. We maintain a separate identity in the way we understand and preach entire sanctification.

The *Manual* statement that began this section also contained the words that Nazarenes “voluntarily associate together.” The question remains, “What brings a specific group of people together for worship and fellowship?” In the past, the concern for holiness drew people together to form Nazarene churches. Do people gather in our churches today because of their desire to seek holiness and to be entirely sanctified?

In any Nazarene congregation throughout the world, the individuals coming into the church building will bring with them diverse religious experiences. Many will come for reasons far from what has formed our denominational identity. The question is, “Can a common identity be forged that will result in a shared commitment to a common lifestyle and core of beliefs?”

Writing in his 1921 *Herald of Holiness* article, “The Nazarene Church and Its Mission,” C. B. Widmeyer explained that while the Church of the Nazarene joined other Christians in a common task, they existed for a specific purpose (see “Application”, to read the article by Widmeyer).

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In this article, Widmeyer first, acknowledged denominations like the Church of the Nazarene serve a temporary and earthly purpose. Every true Christian will be part of the universal church. One day all of the churches that have been useful in the erection of the true Church of God will have served their purpose and will pass away. We will not know in heaven who were Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians or Nazarenes, but who are Christian and lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he asked, “Has the Church of the Nazarene a right to exist?” His answer explains the “why” for the continued existence: “The Nazarene church exists for the purpose of preaching holiness.” In 1918, B. F. Haynes wrote even more directly, “We teach the distinct privilege and duty of all believers to receive the work of sanctification as a second work of grace.”

APPLICATION



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1. List five characteristics of the Church of the Nazarene.
2. Finish: "I belong to the Church of the Nazarene because . . ."
3. Think about experiences you have had with people from other religions or experiences you have had with other religions. How have you found other religions to differ from Christianity? Second, reflect on experiences you have had with people from other Christian denominations. What have you learned to be important in these other Christian denominations? What makes a denomination a Christian denomination?

See: *Orientation to Ministry in the Church of the Nazarene*.

Available at: <http://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/other/TP%2520101%2520HE%2520101%2520Teacher.pdf>

4. Read the article by Widmeyer and reflect upon the mission of the Church of the Nazarene and how your experience of the Church has been the same or different.

THE NAZARENE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

(Rev. C. B. Widmeyer. *Herald of Holiness*, September 7, 1921. Used by permission.)

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets. He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. 2:23, KJV).

"For we have found this man a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5, KJV).

In the days of the Apostle Paul, certain companies of Christians were called Nazarenes and Paul was accused of the leadership of this sect. No doubt some of them chose the name, while others were called by it in derision. The name still exists in Arabic as the ordinary designation of Christians.

For some time after the ascension of Christ, the Church was of one name and one form of government. However, there appears to have soon advanced. Differences arose as to the person, nature and work of Christ, and the Christian world was divided. However, there developed a very strong organization now known as the Roman Catholic Church, which did not hold to the pure spiritual teachings of Christ. Since the day of Martin Luther there


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have developed many church organizations; many of these have served their day in the past, and when they failed to function and hold up the pure gospel of Christ, another denomination has been reared to carry on the glorious task of preaching salvation from sin to the lost and ruined world.

Some object to church organizations, saying they are unbiblical but the history of God's dealings with the Jews show that the Jewish church was a well-organized body. When Christ was here, he did not decry organization, but rebuked the Pharisees because they were given to work and had lost the true spirit of devotion. Upon every occasion, Christ attended the synagogue form of worship and frequently took part; and then we find Him attending the yearly feasts at Jerusalem, required by the law of the Jewish church.

There are some doctrinal issues such as Arminianism and Calvinism that have produced certain churches; but the idea of church government has been a large factor in preparing the way for a new church. Most of the churches are the outcome of a revival of religion. The old church became satisfied with a routine of life and practice and failed to keep alive the fire of God; then some man was raised up to lead the hosts on to victory and as a result the old church would not take the new converts under her wings unless there was a surrendering of the new life and a lessening of the revival fervor; so as a consequence a new church was organized. But by careful and close analysis we find that the new church partook of forms of government from the old church with a change or two. Look at the many bodies of Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc. We like to look upon the various denominations as representing the scaffolding surrounding a house, necessary to its construction; but when the house has been completed the scaffold is torn away and we see the beautiful house.

. . . Just as there was not the sound of the hammer when the walls of the temple were erected in Jerusalem, so when God fits us all together in that church above, we will lose sight of the old scaffolds, trestles, cross beams, rough timbers, etc. hammers, saws, spikes; and will see nothing but the law of love and the harmonious design of the great Master mechanic. . . .

As to church polity, the Church of the Nazarene is a composite body. We have today what might be termed two forms of church government—Episcopacy and the Congregational. In the government of the Church of the Nazarene, the better qualities of both forms are sought and blended together into a workable plan. The extreme of either plan has its faults and failings but both forms have good qualities. So the makers of our laws have sought to select the best of both forms and use only what was necessary to the furtherance of the spreading of the doctrine of scriptural holiness.

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John Wesley said the Methodist Episcopal church was made the depository of the doctrine of holiness or sanctification and that if they failed to preach it, God would raise up some other agency for the spreading of the doctrine of scriptural holiness. Thus God has in these last days signally raised up the Church of the Nazarene for the spreading of the doctrine of scriptural holiness and the conservation of the work. The organizers did not seek to add another denomination to the long list already in the land, but to organize a church that would stand distinctively for the doctrine of holiness and to furnish a church home for the number who received the experience. It was deemed necessary to the promulgation of the doctrine that an organization was essential in order that the best results might be attained. So, "Has the Church of the Nazarene a right to exist?" Why should it encumber the ground? Other bodies who were committed to the preaching of this doctrine have lessened in their zeal and interest. God called upon a company of people to enter the great field of churches and establish a church that would stand committed to this truth and make it her business to work at the job. God wants a holy people. In all ages He has had a holy people. The Nazarene church exists for the purpose of preaching holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord."

God has blessed the Church of the Nazarene with an unparalleled growth. The Pentecostal bodies of the East, the Church of the Nazarene of the West, the bodies from the South and the Southeast USA, the British Isles, and other world areas, have been called together.

The Church of the Nazarene is not called to inaugurate a new social order; she is not sent to prescribe policies for the solving of social unrest; she is not commanded to enter the realm of ethical relationships; she is not commissioned to equalize wealth and wages; she is not to heed the call to a "new vision, a new message, and new methods," but she is to preach the doctrines of regeneration and sanctification. She is to make Christlike disciples in the nations.

Some areas of the modern Church have fallen into the trap laid for the Master, and is discussing eugenics, and trying to make the race better by generation, instead of regeneration. The modern Church is being led today to take the place of a factor in the civilization of the world; when the very name church signifies those who have been called out and separated from the world. God help the Church of the Nazarene to stand true to her call.

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The world believes that in itself lies the secret of its betterment. The call of the world is to the community, while the cry of the Church is to the individual. The world demands no repentance, but the Church demands a confession of sin. Civic righteousness knows no Cross, and acknowledges no Savior. Social regeneration pleads no Calvary, and anticipates no Olivet. The Socialist proclaims that man is his own Savior while the philanthropist is buying his way to heaven. The politician is trying to purify politics to get the vote of the Church. The Church of the Nazarene endeavors to lift up a Savior who can save from all sin, purify the heart from the pollutions and keep the individual free from sin while sojourning here below.

Israel was to go a three days' journey into the wilderness before she could worship her God; she could not accept Pharaoh's plea and worship God in the land. The Church must be separate from the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." The Church of the Nazarene seeks to lead us back to the Cross, back to the ascended Christ, and onward to the coming King. However, before us lies the world in darkness; we will take it the Light. Souls are enslaved by sin; we will take them Christ who is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and can break every chain.

See: <https://nazarene.org/core-values>

EXAM



NOTES

1. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene affirms as the one sole condition that makes every Christian regardless of their denominational affiliation belong to the universal Church which of the following?
 - A. church membership
 - B. confirmation
 - C. being spiritually regenerate
 - D. baptism
2. What is the one belief that primarily separates Christians from other religious groups?
 - A. the Scriptures are our authority
 - B. salvation is through Jesus
 - C. God loves humans
 - D. God helps humans
3. Nazarenes identify themselves as Protestant and Reformed.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. Christians view themselves as a continuation of God's chosen people.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. The Great Commission in Matt. 28:18-20 commands the Church to translate the gospel into all cultures so everyone can respond to the message of salvation.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. In the Book of Acts, Jewish Christians discover _____.
 - A. they are the children of God
 - B. they can eat meat
 - C. the gospel is not for Romans
 - D. the gospel is for all peoples

 NOTES

7. Nazarenes are Christians who _____.
 - A. have organized themselves on the pattern of an New Testament church
 - B. understand salvation to be only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
 - C. envision its mission to be to take the message to every culture
 - D. all of the above

8. The Church of the Nazarene is composed of those who (more than one answer) _____.
 - A. seek holy Christian fellowship
 - B. seek the conversion of sinners
 - C. the upbuilding of believers in holiness
 - D. all of the above

9. The core values of the Church of the Nazarene emphasize that Nazarenes are (more than one answer) _____.
 - A. Christian
 - B. missional
 - C. holiness
 - D. A, B, C
 - E. none of the above

10. The Church of the Nazarene exists for a specific purpose of _____.
 - A. preaching of holiness
 - B. inaugurate a new social order
 - C. prescribe policies for the solving of social unrest
 - D. commissioned to equalize wealth and wages

11. According to B.F. Haynes, what should believers receive as a second work of grace?
 - A. joy
 - B. speaking in tongues
 - C. conversion
 - D. entire sanctification

12. Historically, people have been led to gather in Nazarene churches _____.
 - A. to listen to good music
 - B. to seek holiness and to be entirely sanctified
 - C. to seek God and be converted
 - D. to worship with friends and relatives

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Why do you feel the Church of the Nazarene has a right to exist?
2. Do we still hold a distinct place and purpose for existence? Why or why not.
3. What difference does it make for the Church of the Nazarene to exist?
4. What does it mean to you personally to be called Christian?