

Study 1. The Church as a Body

READ: Ephesians 1: 22 & 23; Colossians 1: 18; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27



KEY VERSE:

1 Corinthians 12: 27

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

We have already learned (Unit B Study 1) that the New Testament presents us with TWO distinct aspects of the church. Firstly, there is ‘the complete church’, consisting of all true believers from the beginning (**Acts 2**), until the Lord Jesus comes again. Secondly, there are ‘local churches’ - congregations of Christians in a given place and at a given time.

The Bible uses a number of ‘pictures’, or metaphors, to help us understand these things. Interestingly, the same ‘picture’ may be used to describe BOTH aspects of the church! In this Study, we shall examine how both the complete church and a local church are spoken of as **“a body”**.

1. THE COMPLETE CHURCH - A BODY

Christ’s church, in its widest sense, is made up of people from many generations, and from widely differing backgrounds. But these differences become of no importance because, in coming to faith in the Lord Jesus, they have become a spiritual unity, just as a human body is a physical unity with life flowing through every part of it. We all understand that every movement and function in our natural bodies is controlled by the brain, which is located in the head. This fact provides a clear illustration of New Testament teaching about the church, for it declares that Christ is **“the Head of the body, the church”**. (**Colossians 1: 18 and Ephesians 1: 22 & 23**)

In using the figure of a body to describe the whole church, the Bible is emphasising TWO main points:-

- The spiritual unity of all true Christians, from whatever circumstances they have come.
- The total authority and supremacy of the Lord Jesus, as Head of His church.

2. A LOCAL CHURCH - A BODY

When Paul wrote the part of the New Testament

which we call **First Corinthians**, he addressed it to **“the church of God which is at Corinth”**. (**1 Corinthians 1: 2**) Clearly, he had the Christian congregation in the city of Corinth in view. In **chapter 12**, he introduces to them the figure or ‘picture’ of a body, saying in **verse 27**, **“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually”**. He uses this concept to impress upon them that every member of the church is important, and has a part to play in its life. Think about these points:

- A body has many differing members, yet it is one! There is a wonderful unity in a body, for life is in every part of it. A church is like that - all its members are **“one in Christ Jesus”**. (**Galatians 3: 28**) They each possess spiritual life from Him. Because of this, we should always do our best to maintain harmony among the members of the church!
- In our bodies, each part has its own task to do. The foot cannot do the hand’s job, neither can the ear take over from the eye! (**See 1 Corinthians 12: 14-19**) So it is in the church; each member must learn what task God intends him to do. Our responsibility then is to fulfil it, as best we can.
- Our physical bodies demonstrate clearly how one member depends on another. How often the eye needs the fingers to wipe away a speck of grit! Likewise the head is totally dependent upon the feet to take it to its desired destination! (**See 1 Corinthians 12: 21**) All this illustrates how the members of a church need each other. We should never become proud and self-important, and think the weaker members are unnecessary!

So we can see that the ‘picture’ of a body is very suitable for illustrating God’s plan for how local Christians should operate as a church. The main ideas may be summarised as follows:

- In a church, as in a body, there is UNITY and DIVERSITY. (**“one body”; “many members”**)
- In a church, there is INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY - each member matters. A body is at its best when each part is doing what it is intended to do.
- In a body, one member depends on the others. Each shows SYMPATHY and HELPFULNESS to the others, when these are needed. So it should be in a church. (**See 1 Corinthians 12: 25 & 26**)

Study 1. The Church as a Body

1 *Colossians 1:18* SPEAKS OF CHRIST AS “THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH”.
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

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2 A. TO WHOM IS *1 CORINTHIANS* ADDRESSED? (SEE *1:2*)

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B. IN THE KEY VERSE PAUL SPEAKS OF THE CHURCH AS “THE BODY OF CHRIST”. WRITE IT OUT.

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C. FILL IN THE MISSING WORDS IN THIS SENTENCE:- THE BODY IS BUT THE MEMBERS ARE (NEED A CLUE? SEE *1 CORINTHIANS 12:20*)

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3 A. READ *1 CORINTHIANS 12:15 & 16* AND LIST THE FOUR MEMBERS OF THE BODY MENTIONED IN THEM.

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B. WHAT IS THE MAIN POINT OF PAUL’S TEACHING IN THESE TWO VERSES?

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4 WHY IS IT TO A CHURCH’S ADVANTAGE TO HAVE MANY MEMBERS EACH DOING THE TASK GIVEN BY GOD?

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5 ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE TO THE FOLLOWING:-

- a. The New Testament likens a church, in any given place, to a body.
- b. Just as some parts of a body are useless, so some members of the church have no function.
- c. The various parts of the body never show any concern for each other.
- d. *1 CORINTHIANS 12:26* teaches that in a church the members share each other’s joys and sorrows.
- e. We should get rid of the weaker members of the church.

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6 CHRIST IS THE “HEAD”, AND WE ARE THE “MEMBERS”. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US ABOUT CHRIST AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO HIM?

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7 THE ‘PICTURE’, OR FIGURE, OF A HUMAN BODY IS VERY SUITABLE FOR A LOCAL CHURCH. DO YOU AGREE? GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR ANSWER.

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Total marks for this study

This study sheet belongs to:

Study 2. The Church - a Temple and a Bride



KEY VERSE:

1 Corinthians 3: 16

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

We saw, in Study 1, that both the complete church and a local church are illustrated by the metaphor of ‘a body’. The very same applies to these other two metaphors - ‘a temple’ and ‘a bride’.

THE COMPLETE CHURCH - THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Paul writes to the Christians at Ephesus about **“the foundation”, “the chief corner-stone”, “the whole building”,** and so on. (**Ephesians 2: 19-22**) We must always remember that he is using these words in a figurative sense. This means that he is not thinking about a literal, material temple somewhere on earth. What he is teaching is that saved sinners, from many countries and, indeed, from many centuries, have been brought into such a wonderful relationship with God that they have become His **“habitation”,** or dwelling-place! Being **“joined together”,** they have become **“a holy temple in the Lord”.** (**Ephesians 2: 21**) When this age ends, this spiritual temple will be complete; for ever it will be to God’s honour and glory!

THE LOCAL CHURCH - THE TEMPLE OF GOD

1 Corinthians 3: 16 teaches us that a company of Christians who are ‘a church’ (in the New Testament meaning of the term) may properly be viewed as **“the temple of God”.** This implies at least TWO things:-

- Because they are **“the temple of God”,** they must not allow any wrong practices, or sinful behaviour, to have a place in their church-life. **Read 1 Corinthians 3: 17,** again.
- Because they are **“the temple of God”,** they can humbly claim to have God with them, as a true spiritual presence in their worship and in their work for Him. **“The Lord is in His holy temple.”** (**Psalm 11: 4**)

READ: Ephesians 2: 19-22 & 5: 22-27

1 Corinthians 3: 16 & 17

2 Corinthians 11: 1-4

THE COMPLETE CHURCH - THE BRIDE

Ephesians chapter 5 contains valuable instruction for Christian husbands and wives about their relationships with each other. To press home his teaching, Paul calls attention to the very best pattern, when he writes, **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it”.** (**Ephesians 5: 25**)

It is true that he does not use the word ‘bride’, but **verses 26 & 27** clearly present the picture of the whole church being like a bride who is being prepared for the day of her marriage!

It is wonderful to think that God views all who have trusted the Lord Jesus as one **“glorious church”,** pure, holy and unblemished - just like the most attractive bride we could ever imagine! When the church is complete, bride (church) and Bridegroom (Christ) will be together for ever, in perfect love!

THE LOCAL CHURCH - THE BRIDE

Once again, Paul uses pictorial language. (**2 Corinthians 11: 2**) He tells the church at Corinth that he has **“betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste (pure) virgin to Christ”.** He is referring to his preaching of the Gospel to them, and his subsequent spiritual care of them. In all of this, he had, as it were ‘arranged their marriage to Christ’! He was concerned now that they were going to prove unfaithful, and turn aside after **“another Jesus”** and a **“different gospel”** (v. 4). He is warning them plainly that, as a church, they must remain totally faithful and devoted to the Lord Jesus, and not allow Satan to deceive them, as he had deceived Eve.

The warning is just as important for us today. In church beliefs and practices, we must remain true to what the Bible teaches, and not allow new-fangled ideas to steal our affections away from our Lord and Saviour!

Study 2. The Church - a Temple and a Bride

- 1** WHEN PAUL SPEAKS OF THE WHOLE CHURCH AS "A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD" IN *EPHESIANS 2: 19-22*:-
- Who does he say is the foundation?
 - Who is the chief corner-stone?
 - What do the words "FOR A HABITATION OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT" mean?
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- 2** READ *1 CORINTHIANS 3: 16 & 17* AGAIN, AND THEN WRITE A SENTENCE TO EXPLAIN WHY THE CHURCH HAD TO TAKE CARE NOT TO ALLOW SINFUL PRACTICES AND WRONG TEACHINGS TO GAIN A FOOT-HOLD IN IT.
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- 3** THERE ARE THREE PLACES WHERE THE BIBLE SAYS GOD DWELLS:-
1. HEAVEN 2. ETERNITY 3. HIS CHURCH
LOOK UP THESE BIBLE REFERENCES, AND WRITE THE CORRECT PLACE NEXT TO THE CORRESPONDING REFERENCE.

ISAIAH 57: 15 *ECCLESIASTES 5: 2* *1 CORINTHIANS 14: 25*

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- 4** READ *EPHESIANS 5: 25*, THEN ANSWER:-
- Upon what is the love of a Christian husband for his wife to be modelled?
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 - What 'price' did Christ pay for His Bride, the church?
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- 5** READ *EPHESIANS 5: 27*, THEN WRITE OUT FROM IT WORDS AND PHRASES WHICH TELL US THAT THE WHOLE CHURCH WILL BE COMPLETELY PLEASING TO GOD IN THE DAY WHEN THE CHURCH, AS 'THE BRIDE', IS PRESENTED TO CHRIST.
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- 6** IN A SENTENCE EXPLAIN THE MAIN IDEA IN SPEAKING OF THE CHURCH AT CORINTH AS "THE TEMPLE OF GOD"? (See Key Verse)
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- 7** WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO BASE WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE CHURCH ON THE TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE?
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This study sheet belongs to:

Study 3. Gods provision for its progress



KEY VERSES:

Ephesians 4: 11 & 12

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

By ‘the church’ we mean the countless millions of believers in the Lord Jesus from the time recorded in **Acts 2**, right down to the present, and forward to the moment of His coming again. As we have seen, God views them as ‘the body of Christ’, ‘His temple’, and, indeed, as ‘the bride of Christ’. It need not surprise us, then, to find that God has provided abundantly for its ongoing life and progress.

An important part of His provision is the fact that He has given **“gifts”** to the church, as **Ephesians 4** tells us. The **“gifts”** referred to in **verse 11** are actually men who played a vital part in the earliest days of the church’s existence. Note who they are:

1. APOSTLES and PROPHETS - If we think of the church as **“the temple of God”**, then we may say that these were the men who laid the ‘foundation teachings’ (or ‘doctrines’) of the church. **(See Ephesians 2: 20)** They were very important people at that time when as yet the New Testament had not been written; God revealed to the apostles and prophets what His mind was, and they imparted it to the churches.

2. EVANGELISTS - These were men who were ‘gifted’ by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel; through their work the church continues to grow, even to the present time. Philip is an example of one of the first evangelists - **see Acts 21: 8**.

3. PASTORS and TEACHERS - The word ‘pastor’ means ‘shepherd’, and it serves to remind us that, just as sheep need the care and protection of a shepherd, so the members of Christ’s church need guidance and instruction. In every generation, God has given to the church men who are capable of shepherding and teaching.

Today, we are living about 2000 years after the beginning of the church. The **“apostles and prophets”**, in the sense in which Paul used these

READ: Ephesians 4: 11-13 & 16 and 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11

names, are no longer with us, because we now have the completed Word of God. We believe, however, that God still gives, to those whom He chooses, the ability to teach and guide **“the body of Christ”**. Such persons should be held in high respect, and their good example should be followed! **(See Hebrews 13: 7)**

Another very important part of the New Testament, for the understanding of God’s provision for churches, is **1 Corinthians 12**. Paul, in this chapter, is impressing upon his readers some practical facts about how local church-life should operate. Among other things, he stresses the following:

1. God is in complete control, and He determines what ‘gift’ (‘ability’ or ‘position’) each member of the body should have. **Read verses 4-6**, and note how there are different kinds of gifts, services and activities, but they all come from God Himself! He is the source of them all and He knows exactly what position and task each person can fulfil in the church.
2. Each person in the church has some ‘gift’ from God. (Note **“to each one”** in **vs. 7 & 11**) As each part of our bodies has a function to perform, so each one of us has a part to play in **“the body of Christ”** (the church).
3. When we do in the church what God has fitted us to do, we are showing that God, the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. This is what is meant by **“the manifestation of the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12: 7)**. We should not hide our **“talent”**, as did the man in Jesus’ parable. **(Matthew 25: 24 & 25)** It is better to use it, for then God’s will is being done in our lives.
4. **“Gifts”** are **“for the profit of all” (v. 7)**. Whatever God has given to us is not for our own selfish ends, but for the building up of the church in love. **(Ephesians 4: 16)** In our human bodies, each part functions for the good of the whole. It should be the same in **“the body of Christ”!**

Each Christian, then, should try to be part of a church where the teachings of the New Testament are believed and practised. In such a setting, we should use and develop the ‘gift’ which God has given to us. This is God’s plan both for our own spiritual growth and also for the progress of His church!

Study 3. Gods provision for its progress

1 WRITE A NOTE TO SAY WHAT IS MEANT BY "THE CHURCH", IN THE BIBLE SENSE.

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2 WRITE DOWN **THREE** FIGURATIVE OR 'PICTURE' WAYS USED IN THE BIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE CHURCH.

- i. "The of Christ"
- ii. "The of God"
- iii. "The of Christ"

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3 A. WHAT IS THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST?

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B. WHAT PART DO PASTORS AND TEACHERS PLAY IN THE LIFE OF A LOCAL CHURCH?

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4 READ *1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6*, AGAIN. THESE VERSES ARE TEACHING THAT THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT ARE ALL ACTIVE IN GIVING GIFTS TO THE CHURCH. PUT THE VERSE REFERENCE IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

- i. Which verse attributes the gifts to "THE SPIRIT"?
- ii. Which verse attributes the gifts to "GOD"?
- iii. Which verse attributes the gifts to "THE LORD"?

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5 WRITE OUT A VERSE FROM *1 CORINTHIANS 12* WHICH COULD BE USED TO PROVE THAT EACH ONE IN THE CHURCH IS 'GIFTED' BY GOD, IN SOME PARTICULAR WAY.

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6 READ *ROMANS 12:3* AND WRITE A SENTENCE TO EXPLAIN WHAT OUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE WITH REGARD TO THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS WHICH THE LORD HAS GIVEN TO US.

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7 HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER A CHRISTIAN WHO SAID THAT THERE WAS NOTHING FOR HIM OR HER TO DO IN THE CHURCH?

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This study sheet belongs to:

Study 4. Women in the Church



KEY VERSE:

1 Corinthians 11: 3

“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

We conclude this series of Studies by asking, “What does the Bible say about the role of women in the church? Are they equal with men?” For answers to these, and related questions, we must turn to our Bibles!

1. The Bible teaches THE EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN. Neither is superior to the other. In God’s view, they are of equal worth. The Gospel does NOT declare that God loved men and despised women! Instead, its message is, **“God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish...” (John 3: 16)**

Note the following points:-

- Men and women are saved on exactly the same terms, namely, repentance and faith. **(Acts 5: 14)**
- Men and women are seen by God as **“one in Christ Jesus”**. **(Galatians 3: 28)**
- Both men and women were baptised, on believing in the Lord Jesus. **(Acts 8: 12)**
- The New Testament letters (epistles) mention many women by name, showing that they were accepted into the fellowship of the churches. **(Romans 16: 1 & 2; Philippians 4: 2 & 3)**
- Women, equally with men, suffered persecution for their faith in Christ. **(Acts 8: 3 and 9: 1 & 2)**

2. The Bible shows that God has given A DIFFERENT ROLE TO EACH, both IN CREATION and IN THE CHURCH.

i) IN CREATION

God created man FIRST, then, from the rib removed from Adam’s side, He made the woman. **(Genesis 2: 22)** In keeping with this order, He gave headship to the man. By this we mean that Adam was placed in a position of authority. It was God’s free choice to do so. Man’s headship in creation in no way upsets the equality already outlined. ‘Headship’ does not imply ‘superiority’. When **1 Corinthians 11: 3** states that **“the head of Christ is God”**, it does not mean that Christ is inferior to God! It is simply

READ: 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16, 14: 34 & 35 and 1 Timothy 2: 8-14

emphasising the different roles within the Godhead. Likewise, to say that man is the head of the woman does not mean that she is inferior to the man!

Another reason for the man’s headship over the woman is found in **Genesis 3: 6 & 16**, and **1 Timothy 2: 14**. Here we are told that it was the woman who was deceived by Satan, and who was the first person to sin.

Summing up the Bible’s teaching we can say that man is ‘head’ of the woman because:-

- He was FIRST to be created.
- She was FIRST in sinning against God.

ii) IN THE CHURCH

What happened at the very beginning of humanity has a bearing on local church-life, as **1 Corinthians 11: 2-16** teaches. God, as we have seen, has given authority and headship to the man. If a Christian woman wishes to show her acceptance of the man’s headship, she wears a covering upon her head when the church meets. She submits to having, **“a symbol of authority on her head”**, as **verse 10** says.

A further important link with **Genesis 2 & 3** is established in **1 Timothy 2: 11-14**. Christian women are forbidden to teach the church, or to have authority over the men. **Verses 13 & 14** clearly refer back to Adam and Eve’s sin as being the reason for this restriction. **“Let your women keep silent in the churches” (1 Corinthians 14: 34)** is another statement which helps us to see God’s role for women in church-life.

What, then, is a woman’s role? There are many ways open to her to serve God and to honour her Lord. By living a truly Christian life, and by being fully supportive of all the work of the church, she will gain the respect of everyone, and become, in time, a good example to those who are coming behind, as is taught, for example, in **Titus 2: 3-5**. No one who submits to the position which God assigns in the church is, in any sense, inferior to other members who may appear to occupy more prominent roles. Spiritually, we will never be the poorer if we are obedient to the will of God!

Study 4. Women in the Church

1 WRITE A SHORT PARAGRAPH TO EXPLAIN SOME WAYS IN WHICH MEN AND WOMEN WERE EQUAL IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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2 READ *ROMANS 16: 1 & 2* AGAIN, THEN ANSWER:

- a. Name the woman referred to in these verses.
- b. Why does Paul speak highly of her?
- c. Suggest some practical ways in which a young Christian today could be "A HELPER OF MANY", particularly in a church setting.

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3 IN SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES, FAMILIES AND ORGANISATIONS OF ALL KINDS, THE IDEA OF 'A HEAD' IS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD. READ *1 CORINTHIANS 11:3* AGAIN, THEN ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:-

- a. Who is the 'head' of Christ?
- b. Who is the 'head' of man?
- c. Who is the 'head' of woman?

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4 IN THE CHURCH, WHAT SYMBOL (OR SIGN) DOES A WOMAN USE TO SHOW THAT SHE ACCEPTS THE HEADSHIP OF THE MAN?

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5 IN THE CREATION ACCOUNT OF *GENESIS 2 & 3*:-

- a. In what way was the woman SECOND?
- b. In what way was the woman FIRST?
- c. Which one, Adam or Eve, was deceived by Satan?

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6 READ *1 TIMOTHY 2: 11-14* CAREFULLY, THEN EXPLAIN WHY THE WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH IS A NON-TEACHING ONE.

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7 HERE ARE BIBLE REFERENCES TO SOME WOMEN WHO WERE WELL-KNOWN IN THE CHURCHES. WRITE IN ONE COLUMN THEIR NAMES, AND IN THE OTHER, RECORD ONE FACT ABOUT EACH WOMAN.

<i>ACTS 9: 36</i>
<i>ACTS 12: 12-16</i>
<i>ACTS 16: 14 & 15</i>
<i>ROMANS 16: 6</i>

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8 *1 TIMOTHY 2: 9 & 10* TEACHES THAT CHRISTIAN WOMEN SHOULD "ADORN THEMSELVES... WITH GOOD WORKS". SUGGEST SOME WAYS IN WHICH THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED TODAY.

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Total marks for this Unit

Return your study sheets to:

25

Total marks for this study