

The Church

We are not just Christian people, we are church people. Not just committed to Christ, but to His Body. The church is in the very centre of His eternal purposes – conceived in eternity past, realized in history, and to be perfected in the future

The English word *church* is related to the Scottish word *kirk* (German *kirche*), and these in turn are derived from the Greek word *kuriakon*, the neuter adjective of *kurios* (“Lord”), meaning “belonging to the Lord.” The word *church* translates the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is derived from *ek*, meaning “out of,” and *kaleo*, which means “to call,” hence, the church is “the called-out ones.” *Ekklesia* appears 3 times in the gospels (Matthew 16:18 and 18:17), and 111 times in the epistles where it mostly refers to the community who believe in, and are followers of, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 8:1; 1 Thess. 1:1).

- *Ekklesia* is commonly used for the assembly of the whole body of citizens in a city who are “called out” by the herald for discussion of public business
- Among the Hebrews – *Ekklesia* designates the congregation (community of believers)
- *Ekklesia* is first applied to Christians by Jesus in Matt 16:18 “I will build my church”

Aspects of the Church

The universal church.

The universal church encompasses all who, since Pentecost, have been born of the Spirit of God through faith in Christ, and have been thereby baptized into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Pet. 1:3, 22-25).” It was the universal church that Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18), for whom Christ died (Eph. 5:25), and over which He is Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). A special feature of the universal church is its unity despite the diversity of culture, race, gender, and social status; a unity produced by the Spirit (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:4).

Symbolic pictures of the Lord and His church:

The Shepherd and His sheep (Jn 10:1-39, Heb 13:20-21, 1 Pet 5:1-4) – He provides guides and protects

The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-16) Living, vital union and dynamic connection of the Lord and His people, bringing fruitfulness in life and ministry

The Capstone and the stones of God’s Temple (Eph 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5-6) Strength and stability, joined together (interdependence) and the dwelling place of God – holy and set apart

The High Priest and the priestly kingdom (Heb 3:1-14, 5:10, 7:1-10:18, Rev 1:6, 5:10, 20:6) Acceptance and continual intercession and cleansing – we are involved in prayer and worship

The Head and the Body (1 Cor 12:12-27) Relationship (organism) of intimacy, responsibility to each other (recognizing diversity and unity), and submission to the head

The Last Adam and the New Creation (1 Cor 15:20-22, 45-49) Completely new order and union with ...new birth and eternal life – new community from a new source

The Bridegroom and the Bride (2Cor 11:2, Eph 5:25-33, Rev 19:6-9) Preparing His bride – sanctifying and beautifying

The Heir and the joint heirs (Rom 8:17, Heb 1:2a, Rev 20:4-6) Our future is assured, inspiring hope and joy, but also accountability with reward or loss in eternity

The Master and His servants (1 Cor 7:20-24, Col 4:1) Under the authority of Christ – the privilege of bond slave, and call to obedience

The local church.

The most common use of the word *church* in the NT designates a local congregation (EG the church in Jerusalem [Acts 8:1], Rome [Rom. 16:5], Corinth [1 Cor. 1:2], and in the home of Philemon [Philemon 2]).

The early believers often met in homes (Rom. 16:5; Philem. 2) and came together for instruction (Acts 2:42; 11:26; 1 Cor. 4:17), worship (1 Cor. 11:18), fellowship (Acts 2:42; 4:31), and for prayer (Acts 2:42).

Formation of the Church

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus prophesied: "I will build my church," indicating that the church was still future at that time. The church was not in existence prior to Pentecost. The Lord Jesus is building His church by the Holy Spirit whom the Father has sent in Jesus' Name (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit baptizes believers into the Body of Christ at the moment of regeneration (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Centrality of the Church

The Church is central to the plan of God. It was conceived and planned in the eternal mind of God (the Church is not a mere parenthesis or alternative plan)

Eph 3:9 *"to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God"*

Col 1:24-26 *"the sake of His Body, which is the Church ... the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints"*

It is the Lord's church – Matt 16:18 *"I will build My church"*

He Died to redeem (set free and purchase to Himself) the church – Acts 20:28 *"Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with his own blood"*

He sent His Spirit to indwell, empower, instruct, endower (enable with spiritual gifts) and guide His church

The Distinctives of the Church

In relation to Israel

The church is distinct from Israel. The people of God in the Old Testament were in relationship with God on the basis of the covenants God made for them. The people of God in the New Testament (the Church) are in relationship with God on the basis of a new covenant based on the sacrificial death of Christ with distinct features from previous covenants.

After the church was established, Israel continued to be recognized as a people distinct from Gentiles and from the church (Acts 5:31, 35 etc.). Paul retains a distinction between Israel and the church (1 Cor. 10:32).

Some believe that Israel was displaced permanently by the Church ('spiritual Israel'), thus teaching that there are no prophecies left to be fulfilled relating to the nation and that there is no need for a Millennium involving Israel. However, God's unconditional promises and covenants to Israel indicate that God does plan a future for His earthly people. This is confirmed by the teaching of the Apostle Paul (Rom 11:15, 26).

Paul also refers to believers in the church to be spiritual heirs of God's promises (Gal 3:29), but this does not imply that God's purposes with Israel are now void.

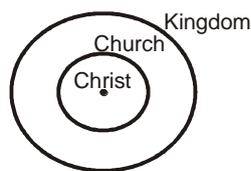
In relation to the kingdom

Some Christians believe that the church is synonymous with the kingdom. The basic meaning of kingdom involves two things: a ruler, a people who are ruled. The word *kingdom*, which means "royal dominion, the rule, and the kingship".

There are two basic forms of God's Kingdom:

1. The universal kingdom which has existed from the beginning (Lam. 5:19, Psa. 103:19; 139:7-10), and involves God's sovereign control of history (Isa. 44:26-45:4). The universal kingdom is God's sovereign rule from eternity to eternity.
2. The mediatorial kingdom where the rule of God is administered through a divinely chosen representative who speaks for God and also represents the people before God. In the past God worked through various mediators such as Adam and Moses, but the true fulfillment is in Messiah, who will rule on earth in the future Messianic kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

The word *church* (Gk. *ekklesia*), it is never equated with the kingdom in the NT. The church is not the kingdom, but both the members of the church and the subjects of the Kingdom are both under the rule of Christ. Jesus proclaimed: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17) but when the kingdom (The King) was rejected, according to the parables of Matthew 13 and other Scriptures, the complete fulfillment was kept for a future time. So Christ is



central to both, but the present form of the Kingdom is not the outward glorious and complete manifestation of the Kingdom. It co-exists alongside the church through this present age and will be fully realized in its final world-wide form after the rapture and the parousia of Christ (the return of Christ in His glory).

What characterizes an authentic local church?

Does a group of Christians, meeting together to fellowship, studying God's Word and praying together constitute a church? When or how does a group of this nature actually become a church?

When the Apostle Paul and other NT missionaries established churches in new locations they appointed elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The role of the elders, to be under-shepherds and to lead, feed and protect the 'local flock', indicated the constitution of a church in contrast to a group of believers simply meeting together. The eldership provided an authority for setting and maintaining biblical doctrine and practice, and putting in place an accountability structure under Christ, with the power to discipline where any may willfully reject their authority.

Also, in the NT the local church was constituted when the group of believers became a unit that was galvanized together, committed to one another and to the whole. This group followed the directions given by Jesus and the Apostles - practicing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41; 1 Cor. 11:23-24) and the characteristic functions of church life (Acts 2:42):

Essentially there are two purposes of the church:

- **Gathered** (called out of) for worshipping and building up the Body of Christ
- **Scattered** (sent into) for outreach to the world

The church is called to a double identity – **separated from the world, but sent into the same world!**

A learning community

At the very outset, the church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). During his 'church planting' missionary work Paul taught the churches both publicly and in the homes (Acts 18:11, 20:20). Biblical instruction was a primary function of the early church (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 1:3; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; 2 Tim. 2:2). Paul describes the Church as being **"the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth"** (1 Tim. 3:15).

A loving community (Body life)

The Church is not a stagnant institution, nor even a progressive organisation, but a living Body. The word *fellowship* (Gk. *koinonia*) means "sharing" and highlights the unity and sense of belonging together that characterizes a local church (Acts 2:42)

Fellowship is expressed in unity, grace and care for one another, including financial and practical help to those in need and in support of those spreading the gospel (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:5)

Fellowship is also emphasized in the frequent use of "one another" (accept one another (Rom. 15:7), love one another (Eph. 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2), do not judge one another (Rom. 14:3, 13), build up one another (Rom. 14:19), and admonish one another (Rom. 15:14).

A worshipping community

The NT church observed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

A serving community

The image of the Church as the Body of Christ emphasizes that the church is the expression of Christ's activity now, just as His physical body was during His earthly ministry. The image also emphasizes the vital connection that all believers have with each other and with Christ. Thus the church is committed to the development and exercising of spiritual gifts in order to serve one another (Rom. 12:7).

A praying community

(Acts 4:24-31; 12:5, 12; Phil. 1:3-4).

A missional community

Evangelism and mission to the unbelievers in the local community as well as a commitment to take the gospel to the whole world (Acts 8:4; 11:19, 20; 16:31; 17:12).

The Lord Jesus did not stay safe within the cloister of Heaven, and now He calls the church to enter other people's worlds as He did (Jn 20:21 "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you").

Social concern and evangelism are both aspects of the missional community, as the same love that motivates the one, motivates the other (James 1:27, 2:1-11). The Great Commandment and the Great Commission go together.

Ordinances of the Church

Historically the church has recognized two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, however the Roman Catholic Church teach there are seven sacraments. An ordinance is "an outward rite prescribed by Christ to be performed by His church."

Lord's Supper

Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on the eve of His crucifixion, commanding that His followers continue to observe it until His return (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23). The bread and cup are figurative only; as are a memorial to the death of Christ (1 Cor. 11:24, 25) the bread symbolizing His perfect body offered as a sacrifice for sin (1 Pet. 2:24) and the wine His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7).

Baptism

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. It serves as a public testimony of faith in Christ, and does not itself produce any spiritual change in the one baptized or convey any spiritual blessing. It is only for believers so infants should not be baptized.

Leadership in God's community

Leadership is critical in the life of a church.

Some churches have correct in doctrine, loving fellowships, prayerful and doing good deeds, but fail to really impact their community, or grow, due to defective leadership.

Bill Hybels: *"The local church is the hope of the world, and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders."*

- The Church is His church and He is her absolute Lord (Matt 16:18 *"I will build My church"* and Acts 20)
- It was conceived and planned in the eternal mind of God (not a mere parenthesis or alternative plan)

Eph 3:9 *"to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God"*

Col 1:24-26 *"... His body, which is the church ... the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints"*

- He trained and commissioned the Apostles
- He Died to redeem the church

Acts 20:28 *"Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood"*

- He sent His Spirit to indwell, empower, instruct, endower (with gifts) and guide His church
- He promises to return for His Church – the Bride

Biblical leadership is always in relationship with the Lord (*Heb 13:7-8, 17-21*)

1. The Lord and His relationship to Church Leaders

➤ Church leaders are to serve with delegated authority

A young, puny police officer is still obeyed!

Verses 7 and 17 – 'leaders' is generic (used of military, civic, religious)

The meaning of word (from context – of obedience and submission to authority):

- To rule with delegated authority
- To represent Christ in life and ministry

We are sent “in His Name” and are to pray “in His Name”.

Apostolic Authority

There is a special place given to the authority of the 12 apostles whom Jesus appointed. They were:

1. The authentic witnesses to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:16-18 and Acts 1:8)
2. The authority for the beliefs that the church was to hold (Eph. 2:19-20 and 1 Tim. 3:15).
3. The authority for what the church should practice.

The apostles’ authority remains, enshrined in their writings which make up the majority of the New Testament. Therefore the church today submits to the Bible as the supreme expression of Christ's authority in all matters of belief and practice.

Local Church Authority

The New Testament teaches that leadership in each local church is the responsibility of a group of men who are appointed as elders.

1. Elder (Gk. *presbuteros*) - the authority in the church (as the elders in Israel who were the wise judges who sat at the gates of ancient cities). The word depicts someone respected in the church community who is mature and established in their faith.
2. Overseer (“bishop” Gk. *episkopos*). This term means “to watch over” like a shepherd. It speaks to the function of the elder who is to nurture and feed the flock of God entrusted to him (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7).
3. Pastor-teacher (Gk. *Poimenos didaskalos*) - the shepherd, who feeds the flock and protects them.

A comparison of Acts 20:17, 28 and Titus 1:5, 7 reveals that *elder* and *overseer* are used interchangeably, denoting the same office. The word *presbuteros* stresses the dignity of the office while the words *episkopos* and *Poimenos didaskalos* emphasize the work.

Plurality of elders was the normal NT practice (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5).

Deacons

The word *deacon* (Gk. *diakonos*) is the common word that means “servant” and is used many times in the New Testament in a nontechnical sense (Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35).

It appears that the origin of the office began in Acts 6:1-6. Deacons care for the material and physical needs of the congregation.

Deaconesses

There are two passages that talk of female deaconesses, though some argue that the word is used in a nontechnical sense.

Romans 16:1 refers to Phoebe as a “servant” (Gk. *diakonon*) of the church.

1 Timothy 3:11 which mentions “women” (Gk. *Gunaikas*), but in the context of the passage where Paul is writing about deacons, there is good justification for interpreting 3:11 as referring to the office of deaconess.

Elders

The elders have a position and a function in the church:

Position:

Elders are given the responsibility of being stewards (managers) of God's people (Titus 1:7 and Acts 20:28). They have been placed in a position of spiritual authority over those in their care (Hebrews 13:17). The word elder means "overseer" (foreman). But their authority is not for themselves

Matt. 23:1-12 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted"

1 Pet. 5:2-4 "shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away"

Function:

Elders are shepherds and guardians who are to care for and protect God's people (Tit. 1:7 and Acts 20:28 *"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God"*). They are to teach, correct and give direction to believers in their church fellowships. They are not to Lord it over the believers, nor place themselves above them as "Father" or "Teacher" (Mark 10:42, Matthew 23:1-12, 1 Peter 5:1-2, and 1 Timothy 5:17).

Nevertheless, they are not just 'one of the boys' but are God-appointed and to be respected. 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-19, and Titus 1:5-9, show how elders should be treated.

The qualifications of an elder are listed twice, showing the importance of their example in the way they live (1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9).

The women, though equal with man in dignity and position before God (Gal.3:28), are not to take the place of authority over men, especially in teaching God's Word (1 Cor.11:3, 14:34-35, 1 Tim.2:11-15).

➤ Church leaders are to serve with dependence on Christ

Leadership involves vision, taking an up-front role with the expectation that the church will follow. Leaders are to lead! However, their leadership is to be in dynamic relationship with the Lord, and therefore in dependence upon the Lord.

Dependence is expressed in prayer (Acts 6 – the church leaders in Jerusalem appointed deacons in the church so they could devote themselves to prayer)

Dependence is expressed in the critical role that the Holy Spirit is meant to have in the life of a church. The book of Acts bears witness to this supervisory role of the Holy Spirit.

➤ Church leaders are accountable to Christ

➤ **Accountability to the Lord of the Church**

James 3:1 *“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly”*

1 Cor. 3:12-17 *“If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work”*

➤ **Accountability to the other leaders and members of the Church**

1 Tim 5:19 *“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses”*

2. The Lord and the responsibilities of Church Leaders

The Pastor-teacher elders are gifts to the Church (Eph 4:11)

- **To serve the church**

Verse 17 *“They are keeping watch over your souls”*

Leaders are not there for their own benefit (John 10: 11-15 *“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd ... and I lay down my life for the sheep”*)

Church members do not belong to the pastor or elders, but the elders /pastor belongs to the congregation (they are their servants for Jesus’ sake - Lk 22:25ff).

Leaders first must yield themselves fully to the Lord and His work (Acts 20:24). They will then be able to move others to give their lives for the same vision - to give their time, their money, their service, their support, their prayer, their tears and hard yakka!

John 13 – servant love: sacrificial and selfless. However, this does not mean that leaders are the ones that serve in the kitchen and do all the mundane jobs (Acts 6:1-6). However, they must be willing.

- **To teach the church**

I. By word

Verse 7 *“Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you”*

1 Tim 3:2 *“... able to teach”*. This does not mean that every elder has to be a pulpit teacher (1 Cor 12:4-5 *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord”*)

Tit. 1:9 *“He (an elder) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it”*)

II. By example

Verse 7 *“Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith”*

1 Cor. 11:1 *“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ”*

Matt. 28:20 *“... teaching them to OBSERVE ...”*

1 Tim. 4:16 *“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching”*

- **To lead the church**

The church needs leaders who lead. Verse 17 says *“Obey your leaders (NKJV ‘those who rule over you’), and submit to their authority”*

Servant leadership is not an oxymoron – a contradiction in terms. Servant leadership relates to the attitude of a leader in relation to Christ and in relation to His people.

- **To protect the church**

Verse 17 *“They keep watch over you”* – the word literally means ‘keep yourself awake’ (as you guard or take care of). It implies the presence of danger.

Church leaders are to protect the believers against dangers such as:

- Turning from the truth (Tit. 1:9 *“He must ... refute those who oppose it”*)
- Backsliding and worldliness
- Unresolved relationship issues (unforgiveness / bitterness)
- Immoral or unethical behaviour
- Spiritual apathy

Etc. ...

Discipline

The elders are called to keep the Lord’s church holy. If there are believers who have turned markedly from the truth or are continuing in sinful lifestyles, the elders are called to publicly discipline them. The purpose is twofold – to protect the church, and to restore the believer. All such discipline must be done in love and gentleness (1 Cor.5:9-13, Gal.6:1-2).

3. The Lord and the response to Church Leaders

Verse 17 *“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority ... let them do this with joy and not with sighing (sorrow / grief / groan)”*

What causes leaders to groan or sigh? Criticism, poison tongue, apathy, willful sin, joy-killers.

Types of Church Government

Even though the Church is not an organization (it is a Body – an organism) there are various forms of organization that govern the functioning of the church. Historically, three major categories can be identified.

Episcopal - from the Greek word *episkopos*, meaning “overseer” (“bishop”). This group of churches is governed by the authority of bishops. They range from the simplest form in the Methodist church, to the most complex structure in the Roman Catholic church, where the ultimate authority is vested in the bishop of Rome, the pope.

Presbyterian - from the Greek word *presbuteros*, meaning “elder”. These churches are governed by elders who are appointed or elected by the people. These churches often have an ordained ‘teaching elder’ who governs the local church. Above these is a presbytery, made up of ordained ministers and ruling elders from each local congregation in a district. Above the presbytery is the synod, and over the synod is the general assembly, the highest court.

Congregational. In congregational church government the authority rests not with a representative individual or a group of elders, but with the entire local congregation. A

congregational church is autonomous (not under any authority outside of the local church other than Christ).

A Learning Community

I believe that we can get caught up with church life to such an extent that we can lose sight of the real purpose of our existence

2 Tim 4:1-5

The church is to be a community that pleases God by basing it's beliefs and practice on God's Word, and so must first be a learning community

Matt 28:18-20 *"Make disciples (learners) ... teaching them to observe..."*

Acts 2:42 *"They continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine..."*

Keeping God's Word foundational keeps our true mission in focus

1. The Importance of God's Word

- ***God's Word reveals the purpose of the church***

On TV a woman was commenting on business's attitudes to employees – their driving focus is obviously to make money – care of employees can get ignored or sidelined if it adversely affects profit! Making money is fundamental to business

What is fundamental to a hospital? Helping the sick in the community!

What is fundamental to a Church?

Churches can easily become unbalanced + unbiblical

God's Word reveals the fundamental purpose for the church's existence (mission)

A biblically balanced mission statement that is clear and well communicated will drive a church.

If we prioritize the purpose of the church to be **a caring community** – we can be in danger of accepting immorality and other sinful lifestyles

If we prioritize the purpose of the church to be a **place of worship** – we can be in danger of growing shallow, biblically ignorant and insular ...

If we prioritize the purpose of the church to be a community who are about **social justice** – we can be in danger of doing great things for our community and the world while they go on their way to hell

What we prioritize as the purpose of the church – that will determine where all the effort and focus will be

- ***God's Word regulates the Practice of the church***

1 Tim 3:15 *"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"*

1 Tim 3:16-17 *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"*

The whole NT emphasizes the application of truth

“Make disciples ... teaching ... OBSERVE all ...”

1 Tim 1:3-5 – false teaching produces bad fruit where in contrast God’s Word produces love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith

REVIVAL – return to God’s Word “**NEW OBEDIENCE**”

FRUIT of revival – joy, peace and love

- **God’s Word realizes (makes real) the power of God**

- **Power that brings salvation**

1 Cor 2:1-5 *“Dear brothers and sisters when I first came to you I didn’t use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God’s message. For I decided to concentrate only on Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. I came to you in weakness – timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. I did not use wise and persuasive speeches, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among you. I did this so that you might trust the power of God rather than human wisdom”*

1 Pet 1:23 *“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God”*

- **Power that transforms**

2 Peter 1:3-4 *“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness ... He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires”*

1 John 2:14 (+Eph 6:17) *“I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one”*

Heb 4:12 *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, ... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

(living – like a word on the computer page that is ‘alive’ (can click on it and it responds – TRY CLICKING WHEN IT IS NOT ALIVE!)

Col 3:16 *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another”*

Hear –read – meditate – study – memorize – share

2. The Instruction in God’s Word

- **Formal Instruction –**

Authoritative

1 Tim 4:11-16 *“Command and teach these things ... devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching ... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”*

Titus 1:9 (an elder) *“must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine ...”*

2 Tim 4:2 *“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction”*

Teaching God’s Word in today’s church is to be a priority.

Pulpit teaching is to be authoritative and expositional, though people do not attend a church service to receive a content-heavy lecture. The pulpit should be more exhortational and life-related, though thoroughly grounded in Scripture (there is a wide variety of knowledge and experience within any congregation).

The church of today needs to find ways of giving formal instruction to the congregation. This will include one-to-one mentoring, serious Bible study groups (similar to BILD, CBTE, KYB and BSF, that are based in the church. Theological training can now be done through the internet and by correspondence, with a church leader as mentor, overseeing the person's studies. Another is to encourage and help support individuals through a Bible College course.

Stewardship

2 Tim 1:13-14 *"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us"*

The elders are to have a sharp nose for error and unprofitable theological diversions. To preempt these with positive teaching is imperative (EG. To teach on Divine Sovereignty with a balanced view before it becomes an issue in the church)

Systematic

Acts 20:26-27 *"I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God"*

Even pulpit teaching, though more exhortational, should aim to cover all areas of theology and all parts of the Bible

Giftedness

1 Cor 12:4-6 *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men"*

NLT *"Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us"*

Only gifted men and women are to be used to teach the Word. However, there must be a recognition of the way the gift of teaching has a variety of ministries "kinds of service" (verse 5). There could be five people with the gift of teaching, but one has the ministry of teaching children; another of teaching in a small, interactive group; another in writing books and articles; another in pulpit teaching; and another again in Bible College type lecturing.

Certainly, churches need to guard the pulpit and only allow those who are theologically equipped, can engage the hearers, be able to impart truth to a wide variety of listeners,, and challenge for application and response. It is not what a teacher teaches that is taught, but what the hearer hears, understands and applies!

Mentoring

2 Tim 2:2 *"the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others"*

Titus 2:3-4 *“teach the older women to ... teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women ...”*

Perhaps the most effective means of teaching is a one-to-one relationship where the mentoree is willing to learn and sees the mentor as his/her teacher.

Paul's strategy

- His evangelism with the purpose of establishing church communities.
- He strengthened and taught the fledgling churches (Acts 20:20)
- He appointed elders
- Each church became a base for evangelism in surrounding area (Acts 19, 1 Thess 1:8 *“The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in God has become known everywhere.”*)
- He wrote letters, visited, and sent other workers to teach, correct, and apply truth
 - Romans – the gospel,
 - Corinthians – divisions, morality, church order, sp. Gifts, resurrection, false apostles
 - Galatians – Legalism and flesh / Spirit living
 - Colossians – false teaching (Gnosticism)
 - Thessalonians – correcting false beliefs re: return of Christ, irresponsible lifestyles
- He established line of succession by charging those who were taught to train others
- He committed each church to God's grace (Acts 20:24)

A loving community

The church is God's family, where we are accepted with all our faults and peculiarities.

When people attach themselves to a church group they ought to quickly feel at home.

The local church ought to be the best means in our culture for realizing true 'community'.

The church is God's New Community

- A community in conscious relationship
- A community enjoying fellowship (sharing in common)
- A community of GRACE – acceptance of one another

Let me illustrate with a church I know of who were so devoted to God that they had a huge impact by the Spirit's power on their community.

They loved each other with a radical love, shared their lives with one another, laughed, cried, prayed and sang together- a real authentic Christian fellowship. They shared with those less fortunate so that socio-economic barriers disappeared. Gender, race, and social and cultural divides were removed. ***It was in Jerusalem back in AD 30 !***

Acts 2:42 “... devoted themselves to ... fellowship ...”

Verses 44-45 “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

Romans 12:9-21

Verse 5 *“we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”*

1. Our shared relationship with God

Verse 5 *“we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”*

In the Christian life we do what we do because we are what we are.

We are in relationship with God, therefore we are in relationship with each other (family)

God’s nature is one of community (John 17:24 *“Father ... you loved Me before the foundation of the world”*)

1 John 1:3 *“so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ”*

John 14:20, 23 *“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you ... and we will come to him and make our home with him”*

1 Cor. 12:13 *“we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink”*

Father → holy nation / Son → His Body / Spirit → Temple

2. Our special relationship with each other

Verse 5 *“we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”*(each member belongs to the others!)

We are profoundly bound together in the Body of Christ – vitally connected to Christ and to each other by His Spirit

Eph 4 *“Maintain the unity of the Spirit...”*- the word maintain implies a unity that is already established by the Spirit.

The Christian life can only be lived in community

The term *“one another”* (or each other) occurs over 50 times in the NT

MOST references to body life in the NT relate to 24 / 7 (not just Sunday mornings!)

If we were to do away with the church building, and cease the Sunday morning services, would our church still exist? Would we still be able to be called a church?

A self made man or woman is independent and self-sufficient – free of obligation to others

That is the antithesis of God’s community !

3. Our sacred responsibility to one another (Verses 9-21)

• We are commanded to love one another (Verses 9-13)

There are 24 commands given in Romans 12

1. Love with Sincerity v. 9-10 *“Love must be sincere”*

Without hypocrisy – authentic, real, genuine ... being honest with one another

Col 3:16 *“admonish one another”* (lovingly correct)

2. Love with Commitment

v. 10 *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love”*

Family love - not based on personal attraction or desirability – this is a love that involves being committed to each other as we are to Jesus Christ.

3. Love with Respect

v. 10 *"Honour one another above yourselves"* (Give preference to the other, honour, value, highly esteem, treat with dignity and respect)

4. Love with Passion (verse 11)

"Never lacking in zeal" (never be slack or irresponsible)

"keep your spiritual fervour" (burning desire to love and serve the Lord)

1 Peter 1:22 *"Love one another deeply from the heart"*

Gal 5:13 *"In love, serve one another" (be slaves to one another!)*

"serving the Lord" (refers back to the use of spiritual gifts in verses 4-8)

1 Thess 5:11 *"Edify (build up) one another"*

Col 3:16 *"Teach one another"*

Heb 3:13 *"Exhort one another"*

Col 3:16 *"Admonish one another"* (lovingly correct)

Heb 10:24 *"Provoke one another to love and good works"*

Verse 12 *"Be joyful in hope"*

"Devoted to prayer" – (a strong commitment to pray for one another)

5. Love with Practical care v. 13

v.13 *"Share with God's people who are in need"*

'Share' = same word for fellowship

Gal 5:13 *"Through love become slaves to one another"*

"Practice hospitality" (pursue hospitality towards the saints as well as to strangers)

1 Peter 4:9 *"Be hospitable to one another"*

6. Love with Empathy v. 15

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep"

Robert Schuller: *"Love is my decision to make your problem, my problem."*

- **We are commanded to live in unity (Verses 14-21)**

1. Grace to live in Harmony v. 16, 18

v. 16 *"live in harmony with one another"*

The heart of the gospel is the restoration of fellowship, therefore anything that undermines the unity of God's people in the NT is taken seriously.

2 Cor 13:11 *"Agree with one another"*

v. 18 *"If possible, as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone"*

2. Grace to accept others with humility

v.16 *"Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited"*

A Community of grace – Acceptance: no discrimination

Rom 14:13 *"Let us not judge one another"*

Your church circles should be semi-circles, opening to include new people.

3. Grace to relate to others with sensitivity

v. 17 *"Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone"*

4. Grace to respond to evil with good

V.17, 21 *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"*

Rom 12:16 *"Live in harmony with one another"*

Eph 4:32 *"Forgive one another"*

James 5:16 *"Confess your sins to one another"*

A worshipping community

1 Pet.2:4-10

A.W.Tozer *"We are saved to worship God. All that Christ has done for us in the past, and all that He is doing now, leads to this one end. We are called to an everlasting preoccupation with God"*

One of / most precious ... is an unprompted *"Daddy I love you"*

Definition: *Worship is to honour God above everything else, in reverence and in awe, because He alone is worthy*

The most important activity for a Christian...

Satan craves it ... seeks to rob God of it! (Temptation & Rev. 13)

1. Our Reason to worship

I. We are the People of God (v. 9-10)

v. 9-10 *"But you are ... a people belonging to God ... Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God"*

Phil.3:3 *"For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh"*

Paul here describes a few distinctives of the Christian in contrast to Judaism. He places worship as one of those characteristics of the Christian faith.

II. We are Part of a worshipping community

"living stones ... being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices ..." (v5)

When a person comes to Christ, they come into the church (as living stones in a temple)

A major emphasis in Bible is corporate worship

III. We are Priests - *"a holy priesthood"* (v5)

HOLY v5 - called out (set apart as bowls and pitchers in the tabernacle)

ROYAL v9 - *"a kingdom of priests"* lit. *"a kingdom, a body of priests"*

This passage teaches the priesthood of all believers. Priesthood implies not just the offering of spiritual sacrifices but the right of access to Him

2. Our Readiness to worship

I. Our Acceptance before Him

A believers worship is *“acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”*

Rom.5:1 *“since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand”*

Therefore believers can worship God with confidence and joy

Heb 10:19 *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...”*

II. Our Approach to Him

*“come to **Him**”* - NOT to an earthly altar, replica, person or building

HOW?

I. With Sincere Appreciation

Verse 9 *“that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light”*

STYLE of worship

Many disputes in churches are over the style or form of worship.

Some prefer liturgical, others free and spontaneous, restricted to males, quiet and contemplative/hymns only/contemporary praise songs only/clap/ raise hands/dance...

Difference over worship styles is one of the biggest issues causing more controversy than any other issue.

Our worship can communicate a lie!

God is **not at work** today.

God is **boring**.

God is **irrelevant**.

God is **powerless**.

God loves funeral services!

*“**Church museum** - come and see what church used to be like 100 years ago!”*

There is no correct style of worship as long as ...”in Spirit and Truth”

Our style reflects our culture or sub-culture, not our theology!

(Africa / India / Maori / Aboriginal / 1890's)

Postmoderns value experience – they want to experience God in worship where moderns are more concerned about the theological content of what they sing

Music is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible. It is God’s vehicle to facilitate worship – to transport a person’s words of praise to Him. In the Psalms God’s people used drums, loud clashing cymbals, trumpets, tambourines, and stringed instruments (more like a jazz band than an orchestra)!

Don’t underestimate the power of music in the life of a church. It is impossible to find a style of music that will appeal to everyone

Choosing the style of music for this church will be one of the most critical decisions to effect the church’s life and future growth. There are no bad styles of music. To say that all ‘good’ music comes from Europe 200 years ago is cultural elitism!

No style of music is sacred! We are to judge the lyrics not the score!

Charles Wesley and William Booth used popular tunes from the taverns.

... often severely criticised - vulgar tunes ...despised...

but revered by Christians today as the grand old hymns of the faith!

3. Our Responsibility in worship

I. To offer spiritual sacrifices

v. 5 *"offering spiritual sacrifices..."*

John 4:24 *"God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit ..."*

Phil.3:3 *"who worship by the Spirit"*

A Spiritual Sacrifice of WORSHIP involves:

I. COMMITMENT

Rom 12:1 *"offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship"*

John 12:3 *"Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair"*

II. PRAISE

Hebrews 13:15 *"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name"*

III. LOVE

Eph:5:2 *"Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"*

Phil 4:18 *"(gifts) are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God"*

IV. EVANGELISM

Romans 15:16 *"...the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit"*

II. To offer acceptable worship

v.5 *"Acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"*

John 4:23-24 - *"in spirit and in truth"*

Not all worship is acceptable to God (EG. the first four commandments)

We are an entertainment driven society and this can affect our attitudes towards worship.

We can secretly want to be entertained! We are not to put worship form above worship content! We do not worship in order to be uplifted, inspired and encouraged.

WORSHIP IS ALL ABOUT GOD, NOT US!

A missional community

John 20:21-23

The church is called to evangelize, but most do not.

- Some know they must evangelize, but don't know how
- Many want to, and feel guilty that they don't, but can't seem to overcome the barriers (such as fear)

- Others regard evangelizing as something done by the “**fanatical fringe**” or by those who are **gifted**

Why should the church be involved in evangelism?

1. We have a Divine Mandate

The mission of Jesus Christ to a lost world should be the very centre of our church life.

Jesus left the 99 sheep in order to find and save the one lost

Richard Baxter: Jesus: ***“Were they not worth My blood? So are they not worth your labor?”***

A church is not merely a group of people waiting to go to heaven. A church is brought together and equipped by God to make disciples of people in our community, and in all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

Each gospel concludes with a commission of the disciples from the risen Lord Jesus

In John 20:21 we read: *“as the Father has sent me, I am sending you”*

In 17:18 He had prayed to His Father: *‘as You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world’*

1 Thess 1:8 *“The Lord’s message rang out from you”* - Sounded forth (*exēchētai*) is used only here in the New Testament and means “to sound forth very intensely.”

I. We are sent with the same mission as Jesus

*“as the Father has **sent** me...”* (in Jesus’ Name)

His mission was to reach the whole world

Matt 28:18 *“Go and make disciples of all nations”*

He invested in a few faithful disciples – trained them, and sent them to fulfill His mission. Luke, the author of Acts, writes in the introduction that in his first book (Luke’s Gospel) he recorded the things Jesus began to do and to teach, clearly implying that the Book of Acts records what Jesus continued to do and to teach. In Acts we have a record of a small cameo of the missionary and church planting work of the 12 apostles who took Jesus words literally and were instrumental in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. The Apostle Paul’s ministry has a special focus in Acts, as he was sent to the Gentiles and was a pioneer in evangelizing the world of his day. He spoke of this mission in terms that have great application for us today:

1 Cor 9:19-22 *“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some”*

Application to us today:

1. Do we really know the people we are reaching?

Paul knew his audience and he tailored his approach to each sub-culture

If we went to Central Asia, how would we adapt our approach to sharing the gospel? If we go next door how do we adapt our approach?

Paul made himself *“a slave to everyone”*

There is great cultural diversity in our city

OUR TROUBLE IS that often the church is still evangelizing as if the communities around us have the same worldview as us!

Our neighbours live in their own world, with their own beliefs and values that colour their interpretation of what they hear.

Everyone is deeply (but subconsciously) tied to their worldview

Gresham Machen: *“False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervour of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here or there; if we permit the whole collective thought of a nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which ... prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.”*

The Post-modern Worldview

Multiculturalism – treats all cultures as morally equivalent

Pragmatism – Whatever works must be right

Materialism – Individual happiness is tied to material security and pleasure

Individualism – Each person is his/her main point of reference

2. Are we willing to become like the people we are reaching?

Paul was ADAPTABLE in matters of moral indifference BUT UNMOVABLE in matters of principle

Exercise: Fold your arms - uncomfortable?

The Post-modern seeker:

- Dislikes dogmatism
- Looks for authenticity
- Values story and personal experience
- Requires a process which may take time (hence the effectiveness of Alpha-type courses)
- Value relationships and desire true community

3. Are we looking for all possible means to win the people we are reaching?

Build friendship & trust

The church needs to value time spent with no ‘conversion agenda’, complete transparency, hospitality, finding common interests.

Genuine care

The church needs to be willing to care when there is nothing in it for the church – reach out in love to people in times of pain, helplessness, turmoil, anxiety, stress etc.

Today’s culture will not care how much you know, until they know how much you care

V 22 *“So that by all possible means I might save some”.*

Paul became *“all things to all men”* (v 22) - that is, he accommodated himself to them in every possible way without compromise.

“Go into...” not just geographic – it has to be incarnational

Jesus *became* flesh - Paul here *became* ...

John Stott: "Double listening" - To God's Word and... world (how they relate...).

Like Paul... 'to the Postmodern we must become postmodern'

Paul "BECAME all things to all people ... some"

He was pragmatic, and yet he believed in God's sovereignty

The Christian church is failing to engage with the current unchurched "Postmodern" generation.

The "attractional" model has not worked and does not work.

The "missional" model of encouraging Christians to go out to where the unchurched are and become a part of their community

- The Maroonah and New Age Festival team (gem stones)
- Chaplain in the schools
- Barclays for the Introducing Christianity course
- We have had people over for a meal and a game of cards ...
- Others ... sports (soccer, golf and cricket)]
- Saturday church / café church

II. We are sent with the same motivation as Jesus

"as the Father has sent me, even so..."

At a recent seminar for pastors, I was struck by the way many pastors find they run themselves ragged trying to indulge the "concerns" of a relatively small number of people whose interest is totally consumed with themselves. As one of them said: "Keeping the average church member happy and indulged has become all too difficult".

- **In Obedience**

Matt 28:18 *"All authority ... therefore go..."*

Acts 5:29 *"We must obey God rather than man"*

- **With Compassion**

2 Cor.5:14 *"For Christ's love compels us"*

The church is the only organization on earth that solely exists for the benefit of non-members

- Paul believed people were lost

"My heart's desire and prayer to God is that they might be saved" (Rom 10)

- He cared that they were lost .

When we *lose our passion* and motivation for the lost – we become inward looking - nit-picking, critical and disunited.

Or we become insular, and content with our church sub-culture

You can tell if someone cares for the lost by what they do!

- **Accepting self-sacrifice**

"Left the 99 and went in search for the one that was lost"

(Moravian missionaries who went out to the West Indies and became slaves to each the slaves on the plantations – *“If we do not go, the Lord’s death for them will be in vain”*)

Acts 19:24 *“I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace”*

Why should we be involved in evangelism?

2. We have the Divine Means

“He breathed...’receive the Holy Spirit’ ”

Jesus’ act meant: The Spirit will be none other than Me – My Breath

Luke 24 – ***“wait in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high”***

Acts 1:8 ‘ ***“You shall receive power after ...witnesses”***

The Mandate and the Means GO TOGETHER

I. The Holy Spirit guides (*Acts... adventure*)

II. The Holy Spirit gives power

- Power to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8)
- Power to convince of the truth

1 Cor 2:2 *“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power”*

1 Thess 1:5 *“our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction”*

- **Power to inspire courage**

Peter, who through fear of men cowered and denied his Lord, in Acts 4:31 he was filled with the Spirit and spoke the Word with boldness

2 Tim. 1:7-8 *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a Spirit of power... So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord ... but join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God”*

How do we appropriate the Spirit’s power?

We appropriate the Holy Spirit’s fullness by faith

3. We have the Divine Message

John 20:23 *“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven”*

Luke 24:47 *“repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”*

Lausanne Covenant – *“To evangelise is to spread the good news that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as reigning Lord He now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Holy Spirit to all who repent and believe”*

We do not have the power to forgive

Paul: 2 Cor 2:15-16 Our message is *“an aroma of Christ among those who are being saved, and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?”*

Roman - victorious general ... festive procession ... burning of spices

Eva Hart tells of the fateful night – April 15th 1912 – Titanic

“I saw all the horror of it’s sinking and I heard, even more dreadful, the cries of the drowning people” 20 lifeboats were launched but only #14 rowed back in the darkness in search of those who were crying for help. But no other boat helped. Most lifeboats were only half filled yet they did not go back for fear that their small boat would be swamped with countless survivors...