

Foundations of Healthy Church Life



"Jesus' Resurrection is the beginning of God's new project, not to snatch people away from earth to heaven, but to colonize earth with the life of heaven." NT Wright

Nine "Passionate Pursuits": Things God has revealed to us that we can't live without pursuing.

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(Nine of our Passionate Pursuits)

1. CHRISTIANITY/CHURCH IS A WAY OF LIFE UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS, WALKING TOGETHER (WITH HIM AND EACH OTHER) AS

GOD'S FAMILY: God's calling upon His people is to walk in a way of life as His family with Him and His people as we engage in His mission every day. It is more than attending meetings in a building or participating in programs. It is a family way of life under the loving Lordship of Jesus.

- *The Lordship of Jesus* **Pg. 4**
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2. WE ARE CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS AS DISCIPLES, AND HELP OTHERS TO FOLLOW HIM AND PUT HIS WORD INTO PRACTICE:

The call to believe is not just mental assent to facts about Jesus. Biblical belief should result in following Him as disciples as we learn to obey His word.

- *Discipleship* **Pg. 14**

3. A CONTINUAL SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE: We are called to live a Spirit-filled life. The Spirit-filled life is to be both our initial and continual experience. The Bible never encourages us to want less of Holy Spirit's activity in and through our lives, but always more (Ephesians 5:18-20, John 7:37-39).

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4. BIBLICAL WORSHIP IN EXPRESSIONS AND EVERYDAY LIVING: We pursue worship that has biblical expressions towards God and a Biblical lifestyle of worship daily. Worship is loving and honoring God with all we are in response to all that He is. Jesus expresses the first, most important commandment in the context of worship, "Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Matthew 22:36-40, Mark 12:28-30, Luke 10:27, Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 11:13, 30:6, Psalms, John 4:24, Romans 12:1-6, etc.).

- *Praise and Worship* **Pg. 26**

5. IMPORTANCE/CENTRALITY OF HIS CHURCH THAT WALKS TOGETHER IN A WAY OF LIFE AS HIS FAMILY: The church is central to

God's eternal plan. He is building His church and actively involved us in that process. (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:22-32, 2:19-22, 4:1-16, Colossians 2:19). The church is Jesus' eternal bride (Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 19:6-10, 21:2-11). The only things that will go into eternity with God are Jesus and His church. Therefore, the church is essential to our lives.

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6. ALL EPHESIANS 4:16 GIFTS ARE ESSENTIAL, NOT OPTIONAL, TO WHAT JESUS IS BUILDING: For the church to become all God intends, they must have "equipping" from all the Ephesians 4:16 leaders.

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7. MULTIGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: We want to see all generations walking together as His family, which is the Biblical design (Deuteronomy 6:7-9, 11:18, 32:46, Psalms 78:5-6, Titus 2, Zechariah 8:3-23, etc.).

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8. BUILDING OUR LIVES ON GOD'S WORDS: We live our lives based on God's unchanging Word (Matthew 28:18-19).

- ***The Word of God*** ***Pg. 77***

9. ENGAGING IN EVERYDAY MISSIONS: We endeavor to walk together as His family to pursue His mission (Jesus modeled this with the twelve). We can sum our missionary calling up with the phrase, "Missions are everyone, everywhere, all the time." Missions are both across the ocean and across the street. The end of our block is just as important as the "ends of the earth."

- ***Becoming a Missional People*** ***Pg. 80***

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

PREFACE: It is unfortunate, but one of the biggest reasons for most of the problems in the testimony of individual believers' lives and the Church is a lack of walking under the Lordship of Jesus. This is an often-neglected truth, yet it is essential to our foundation in serving Christ. If we want to have Church Life that expresses a New Testament design, His Lordship must be firmly established.

I. BIBLICAL SALVATION INVOLVES COMING UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

- *Romans 10:9-10* 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (NASB)

A. To receive Jesus as savior, we must receive Him as Lord.

Acts 2:36 Lord and Christ (Savior), was the Biblical message.

B. What is a Lord? Acts 10:36

Definition - supreme in authority; controller; one in charge; one who rules over everything.

Jesus as Lord is related to coming into the Kingdom. The closest idea to "Kingdom" we have in our culture is the idea of "government." Kingdom means rule. If we are to come into the Kingdom/Government of God, we must come under the rule of Jesus.

Models of Salvation

- *American Model* - Are you saved? In other words, have you "made a decision" to believe in Jesus?
- *Biblical Model* - Are you under Christ's Government/Kingdom/Lordship? Does Christ rule your life?

Coming under the Lordship of Jesus Christ means ending life on your terms. It is surrendering the rule of your life to Jesus.

*Lk 6:46 And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?
Mt 7:13-23 ...depart from Me you who practice lawlessness (absence of government).*

C. Living under Christ's Lordship means we yield our lives daily to His rule.

- *Luke 9:23-24 23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (NASB)*

The essence of the nature of sin is selfishness. Taking up our cross means death to self. In Biblical times if you saw someone carrying a cross, they were going to one place for one purpose, the place of death. In taking up our cross, we are dying to ourselves to live unto Him. Luk 14:26-27; Mat 10:38-39, Mat 16:22-25; Mar 8:34-38; Joh 12:25-26.

II. WE OFTEN SEE A SUBSTITUTE SALVATION MESSAGE THAT IGNORES CHRIST'S LORDSHIP

Famous Revivalist Vance Havner (1901-1986), "If I had only one sermon to preach, it would be on the Lordship of Christ. When we get right on that point, we are right all down the line. God honors the exaltation of His Son."... One of the greatest errors in the church today is the artificial distinction we have created between accepting Christ as Savior and confessing Him as Lord. We have made two experiences of it, but the New Testament makes them one."

A. There often is a watered-down message that allows one to take Jesus as Savior without mentioning His Lordship.

This message often portrays Jesus as a personal valet, Jeannie-in-the- bottle, or celestial Santa Claus, who is only concerned with catering to our selfish desires. We often find the term "personal savior" used in this type of message. Nowhere in the Bible is this term found.

B. The Biblical emphasis is on Lordship.

The term "Savior" is used 37 times in the Bible; the word "Lord" is used about 7000 times. The emphasis is clearly on Lord.

It is only as Jesus becomes Lord does He become Savior. A prime example is in marriage. Our spouse must become our husband/wife before they can function in its roles. Any other arrangement is a perversion (living together, fornication etc.) of what was intended.

C. One must consider Christ's Lordship upon becoming a Christian.

It is not just to be a quick, light-hearted decision. There needs to be a consideration.

Lk 14:26-35 "count the cost"

It is the end of life on our terms.

D. God empowers us to come under Christ's Lordship and follow Him.

Even though following Jesus as Lord is a decision we make, we cannot do so in our human power. God gives us His grace and the ability to follow Christ.

- Mt 19:24-25 It is only possible with God.
- Eph 2:8 It is by God's grace.
- 2 Pet 1: 3 It is by God's divine power.
- Phil 2:13 God is working in us the will to work for His good pleasure.

III. CHRIST HEADSHIP IN THE CHURCH

- *Eph 1:21-23...22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*
- *Eph 4:15-16 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, (16) from whom the whole body....*
- *Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church.*

A. Christ as the head of His body is what makes a church a Biblical church.

Just like a human body cannot live if it becomes disconnected from its head, the church cannot live without Christ as the head.

B. A church can function without Christ as the head.

Just like we can keep a human body functioning with medical devices, that doesn't mean it has life coming from the head.

C. Seven signs that Christ is the Head of a local church.

1. Jesus is Lord – The ruler or the one in complete authority. It is not about what we want individually or corporately, it is about what the Lord wants.

2. The first desire among the people is to please Him.

- *2Co 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*
- *Eph 5:8-10 ...walk as children of Light...(10) trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*
- *Heb 13:20-21 Now the God of peace... (21) equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ*

3. God's Word is given preeminence. Over tradition, man's opinion, over experience.

4. Prayer, worship, and prophetic become essential activities of the Church. He doesn't want a church that prays but a praying church, not a church that worships but a worshipping church.

5. People desire to have a growing relationship with God. John 15 Abiding in Christ etc.

6. Real repentance will become an important part of our life.

- *2Co 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

7. They will have a desire to move in all the desires of God expressed in the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4. *Ephesians 4:10-11*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. The typical American gospel is to receive Jesus as your Personal Savior rather than your Lord and Savior. Describe the difference it makes in one's life if they attempt to accept Jesus as Savior without Him being Lord.

2. *Kingdom* is a verbal noun defined as "The active rulership of God." Describe the connection of God's Kingdom and Christ's Lordship. Can one receive the Kingdom if Jesus is not their Lord (why or why not)?

3. How does Christ's Lordship affect your everyday life? How does His Lordship affect your relationships?

4. Jesus is Lord and "Head of the Body, the church, that He would come to have first place in everything" (Colossians 1:18). What are indicators you have seen in which Jesus is, or is not Head/Lord of the church?

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The Kingdom of God - The Church - And Relationships

PREFACE: The Kingdom of God, in its simplest form, is the rule/government of God. The main call of the Church is to express the Kingdom of God in the earth. As we understand the Kingdom of God from Scripture, we will see that walking in right relationships is at the heart of living in and expressing the Kingdom.

I. INTRODUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. Five things show us that the Kingdom of God was the central thrust of Jesus' ministry.

1. He announced it's coming in a present sense.

- *Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Kingdom used over 50 times in Mathew alone. Jesus was the perfect example of the Kingdom*

2. His teachings centered around revealing truths about the Kingdom.

- *Matthew 9:35 And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (NASB)*

Showing, declaring, and demonstrating the Kingdom of God

His parables illustrated truths about the Kingdom. Mt 13:11

3. He talked about how to enter the Kingdom. *Jn 3:3-6, Mt 5:20, Mt 7:21.*

4. His mighty works were to prove that the Kingdom was here. *Mt 12:28*

5. He also announced the Kingdom's coming in a future sense. *Mt 24:31-34, Lk 22:29-30*

B. The Kingdom of God was a main thrust of the early Church.

Book of Acts begins with and ends with teaching on the Kingdom (and Jesus' Lordship, the cornerstone of His Kingdom) and it was proclaimed throughout.

- *Acts 1:3 To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (NASB)*
- *Act 28:30-31 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, (31) preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.*
- *Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (NASB)*
- *Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. (NASB)*

C. God wants the Kingdom to be our main thrust.

1. *We are to pray as a priority for it to come. Mt 6:10*
2. *We are to seek it first. Mt 6:33*

D. Definition of Kingdom.

Hebrew: Malkuth - a rule, a domain, a realm, a reign.

Greek: Baselea - a royalty, rule, a realm, royal power or dominion. King (King's) dom (domain) - In its simplest form it is a king's rule and domain.

Kingdom is a governmental word. A contemporary word that could be used is the "government" of God.

In a Biblical sense, the Kingdom of God is King Jesus's rule and the area that is receptive to His rule. Linguist and Bible Translator who worked for Whitcomb and translated the NT into Aztec – "In Greek and Hebrew, the word is a verbal noun. It is a thing, yet it is active. It is the active rulership of God." This will change your whole perspective.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

A. Salvation involves God placing us in and/or under His Kingdom (rule).

- *Colossians 1:13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (NASB)*

B. Coming under the Lordship of Jesus means coming into the Kingdom.

- *Romans 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (NASB)*

C. God has designed His Church to dwell in and express the Kingdom to the world around us.

1 Peter 2:4-9 which is a quote from Exodus 19:5-6

- *Matthew 16:16-19 And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (NASB)*

The Church is the vehicle or agent to express the Kingdom of God.

Billy Graham from the book *Approaching Hoof beats*. *"He (the apostle John, in Revelation) wrote to individual churches, small clusters of believers, leaders and followers together. At the heart of these letters is God's assumption that we belong together at work and at worship in a local church. I am convinced that the cluster of believers of which you are a part, those brothers and sisters in Christ with whom you join to pray and study, give and witness, is the basic unit through which God is working to redeem the world."*

The lifestyle of the Kingdom of God is to be lived out and expressed through the Church. The Church is to demonstrate the culture of the Kingdom to the culture around it.

The nature of the King (what He is like) should be seen in His Kingdom (through the Church).

III. The Kingdom of God and Relationships

A. One of the main ways the Kingdom of God is expressed is through the right relationships of its people. Right relationships with God and with one another.

It is a relational Kingdom.

When religion drifts away from relationships toward religion, it becomes progressively complicated. Jesus appeared on the scene and religion had become complicated.

- *Mar 12:13-34 Then they *sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. (14) They *came and *said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?...28-34 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" (the Law at that time had become complicated: (613 Commands - Oral Law Over 7000) (29) Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; (30) AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' (31) "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (32) The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; (33) AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." (34) When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."*

Ten commandments: 4 Relationship with God and 6 relationship with others.

It is a relational Kingdom - Rom 14:17-15:6 The context of the passage of the Kingdom is right relationships. *17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Eph 2:14-22 The work of Christ brought peace between man and God and peace between people who now walk in right relationships.

B. Our relationship with God and one another are interrelated. They affect each other.

- *1 John 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (NASB)*

- *Mat 6:12-14 NASB 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... (14) "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*
- *Mat 18:21-35 NASB Then how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, (22) Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (23) "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves...(34) "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. (35) "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."*
- *Mat 5:23-24 NASB "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*
- *1Jn 4:12-21 NASB No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us....19) We love, because He first loved us. (20) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.*
- *1 John 1:3 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

C. The way God relates to us is the way we are to relate to one another.

- *Romans 15:7 7 Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (NASB)*
- *Ephesians 4:32 32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (NASB)*
- *Ephesians 5:2 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (NASB)*
- *2 Corinthians 1:3-4 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforts*

us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (NASB)

- *John 13:34-35 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (NASB)*
- *Joh 17:11-22 "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are...20) "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; (21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Can one live in the Kingdom of God if Jesus isn't the Lord of their life? Why or why not?
2. Paul defines the Kingdom as "Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). How are those three things connected and because of that why is it hard to have one without the other?
3. If Jesus is, or is not, in reality, the head (in charge) of a local church, how will that affect how that church demonstrates His kingdom?
4. What are some of the indicators that God's Kingdom exists in a family?
5. How can you help someone (what scriptures can you bring up etc.) who says they are perfectly fine in their relationship with God while at the same time they are bitter and cannot get along with others?
6. What can someone do if they have areas of their lives they are having a hard time with Jesus ruling over them?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

DISCIPLESHIP

PREFACE: Discipleship is one of Christianity's most neglected areas of instruction. This is a great deception when you consider that the heart of our call is to "follow Christ", which means be a disciple. Our primary call is to be disciples of our Lord Jesus. Discipleship is foundational in our walk with Jesus.

I. WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A. Definition of "Disciple"

Greek word "Mathetes, Matheteuo" - A learner, to be a pupil, a follower, or an adherent.

A disciple following his teacher is not a negotiable issue. It does not mean a pupil in a contemporary sense. In a modern sense, a pupil studies under a teacher and has the freedom to agree or disagree with what the teacher tells him. A disciple in a biblical sense, is not just a pupil but also a follower and an adherent. A disciple follows and adheres to his teacher.

II. OUR CALL IS TO BE A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD JESUS

A. The great commission is centered around discipleship.

Mt 28:18-20

It is more than just hearing and believing the gospel. It is enrolling people in the way of life following Christ.

The Devil believes in Jesus, but it is evident that he isn't saved.

- *Jas 2:19 "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons believe, and shudder."*

B. It is hard to justify Biblically a Christianity without discipleship.

The word "disciple" appears 269 times in the Bible, KJV. The designation "Christian" only occurs 3 times in the New Testament. Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet 4:16

The phrase "Follow Me/Come after Me" appears 25 times in the Gospels. The phrase "Believe in Me" appears only 4 times.

- *Acts 11:26 when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. (NASB)*

The inference from scripture is that the title "Christians" originated with pagan unbelievers and not with the Christians themselves. The pagans identified Christians as followers of Christ.

When Jesus called people in the Gospels, He called them to follow Him. That is what discipleship is all about. We often get this backwards, thinking Christianity involves Him following us.

When Jesus set forth the terms of following Him, it was clearly explained that if you don't meet those terms you couldn't follow Him or be His disciple. Lk 14:26-27,33; Mt 10:24-40; Mt 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35; Lk 9:23-24

We have substituted the idea of "Making a decision for Christ" for "Becoming a disciple of Christ." A decision can simply be a rationalistic statement, but a disciple is the reality of a lifestyle.

C. The church can only be built on Biblical design with disciples following Jesus.

- *Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

A Biblical church is not "the church of our choice" but a church that Jesus dwells among and they seek to follow and please Him.

- *Hebrews 13:20-21 Now the God of peace,... (21) equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight.*

III. SEVEN BIBLICAL TERMS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

A "term" is a condition regarding something or the stipulations regarding the agreement.

These terms may seem rough, but they deal with the foundation from which we serve Christ. It is much like using concrete in building a foundation of a house. It seems rough and inflexible, but it has to be that way to hold up under the weather and storms and support the weight of the house.

Quotes: "The Savior is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings, or their weekends, or their years of retirement to Him. Rather He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives." H.A. Evan Hopkins

"Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary." William MacDonald.

A. A supreme love for Jesus Christ

- *Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. (NASB)*

This scripture doesn't mean that we should have animosity or ill-will towards our relatives, but it does mean that our life and devotion to Christ should be so great that all other is like hatred in comparison. The most difficult phrase in this scripture is "yes, and even his own life."

When we become followers of Christ, it is a radical move that brings division in our lives.

- Mt 10:33-37
- Lk 12:49-53

Our love and devotion to Him is often tested in relationships.

Jesus shows us that our devotion to Him takes priority over natural family relationships. Mt 12:48-50; Lk 8:19-21

Jesus demonstrated this in Lk 2: 41-51 even though He was still subject to His parents. Eighteen years later in Jn 2:1-11, even at his mother's prodding, it would not cause Him to do something God did not want Him to do.

Christ is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. When we become His disciples, those same qualities will tend to mark our lives. 1Pet 2:6-8; Lk 2:34; 2Cor 2:14-16; Lk 20:17-18

B. A denial of self.

- Mt 16:24-25
- Mt 10:37-38
- Mk 8:34-35
- Lk 9:23-24
- Lk 14:27

This is the first step in taking up your cross.

Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. Self-denial means foregoing certain things. Denial of self has more to do with complete submission to the Lordship of Jesus, giving self no rights or authority at all.

C. A taking up of our cross.

- Mt 10:38
- Mk 8:34
- Lk 9:23 Taking up your cross daily
- Lk 14:27
- Mk 16:24

The Bible speaks of two crosses. The one Jesus died on and the one we take up and die on.

The cross in Biblical times was a means of death.

D. A life spent following Christ.

Once we set ourselves following Christ there is to be no looking back.

- *Luke 9:62 Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (NASB)*

A disciple "abides" in Christ. Jn 15:1-8

E. A fervent love for all who belong to Christ.

Jesus tells us that love for one another is how the world will know we are His disciples. Jn 13:34-35

Love of God and love for the saints are the two great commandments upon which all the things of God rest.

- *Matthew 22:37-40 37 And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 'This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 'The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 'On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'" (NASB)*

We were born again to enable us to have this kind of love for one another. 1Pet 1:22-23

F. A forsaking all to follow Him.

Mt 19:27-30

Mk 10:31

Lk 14:26-33

Phil 3:7-8 "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

The rich young ruler exemplifies the need to forsake all to follow Christ. Mt 19:16-26

When we become disciples, we become stewards of our resources. Christ becomes the owner.

G. A life lived according to His word.

- *John 8:31-33 31 Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. " 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free'?" (NASB)*
- *Psalms 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. (NASB)*
- *Mat 28:18-19 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

The Great Commission is to make disciples (not decisions or deciders) instructing them to obey Jesus' word. Without discipleship based on obeying His word, the Great Commission becomes the Great Omission. Discipleship isn't information-based (gaining information about Jesus) it is obedience based. The word of God, not our feelings or the cultural ideas around us, are how we govern our lives.

Jas 1:21-25 We view our lives and the world around us by the word of God.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Can one be "saved" without following Jesus? Why or why not?
2. What is the difference between a student and a Biblical disciple?

3. What does the Biblical idea of “taking up our cross daily” look like in everyday life?
4. In conjunction with the call to follow Him, Jesus often said “for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” What does Jesus mean by that? How does this happen in real life?
5. Current discipleship ideas are often based on gaining information about God and His word while Biblical discipleship is about learning to obey His word. What are some things that can be done to facilitate obedience-based discipleship rather than information-based discipleship?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

HOLY SPIRIT

PREFACE: When a person has started a new life by faith in Christ, they are not left on their own to walk it out. God has provided Holy Spirit to enable believers to live with and be witnesses for Him. In Acts 2 Peter speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the last days. We are still living in that period, and the Spirit's ministry continues. There has been much confusion about the person and work of Holy Spirit in the believer's life. In this study, we hope to clarify confusion about the Spirit's work in the life of God's people.

There are 57 times in the book of Acts in which activity is attributed to Holy Spirit.

Peyton Jones "In the early church, if you took the Holy Spirit out, 95 percent of what they did would stop. But today, if you took the Holy Spirit out of the church, 95 percent of what we do would probably continue."

Some Christians have mistakenly asked, "Do I have to be Spirit-filled to be saved or go to heaven?" This is a wrong question and a wrong perspective! You need to be Spirit-filled to serve Jesus and go to Walmart!

I. BIBLICAL PROOFS OF THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT

A. The Holy Spirit is a personality, not a mere influence or power.

The Holy Spirit is spoken of as He. Jn 16:13,14

1. Attributes of personality ascribed to Him:
 - a. Knowledge - 1 Cor 2:9-11 The Spirit knows the thoughts of God.
 - b. Will - 1 Cor 12:11 The Spirit distributes gifts according to God's will.
 - c. Mind - Rom 8:27 Whoever knows the mind of the Spirit..., He intercedes for the saints.
 - d. Love - Rom 15:30 Paul urges the church by the love of the Spirit.
 - e. Intelligence - Neh 9:20 God gave the Spirit to instruct them.
 - f. Grief - Eph 4:30 Don't grieve the Spirit.
2. Biblical symbols for the Holy Spirit: These symbols often describe various operations of the Spirit.

- a. Fire - Isa 4:4; Acts 2:4; Mt 3:11
- b. Wind - Jn 3:8; Acts 2:2,3
- c. Water - Jn 7:38,39; 1 Cor 10:4
- d. Oil - Mt 25:3; Ps 89:20; 1Jn 2:27
- e. Dove - Mt 3:16

B. The Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus (The Head), and the Church (His body).

	Christ	The Church
1. Born of the Spirit	Lk 1:35	Jn 3:1-5; 1Pet 1:22-23
2. Filled with the Spirit	Jn 3:34	Acts 1:8; 2:4; Eph 3:19
3. Lead of the Spirit	Mt 4:1	Rom 8:14
4. Preaching by Spirit	Lk 4:18	Acts 4:8-12
5. Cast out devils	Mt 12:28	Acts 8:5-7
6. Anointing	Acts 10:38	2 Cor 1:21; 1Jn 2:27
7. Crucifixion by Spirit	Heb 9:14	Rom 8:13, Gal 5:16
8. Commandments by Spirit	Acts 1:2	Acts 15:28-29

C. The purpose of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

1. Power to be witnesses.

Power - dunamis - force, strength, might, power, strength, ability Lk 24:49. They were to wait for the Spirit Acts 1:8; 4:31-33

2. Inspiration for true worship. Jn 4:24; 1 Cor 14:15

- 3 Help in our prayer life. Rom 8:26-27

4. Understanding of the Scriptures. Jn 16:13; 14:26

5. Guidance from God. Jn 16:13; Mk 13:11; Rom 8:14

6. Ability to bear fruit. Gal 5:22

7. Ability to operate in Spiritual gifts. 1 Cor 12:7,11

II. HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IS ESSENTIAL IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Every member of the family of God is called to "live by Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:8, Rom 8:13-14, Gal 3:3-5, 5:16-25). This includes being led by and empowered by Holy Spirit, who is essential to our lives.

The book of Acts is sometimes referred to as "Acts of Holy Spirit." There are 57 times in the book of Acts when activity is attributed to Holy Spirit.

Peyton Jones *"In the early church, if you took the Holy Spirit out, 95 percent of what they did would stop. But today, if you took the Holy Spirit out of the church, 95 percent of what we do would probably continue."*

Some Christians have asked, "Do I have to be Spirit-filled to be saved or go to heaven?" Wrong question! You need to be Spirit-filled to serve Jesus and go to Walmart!

II. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Questions that cause most of the controversy over this issue.

1. Do we automatically get filled with the Spirit at salvation, or is there something more?
2. Is there any accompanying manifestation in those who are filled with the Spirit?
3. What is the procedure, or how is one filled with the Spirit?
4. Is being filled with the Spirit a one-time thing like water baptism?
5. Is there any part God's people play in being filled or is it a passive experience?

We simply need to look at the Biblical accounts in answering these questions.

B. Biblical accounts.

- Acts 2:1-11 The Spirit fell on them while waiting in prayer before God (vs 1-4). The initial result was speaking in tongues about the mighty deeds of God (vs 4,11).
- Acts 2:14-17 Peter speaks of the ministry of the Spirit in the last days. He lists manifestations of the Spirit in the lives of believers with prophesy, dreams, and visions.
- Acts 4:8 The Scripture distinguishes that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit in speaking.
- Acts 4:31 The same believers who were filled in Acts 2 were filled again while praying. The result here was speaking the word of God with boldness.
- Acts 6:3 When choosing men to serve, one requirement was that they were full of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 8:12-24 A period of days elapsed between the time they received the word and were later filled with the Spirit (vs. 12-17). They were filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on them (vs. 17). Something observable happened as a result of them being filled with the Spirit (vs. 18).
- Acts 9:1-17 A period of 3 days elapsed between Paul's Damascus road experience and being filled the Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on him (vs. 17-18). We do not know what the initial manifestation of the Spirit was in Paul's life but we do know that he later operated in gifts of the Spirit, especially speaking in tongues. 1 Cor 14:1-40, 18.
- Acts 10:43-48 The Holy Spirit fell on them while Peter was speaking. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and exalting God. (vs. 45-46). This event occurred before they were baptized in water (vs. 47).
- Acts 19:1-6 Something in their experience, Paul indicated that they hadn't received the Spirit when they initially believed (vs. 2). They were filled with the Spirit as Paul laid his hands on them. (vs. 6). The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and prophesying.

C. There are nine descriptive passages (describing what happened) and seven prescriptive passages (what one needs to do) about being continually filled and moving in life with Holy Spirit.

- **9 Descriptive Passages:** Acts 2:1-11 (Their initial filling), 2:14-17, 4:8, 4:23-31, 6:3, 8:12-24, 9:1-17, 10:43-48, 19:1-6.
- **7 Prescriptive Passages:** Acts 1:4-5, John 7:37-38, Ephesians 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 2:1-6.

C. Answers from the Biblical accounts.

1. There is no automatic assumption that one is filled at salvation.

Some people were filled before they were baptized in water, others were filled as they came into Christ, and some were filled after they had a salvation experience. Yet, there was clear evidence of the Holy Spirit filling them in all these examples.

2. There are noticeably clear accompanying manifestations when one is filled, such as tongues, prophecy, exalting God, and speaking with boldness. The most common manifestation is speaking in tongues (4 of the five initial fillings were accompanied by speaking in tongues while the other, Acts 8:12-17, indicated that something observable revealed that they

received the filling of Holy Spirit). We should expect accompanying manifestations when filled. In other writings from the Apostle Paul, some inferences about speaking in tongues held a common place in the lives of believers 1 Cor 12-14, *1Co 14:18, 39 I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all...Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy and do not forbid to speak in tongues*

3. How were people filled with Holy Spirit? People were filled when hands were laid on them, praying and listening to the word being preached.

4. It is evident that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time only thing. These accounts, along with the exhortation in Eph 5:18 to be continually filled with the Spirit, show us that it is a continual experience.

5. Is there a part we play in the continual filling and moving in Holy Spirit's power? The Bible shows us that Jesus is the one who baptizes with Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11, Mk 1:8, Lk 3:16, John 1:33). Jesus said we are to "keep coming and keep drinking" Holy Spirit from Him (John 7). This is like Paul's analogy of drinking wine to drunkenness (Ephesians 5). The exhortation to "kindle afresh" (1 Tim 4:17), "not neglect" (2 Tim 1:6), and "desire earnestly" (which means with passion, fire, and zeal 1 Cor 12:31, 14:1) all point to the fact that we have a responsibility to seek, drink from Jesus, and participate in stirring up Holy Spirit's activity in our lives. We actively seek God as He responds to fill us. We seem to carry the responsibility in our attitudes and actions not to allow any dormancy of Holy Spirit's activity in our own lives.

D. Receiving the Spirit.

1. Like everything else in God, it is to be received by faith. Gal 3:2; Rom 10:17.

2. We must be convinced that the baptism of the Spirit is Biblical, necessary, applicable for today, an experience distinct from salvation, and evidenced by speaking in tongues or other biblical manifestations.

3. Make Jesus your focus. Mt 3:11

4. Ask for it based upon a hunger in your heart. Lk 11:9-13; Jn 7:37-38

Expect to receive and act in faith to respond in Biblical manifestations. As in Acts, they spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave the utterance.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Describe the work of Holy Spirit in our "born again" experience (John 3:1-6).
2. Some say we get all of Holy Spirit when we are saved (receive Jesus, born again, baptized) while other say there is an additional experience of being filled with Holy Spirit. What does Holy Spirit do in our salvation experience and what does He do in our filling experience?
3. Do you have to speak in tongues or experience other gifts when you are filled with Holy Spirit? What should one do who hasn't received any apparent giftings?
4. How do we follow the "prescriptions" to be continually filled? What are some evidence of the continual fillings?
5. What are some of the things we can practically do to "desire earnestly Spiritual gifts," (1 Corinthians 14:1), "stir up the gifts within us," (2 Timothy 1:6), and "do not neglect the gift" (1 Timothy 4:14)?
6. What could be some problems with someone who does not want to be continually filled or move in the gifts of the Spirit? How can you encourage them?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

PREFACE: Praise and worship hold a significant place among God's people. The Bible gives us thorough coverage of praise and worship. There has been a great hunger among God's people to return to a more Biblical expression of praise and worship. We believe that God desires us to worship in a Psalmic pattern, a genuine, heartfelt, expressive praise and worship desired by God and described in detail in the book of Psalms. Scripture also shows us that worship is not just singing songs but how we live daily. Let us look at part of the Biblical pictures of praise and worship and pattern ourselves after them.

I. INTRODUCTION TO PRAISE AND WORSHIP

A. Importance of praise and worship

Satan knew the value of worship. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if He would fall down and worship him. Mt 4:8-11

The importance of praise and worship lies in the relationship between the worshiper and the object worshiped. We tend to become like what we worship—an example of a fan and an athletic team.

B. Real worship and praise are the characteristics of true Christianity.

- *Phil 3:3 "for we are the true circumcision; who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."*

When talking to the woman at the well Jesus explains that the time has come when true worshipers will not be set apart by outward form. True worshipers will worship God in Spirit and Truth. Jn 4:21-24.

C. Distinctions between worship and praise.

1. Definitions:

Praise - to commend, to applaud, to express approval or admiration of, to extol in words or in song, to magnify, shine, boast, rave etc. It is an outward expression.

Worship - The Greek word means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand. Also, it means to do reverence to, adore, fawn or crouch, worship etc. It is difficult to get a simple definition of worship because real worship defies definition. It is a response to a revelation of God. It is something to be

experienced. It results from a divine encounter that involves feelings born out of intimate communion with God.

Praise and worship are so closely related and affect each other so much that separating them into narrow boxes of definition is difficult.

D. How are we to worship God?

Jesus tells us how to worship in John 4:24.

1. Worship in spirit - Jesus here shows that worship is not to be bound to a particular time or place, but it was going to be a function of the spirit of man reaching out to the Spirit of God. Worship isn't just an outward ritual. Worship is our spirit corresponding with God's Spirit.

2. Worship in Truth - Jesus Christ is the truth. Jn 14:6. Jesus intends that we worship in accordance with the truths of God's word. Jn 17:17, Ps 119. The doctrinal content of our songs determines their real spiritual value.

3. Worship with our whole heart. Ps 111:1; Ps 9:1 It includes our emotions.

E. Praise and worship signify our priestly ministry.

1. The Bible teaches that we are all priests unto God. Rev 1:6; I Pet 2:5

2. God has shown that He is to be approached by sacrifice and spiritual sacrifices. 1 Pet 2:5

- Sacrifice ourselves. Rom 12:1
- Sacrifice our possessions. Phil 4:18; Heb 13:16
- Sacrifice of praise. Heb 13:15
- Sacrifice of thanksgiving. Ps 116:1 7; I Thess 5:18; Eph 5:20
- Sacrifice of joy. Ps 27:6

II. WHY WE ARE TO WORSHIP

- God has ordained worship/praise as a way to come into His presence. Ps 100:4
- Worship/praise is a sign that God is in the midst of us (Ps 22:3). God inhabits our praise (Jer 33:11).
- God has given us worship as a way of glorifying Him. Ps 50:23
- Worship/praise is part of our priestly ministry. Heb 13:15
- God is worthy to be praised. Ps 18:3

III. WHEN AND WHERE WE ARE TO WORSHIP

A. When are we to worship?

- At all times. Ps 34:1
- Continually. Ps 34:1, Ps 35:7, Heb 13:15; Eph 5:18,20; Lk 24:53
- While I have my being. Ps 146:1-3; 45:17; 71:6; 119:164
- Everyday. "Every day will I bless Thee" Ps 146:1-3

B. Where we are to worship?

- In our homes. Ps 149:5
- In the congregation. Ps 22:22; Ps 35:18; 100:2,4; 111:1; 134:2; 135:1
- Before the unbeliever. Acts 2:46-47; Ps 40:3; Ps 126:2; Acts 16:25-34

C. Who is to worship?

- The Lord's servants. Ps 113:1
- Those who fear the Lord. Ps 22:23
- Those who seek Him. Ps 22:26; 145:10

D. Worship is a whole way of life, not just expressions centered around songs and music.

Worship is more than singing songs with Biblical expressions. It isn't simply singing "worship" songs at an event in a building. We are to live all our lives as worship to God.

- *Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship (GNB This is the true worship you should offer). (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The English word "worship" is derived from Old English "worthship", meaning "worthiness" or "worth-ship." So in its most straightforward concept, worship is to give worth to something. Living a life that is pleasing to God is part of worship. Everything we do that brings pleasure to God, because He is worthy is part of worship.

- *Philippians 2:12-13* So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
- *1 Thessalonians 4:1* NC Brothers and sisters, we taught you how to live in a way that will please God, and you are living that way. Now we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to live that way even more.

If we are not living our lives in a way that pleases God and think we are worshipping Him by singing alone, it isn't true worship.

- *1 John 4:19-21* We love, because He first loved us. (20) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

IV. BIBLICAL EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP/PSALMIC WORSHIP

Controversy stirs when we begin to discuss how we are to worship God, especially the outward expressions. We believe in "Biblical Psalmic Worship," a genuine, heartfelt, expressive praise and worship desired by God and described in the Bible, especially the book of Psalms.

This is part of worshipping Him according to the word. Some mistakenly think the we praise and worship with expressions we are comfortable with. This is the wrong posture.

Biblical/Psalmic expressions of praise and worship are like "love languages." Most spouses have certain expressions of love that are especially meaningful to them that they desire their spouse to exhibit. The expressions of praise and worship in the Bible are love language that He likes, not what we prefer or find meaningful. The expressions of worship aren't about what we like or find meaningful. They are about what God delights in, and we do it because it is what He desires. God is our Heavenly Father, and Jesus is our Bridegroom.

A. Biblical expressions of praise and worship.

1. Lifting our hands. 14 Times

- *Ps 28:2* "Hear the voice of my supplication when I cry to Thee for help, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy sanctuary.

- *Ps 63:3-4 "Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, My lips will praise Thee. So I will bless Thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands to Thy name."*
- *Ps 141:2 "May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee; the lifting of my hands as the evening offering."*
- *Ps 134:2 "Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."*
- *1 Timothy 2:8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

Children lift their hands when they want adults to pick them up. Lifting of the hands is also a form of surrender.

2. Clapping hands. 12 Times

- *Ps 47:1 "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of Triumph."*
- Ps 98:8

3. Playing musical instruments. 58 Times

- Ps 149:1-4
- Ps 150:1 -6
- Ps 81:1-2
- Ps 98:4-6
- Ps 33:2
- Ps 45:8

God has given us music and singing to help lift our heart.

4. Singing. 29 Times

- Ps 81:1-2
- Ps 33:2-3
- Ps 95:1
- Jas 5:13 "...Is anyone merry, let him sing praises."
- Eph 5:19
- Col 3:16
- Ps 149:6 "Let the high praises of God be on our lips."

5. Shouting, crying out, lifting our voices. 265 Times

- *Ps 47:1 "Shout unto God with a voice of triumph."*
- *Ps 66:1-2 "Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; Sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious."*
- *Ps 81:1 "Sing for joy to God our strength; shout joyfully to the God of Jacob."*
- *Psalms 95:1-2 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. (2) Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

- *Psalms 98:4-6 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises. (5) Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, With the lyre and the sound of melody. (6) With trumpets and the sound of the horn Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.*
- *Psalms 100:1 A Psalm for Thanksgiving. Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.*
- *Psalms 126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter And our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*

The word "hallelujah" means to cry aloud or break out into a cry.

The five places in Revelation that reveal the eternal state are is full of loud voices.

- *Revelation 7:9-12 NASB I looked, and behold, a great multitude...10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*
- *Revelation 14:1-7 NASB Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion,..2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harp6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth,...7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory,... worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."*
- *Revelation 19:1-6 NASB After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;...6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.*
- *Revelation 21:1-3 NASB 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.*

The only Silence in Revelation is the half an hour before the judgments of God are released on the earth in Chapter 8

6. Standing. 7 Times

- *Ps 135:2 "You who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God! Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is lovely;"*
- Ps 122:2
- *Ps 134:1 "Behold, bless the Lord, all servants of the Lord, who serve (stand) by night in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."*
- Ps 135:2

Standing speaks of respect and alertness.

7. Dancing. 9 Times

- Ps 30:11
- Ps 149:3
- Ps 150:4
- Ex 15:20-21

8. Bowing or kneeling. 12 Times

- Ps 95:6
- Rev 19:4

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. If worship is primarily a matter of the heart, why do we need outward expressions?
2. Introverts are usually not comfortable with outward expressions of words and actions. What should an introvert do who is uncomfortable with expressions of praise and worship found in the scripture?
3. Different churches seem to have different customs regarding praise and worship in corporate gatherings. What should someone do if they are in a gathering of praise and worship, but there are no responses or expectations of outward expressions?
4. Are the expressions of praise and worship mentioned in the scripture more like suggestions or commands? Why or why not?

5. Some expressions of praise and worship are mentioned that I have never participated in. How should I handle that?

6. What do I do when I find it easier to participate in certain songs, but our worship team does not do the styles I like?

7. What are the circumstances or seasons in your life or the lives of others when you tried to relegate worship to singing songs at a service, but you didn't have a life of worship?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

THE CHURCH

PREFACE: The Church is essential in the plans and purposes of God. Jesus spoke of the relationship of the Kingdom of God and the Church in Mt 16:16-19. The Church is the instrument or agent to express and demonstrate the Kingdom of God on the earth. As the Body of Christ, the Church is to be the visible expression of Christ in the earth. Often neglected and misunderstood by believers, the building of the Church (Mt 16:16-18) as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27) lies at the center of the purposes of God in our time (Eph 3:10-11). The early church had no idea of our society's brand of "church-going." When you look at the early (Biblical) church, they had a much deeper experience in their relationships as a family together in Christ. They were "added and devoted" to a way of life together as they engaged in His mission (Acts 2:41-47).

I. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

A. Definition

"Church" - Greek word "Ekklesia" - calling out, called out ones, congregation, assembly.

The church is the called out assembled people of God, called out of the world, and assembled together in Local Church Bodies.

B. Incorrect views of the Church.

Charles Colson "It is hard to imagine a more urgent or critical task than the recovery and restoration of the Biblical view of the church...Three or Four years ago I came to the realization that we have a scandalously low view of the church."

D. Mrtyn Lloyd-Jones "Our greatest need is to recapture the New Testament teaching concerning the church."

John Stott "Today more than ever, we need to catch a Biblical Vision of the church...If the church is central to God's purpose, as seen in both history and the gospel, it must also be central to our lives. How can you take lightly what God takes so seriously? How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed in the center."

In much of Christianity the current view of the church is different than the Biblical model. This must be changed if we are to move forward in the purposes of God for the church. The following is a list of some of the incorrect views and their Biblical counterpart.

1. *The church or house of God is the building you meet in.*

Biblical view - The church is the people baptized into the Lord Jesus and assembled together to serve His purposes. Eph 2:19-22; 1 Cor 10:17; 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Pet 2:4-5; Acts 7:46-49

2. *The church is something you have usually in the form of services or meetings.*

Biblical view - The church is something you are. 1 Cor 12:27

3. *The church functions at scheduled meeting times.*

Biblical view - Church life is an ongoing process, and the church must function all the time. Mt 18:19; Acts 2:46; Acts 4:31-37; 1 Cor 14:26

4. *The church is an organization/denomination you are a member of.*

Biblical view - The church is an organism. There is a practical commitment to the local group of believers God joins you to. 1 Cor 12:13,18

5. *Any believer is the church; therefore, any believer himself or group of believers who get together constitutes a church - Bible studies, praise and worship meetings, Christian clubs, organizations, etc.*

Biblical view - While it is true that Jesus lives in the believer, and where 2 or 3 believers gather, He is in their midst (Mt 18:20), the Biblical picture of local churches is flocks of sheep. While fellowship, worship, the study of the Word, etc. are all activities of believers, one important ingredient that constitutes a church is leadership. God assigns shepherds to pastor/shepherd the flocks. God-ordained leadership that oversees, pastors, and leads the flock. Acts 14:21-23; Acts 20:28; Eph 4:16; Heb 13:17; 1Thes 5:12-13; 1 Pet 5:5; 1 Tim 5:13; Phil 1:1, etc.

II. TWO FORMS OF THE CHURCH IN SCRIPTURE

A. The Invisible Church

All believers everywhere, past, and present, are joined in a mystical union in a spiritual body for a habitation of the Spirit, with Jesus Christ as it's Head. 1 Cor 10:32; 1:2; 3:16

B. The Church Visible/Local Church.

Those believers in a distinct geographic area joined together to serve the purposes of God. It is an identifiable group of believers who are joined together in the way of life serving God under the oversight of God-given leaders.

It is:

- Groups of believers in a given locality. Mt 18:20.
- Gathered to the person of Jesus for worship. Jn 4:24.
- Living a disciplined life. Mt 28:19-20.
- Under the oversight of gifted ministries. Eph 4:9-13.
- Established in the principles of Christ doctrine. Acts 2:42, Heb 6:1-2.
- Keeping the memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1Cor 11:23-34.
- Locally governed yet in fellowship with other groups of believers. Rev 1:11, Phil 1;1.

C. The context of the Bible (The NT) is the context of the Local Church.

The New Testament was written to local churches, and it is only in the context of local churches that it can be properly understood.

The Greek word used for Church (Ekklesia) is used 114 times in the New Testament, 96 of those times, it is about the local Church. The Greek background of the word "Ekklesia" means the called out and assembled together body of people that governs the affairs of a city.

Individual verses Corporate glasses. We tend to read scriptures through individual glasses rather than corporate glasses. This often causes us to misinterpret the scriptures because they were written from a corporate context. Examples: Rom 12:1-2 context vs 3-18; 1Pet 1:23 context 1:21-2:10

Billy Graham. "Letters were written to individual churches, small clusters of believers, leaders, and followers together. At the heart of these letters is God's assumption that we belong together at work and at worship in a Local Church. I am convinced that the cluster of believers of which you are a part, is the basic unit through which God is working to redeem the world."

John White, Navigators "Can one be a committed disciple and not be a part of a local congregation? Practically, I believe the answer is no. If we take Scriptures seriously, committed discipleship must include fellowship, interaction, and functioning with other believers in a local church."

Terry Virgo "It was said of Jesus (when He drove the money changers out of the temple) Zeal for God's House would consume Him...Do we have zeal for God's House, or do we see it as hopeless? Many Christians would reply, "of course we go to church," but that wasn't the question. Do we have zeal

for God's House? The book of Revelation shows Jesus, not as one who is vaguely in the midst of the church, but as one who walks among the individual lamp stands. He knows each local church intimately. He commends one and warns another. He notes steadfastness here, and apathy there. Each is an open book to Him. His longing for a glorious bride is seen in His concern and ambition for each congregation. How far short we come in our attitude towards the Local Church! Our devotion to Christ is rarely matched by a similar devotion to His church but finds expression in other areas. And so we fail to share God's heart and follow his strategy.

III. Nine MODELS WE SEE IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH SCENE

A. The Teaching Center - A place where believers go to hear the Bible expounded. Some go so far as to their church organization "_____ Teaching Center."

B. The Theater - A place where faithful gather to witness the drama of the sacrament and other traditions enacted before them.

C. The Corporation Church - A place where an efficient and highly program-oriented organization with a full-time pastoral team is involved in retailing religion to the masses.

D. The Country Club Church - Is a place where people join to have certain needs met, just as one might join any other organization to meet other needs.

E. The Mystical/Anti Structure Church - House churches, any meeting church, alternative churches etc. This **View of the church is anti-organizational**. Anything that has a structure is considered wrong. They frown on any recognized leadership or authority. No organization, no structure, we are one in the Spirit,

F. The Personality Church - People are drawn together around the personality or charisma of the leader. He may be well known or well-liked.

G. The Issue Church - The Church is built on issues. The issue is the thing that draws and keeps the church together. As long as the issue is to the forefront the people have a common rally point. Issues can be anything from Politics, Home Schooling, Abortion, etc

Event/Revival Center Church - The Church is centered around getting people to attend events or meetings. Success is measured in the number of people gathered in buildings.

H. Spiritual Hospital - Needy People (all aspects) are drawn to caring people. The identity of the people is need-based. The problem with

hospitals is that you can touch the caring element of family but can't build a normal healthy family there. A lot of germs and sicknesses there. People tend to want out of there when they feel better.

IV. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

This was the Church that "turned the world upside down". Acts 17:6. They made a significant impact in the earth. The early church's experience greatly contrasts society's view of the Church today. The church is often seen as boring, irrelevant, impersonal, and full of hypocrites.

A. The Church of Pentecost Acts 2:36-47; 4:31-33; 5:42

Authentic Christianity "Coming under the loving Lordship of Jesus, and by the Spirit are being joined to a family of imperfect followers of Jesus who are learning to live a new life in a new way as they engage in His mission every day."

B. One of the hallmarks was that they were devoted to fellowship. Acts 2:42.

Fellowship - Gk Koinonia - a having in common, partnership, a shared life, or common life. It is where we get our word "community". Fellowship/community was their lifestyle.

Their view of Church was not a building, a meeting, or an organization. They saw it as a joined group of people (people in relationship with God and each other) relating and working together regularly to extend the Kingdom of God.

A "Sunday Morning Christian" was no more in their way of thinking than a "Sunday Morning Church." They were radically devoted to God and to one another.

Biblical Fellowship was meeting more than two or three times a week for five minutes of "fellowship." It was a lifestyle in which they shared an everyday life together.

B. Examples of the life of fellowship in the Early Church's experience.

- *They prayed, broke bread, and received teaching together. Acts 2:43*
- *They were together and held things in common. Acts 2:44*
- *They shared material possessions as any had need. Acts 2:45, 4:32*
- *They walked together living their lives daily. Acts 2:46*
- *They ate meals together in their homes. Acts 2:46*
- *They praised God together. Acts 2:47, 4:24*
- *They met in the Temple and from house to house. Acts 2:46*

- *They were united in purpose, one heart one soul. Acts 4:32 (They had a common destiny in God together).*
- *There wasn't a needy one among them due to their benevolence. Acts 4:32*

V. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

A. The New Testament was written to Local Churches (groups of believers in geographic areas joined together in relationships) and it is only in the context of Local Churches that it can be understood.

B. The New Testament gives us very clear guidelines on how we are to walk in relationships together as a Local Church. 59 One Anothers

1. "...Be at peace with each other." (Mark 9:50)
2. "...Wash one another's feet." (John 13:14),
3. "...Love one another..." (John 13:34), 4. "...Love one another..." (John 13:34), 5. "...Love one another..." (John 13:35), 6. "...Love one another..." (John 15:12), 7. "...Love one another" (John 15:17)
8. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..." (Romans 12:10)
9. "...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. "Live in harmony with one another..." (Romans 12:16)
11. "...Love one another..." (Romans 13:8)
12. "...Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)
13. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..." (Romans 15:7)
14. "...Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)
15. "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16)
16. "...When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (I Cor. 11:33)
17. "...Have equal concern for each other." (I Corinthians 12:25)
18. "...Greet one another with a holy kiss." (I Corinthians 16:20)
19. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." (II Corinthians 13:12)
20. "...Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)
21. Don't bite or devour one another "If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other." (Galatians 5:15)
22. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)
23. "Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2)
24. "...Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)
25. "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)
26. "...Forgiving each other..." (Ephesians 4:32)
27. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
28. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)
29. "...In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)
30. "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
31. "Bear with each other..." (Colossians 3:13)

32. "...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
33. "Teach...[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
34. "...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
35. "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
36. "...Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. "...Encourage each other..."(I Thessalonians 4:18)
38. "...Encourage each other..." I Thessalonians 5:11)
39. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
40. "Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13)
41. "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
42. "...Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
43. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
46. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
47. "...Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
48. "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
49. "...Love each other deeply..." (I Peter 4:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
52. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..."(I Peter 5:5)
53. "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)
54. "...Love one another." (I John 3:11), 55. "...Love one another." (I John 3:23), 56. "...Love one another." (I John 4:7), 57. "...Love one another." (I John 4:11), 58. "...Love one another." (I John 4:12) 59. "...Love one another." (II John 5)

Walking in these instructions for fellowship will take more than just a corporate meeting one or two times a week. It is to be a way of life.

C. At the heart of the purpose of God for Local Churches is the need to walk together in right relationships.

- *Romans 15:5-7* 5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; 6 that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (Ephesians 3:17-18)
- *Philippians 2:1-2*...2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

- *Colossians 2:1-2 ...2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,*
- *1 Corinthians 1:10 10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. (NASB)*

VI. GOD'S DESIGN FOR MUTUAL DEPENDENCY IN THE CHURCH

A. Design and metaphors for the church. God has given us different metaphors and examples that describe the nature of His church.

Spiritual Temple or Building: (1 Corinthians 3:4-17, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:4-6)

- *Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*
- *1 Peter 2:4-6 NASB And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*

The Body of Christ: (Ephesians 1:22-23, Romans 12:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:14-18, Ephesians 4:11-16,

- *Ephesians 1:22-23 NASB And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*
- *Romans 12:3-5 NASB For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and*

individually members one of another (AMP Mutually dependent on one another).

The Bride of Christ: (Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelations 19:7-8, 22:17).

- *Revelation 19:7-8 NASB "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

The Family of God: This is the most prevalent description and is more than a metaphor; it is a reality. Our idea of the family came from the Godhead, who was a family in all eternity (Genesis 1-2, Psalms 68:5-6, John 1:12, Matthew 6:9, Ephesians 2:19, 3:14-15, 5:22-23, Hebrews 12:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:15, Revelation 19:7-8).

- *Ephesians 3:14-15 NASB For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name,*

Important Biblical foundations and statistics on family.

The Biblical storyline can be summed up in the following phrase "God's family together (with Him and others) on His mission. The Bible begins with this at creation in which God made mankind "in Our image and Our likeness" with the commission "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and rule over it" (Genesis 1:26-28). The Bible ends with that story fulfilled at the great family event, "The marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:1-9).

The New Testament uses family terms regarding God and His people 1276 times. In contrast, it uses "Christian" 3 times, and "saint" 61 times. Paul uses the fellow family term "brothers and sisters" 132 times.

The "Lord's prayer" was taught by Jesus to emphasize family, "Our Father who art in heaven."

God described His dwelling place in family terms "House/Household" of God (Psalms 68:5-6, 1 Timothy 3:15 etc.).

In these various descriptions of the nature of the church (Temple, Bride, Body, and Family) one thing becomes clear, we are part of each other. For His design to work in its fullness, we must remember an important thing, WE NEED THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH NEEDS US. This is the calling of every member.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Describes some problems with a mentality that sees the church as the building.
2. What do you tell someone who hasn't found a church they feel they should join in their area?
3. If every person in Christ is automatically part of the church, why do I have to join with others in a local church to "be the church?"
4. What do I do if I am part of a church that doesn't exhibit any of the characteristics of the early church in Acts 2 or 4?
5. What does it mean when we say Christianity is personal but not private?
6. If every one of God's people is to be "led by the Spirit" (Romans 8), why do we need earthly leaders in the church?
7. What do I do if I "am not getting anything out of going to church services?"

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

THE COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD

PREFACE: The concept of God's covenant and His people lies at the heart of God's purposes. Throughout Scripture, God has revealed His covenant intention to have a people for Himself in this earth that would reflect His nature and Kingdom. A true revelation of God's covenant people will help break us out of our individualistic frame of reference into the corporate purposes of God.

- *Tit 2:14 who gave Himself to us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession.*

I. THEME OF THE BIBLE

A. To properly understand the whole Bible, we must understand its central theme. Without this we will have difficulty seeing how the OT and NT fit together.

B. To serve God's purpose, our lives must be ordered around His theme/story.

- *Acts 13:22, 36... He raised up David...concerning whom He also testified..., 'I have found David...a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'36"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep.*

C. Central theme of the Bible

- **Central figure** - Jesus Christ
- **Major themes of the bible** - Reconciliation, Atonement, Redemption etc.
- **Central theme** - God chose a people from all the other peoples of the earth and entered covenant with them that they would become His holy people carrying out His purposes. As they live together as His family under His rule, He demonstrates His life and Kingdom through them. Another way to say it is "God's family on God's mission."

D. Scriptures regarding the theme of the covenant people of God.

Exodus 6:1-8, 19:1-7; Deut 7 :6-8; 1 Pet 2:4-10 Peter quoting from Exodus 19; Titus 2:13-14; Eph 5:25-27; 1 Cor 10:1-11; 2Cor 6:16-18

E. Definitions from Exodus 19:5-6, Dt 7:6

- **Nation** - A nation of people. Dictionary - A body of people associated with a particular territory that is conscious of its own unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own.
- **Kingdom** - A rule, a domain, a realm, royal power or dominion, a king's rule or domain.
- **People** - A people of the same race and language. Dictionary - The whole body or persons constituting a community, tribe, race, or nation.

F. Covenant is how God chooses and joins Himself with His people

- *Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant...with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*

The story of the Bible reveals various covenants God made with His people.

Adam and Eve Genesis 1-5; Noah Genesis 8:20-9:17; Abraham Genesis 12, 15:4-21, 17, Gal 3:16; Moses Ex 6:1-8, chapters 19-24, Dt 7:6; David 2 Sam 7...; and the New Covenant, Jer 31:34, Heb 8:8-13 (which is a continuation, and fulfillment of aspects of the previous covenants).

G. New Testament writers viewed the New Covenant as fulfilling important aspects God had revealed in previous covenants (primarily to be His people on the earth).

1. The earth being filled with a people reflecting His image

- *Gen 1:27-28 God created man in His own image...28) God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, **and fill the earth**, and subdue it.*
- *Eph 1:22-23...and gave Him as head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.(msg The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.)*
- *Eph 3:11-12 "through the church the many sided wisdom of God is made known."*

2. Abraham's seed that will multiply and bless many nations (Christ and His church) Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-5, 17:1-7,15-21,

- *Gal 3:16-29...the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one... that is, Christ...(29) And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*

- *Gen 22:17-18...I will greatly multiply your seed...and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. (18) "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."*
- *Mt 16:18 "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail" (msg will not be able to keep it out).*

3. God's Holy Nation and People of His possession

- *Exo 19:5-6...if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; (6) and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'*
- *Deu 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*
- *1Pe 2:1-9...(4) And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, (5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (6) For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION...(9) But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION*

H. What is the idea of "Covenant?"

Covenant - Webster's dictionary, "a mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons, or a contract."

God's s definition goes much deeper - It is not just an agreement creating a connection. It is a joining to accomplish a purpose. It is a joining together that alters both parties.

God joins Himself to His people. We are "baptized into Christ" Romans 6:3, Gal 3:27. We are joined forever, a part of Him ("now you are the body of Christ" 1 Cor 12:27).

The covenant joining of God includes Him joining us together as His family. One distinction lost in English translations of the Bible is that almost all of the promises and commandments of the NT were written in the plural form. An example is the term "you" found in the NT 2,391 times. It is used 2,022 times in the plural form.

The church, according to Paul, was not a loose federation of isolated individuals. God designed it to be a joined body, a living, breathing organism whose members are so closely connected that they can move together.

Part of the understanding of the communion ceremony realizes Christ's covenant has caused us to be joined together.

- *1Co 10:16-17 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? (17) Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*

Jesus prayed for the same oneness that is in the Godhead to be among His people

- *Joh 17:11-21...that they may be one even as We are...(21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

G. History of the theme of God's covenant people throughout the bible.

Adam and Eve - God's desire for Adam and Eve to fill the earth with a people of His image. Gen 1:28-28

Abraham - God chooses a man of faith to father a nation of people that will bring blessing to other nations Gen 12:1-3, Gen 15:1-6. He reaffirms the promise after Ishmael Gen 17:1-7 6-7. He reaffirms the promise after the sacrifice of Isaac. Gen 22:16-18

Isaac - God reaffirms the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac. Gen 26:23-25

Jacob - Steals birthright from Esau; steals blessing from father; wrestles with Angel and his name changed to Israel (striven with God). God affirms name change and promise of a nation and people to come forth from him.

Gen 35:9-12

Joseph - the dealings with Joseph and his brothers culminated with the preserving of His people Gen 45:7, 50:19-20

Moses - People of God multiplied in Egypt. Ex 1:7-9. God raises up Moses to deliver them. Ex 3:7-8. People led out to Mt. Sinai and received their national identity. Ex 19:1-6.

Numbers - People lead to land and rebel, go back into the wilderness until a new generation arises.

Deuteronomy - Moses assembles the new generation and recounts the covenant to them. He explains to them that their purposes as a nation is so other nations will see the greatness of God through them. Dt 4:7, Dt 7:6-8

Joshua - People led into the promised land and capture key strategic places.

Judges - People mess up as they fight against the enemies in the land and God delivers them by raising up Judges.

1&2 Sam, 1&2 Chron, 1&2 Kings - Samuel is the last Judge, and the people want a king to rule over them. Saul is chosen as the first king, but he turned out bad then David is anointed as king. David's son Solomon takes over and builds the temple. He dies, and the kingdom is divided between the 10 northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah. Each has a series of good and bad kings that rule over them until the northern tribes are

led away into captivity by Assyria and the southern kingdom is led away into captivity by Babylon.

Ezra and Neh - After 70 years of captivity, a remnant returns under Zerubbabel and Joshua. Later Ezra returns with a remnant and the Temple is rebuilt. Twelve years later, Nehemiah returns and builds walls around the city.

Malachi - God's people continue to show signs of drifting away, and Malachi calls them back to covenant faithfulness. The OT closes heading into the 400-year intertestament period with God promising that a prophetic voice would turn His people back to the family. Mal 4:5-6

New Testament - Jesus comes on the scene and announces a new phase in the plan for the Kingdom Nation and covenant People of God.

Jesus announced that the Kingdom was being taken away from the natural Jews and given to the Church. Mt 21:42-43, Rom 9:24-26. He tells it in a Parable. Lk 20:9-18. He tells Peter He is giving the keys of the Kingdom to the Church. Mt 16:16-19 Parable of the vine growers

Christ gives His life as the covenant to sanctify God's people. Titus 2:13-14, Eph 5:25-27

Paul expresses it as both believing Jews and Gentiles formed into one new people in Christ. (Eph 2:11-22) to express the life of the Kingdom.

The New Covenant is a covenant of peoplehood. Heb 8:1-12 is a quote from Jer 31. Peter expresses the fulfillment of the idea of peoplehood through the Church. 1 Pet 2:4-10

The Church is a people just as an individual is a child of God. Converted individuals become part of the transformed people. The walking out of this reality always produces a church with NT dynamic, unless stifled by unbiblical traditions.

II. BIBLICAL MANIFESTATION OF INVOLVEMENT WITH GOD'S PEOPLE

A. The Biblical model of involvement is with the church, specifically the Local Church

The word church is used 114 times in the NT, 96 of those times is in direct reference to the Local Church.

B. Definition of Church

Gk Ekklesia - calling out, called out ones, assembly, or called out and assembled together for a special purpose.

C. God's design of His people is covenant interdependence - We are to be joined, not just connected

- Romans 12:5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Amplified "mutually dependent on one another"
- Ephesians 4:25 for we are members of one another. 1 Cor 12:13-27, Eph 4:16

Difference between joining and connection - An extension chord is connected to the wall outlet as it is plugged in, but an arm is joined to a body. You can disconnect the chord without much problem, but it is a much bigger problem if you disconnect the arm.

We often overemphasize the personal that we lose the aspect of our corporate walk.

- *Ephesians 3:18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (NASB)*

D. We can only operate in a Biblical model as we walk in our relationships with God's people.

- *Ephesians 2:21-22 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (NASB)*
- *Ephesians 4:16 Colossians 2:18-19*
- *1 Peter 2:4-5 And coming to Him as to a living stone...you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood.*

E. It takes covenant commitment to walk in relationally with God's people.

Acts 2:24 says they were devoted to fellowship Gk koinonia - a having in common, partnership, a shared life, or a common life. It is where we get our word community.

Wallis - *"Community is the very essence of the Church, and the very lifestyle of the Kingdom. The Church is community."*

F. We must avoid the unbiblical idea of not being joined and walking together with God's people.

We don't want to be spiritual bumble bees, spiritual butterflies, spiritual lone rangers, or spiritual grasshoppers hopping from one exciting meeting or Bible study to another. Nor do we want to be content with only being a part of the radio or television church with little actual involvement with other believers.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Describe in your own words the central storyline of the Bible that Jesus is carrying out.
2. What are some similarities and differences between a human contract and a Biblical covenant?
3. What are some examples of personal callings which would prohibit someone from tangibly joining with others in the form of a corporate call?
4. What are some passages of Scriptures that we misinterpret when we view them with individualistic perspectives?
5. What has been some unfortunate fruit in our culture as we have drifted away from the idea of the covenant?
6. List some of the benefits and responsibilities in God's idea of covenant?
7. What happens when someone wants the benefits but refuses to participate in covenant responsibilities?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE NEW COVENANT

PREFACE: The New Covenant is relational in nature. At the heart of what God did through Jesus Christ was the establishment of right relationships between Him and those He joins you to in the Church. It is a covenant that has both horizontal as well as vertical aspects that are tied to relationships

I. THE RELATIONAL NATURE OF THE NEW COVENANT, VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL

A. The New Covenant has a vertical aspect in relationships.

God initiated it to bring us into a new/right relationship with Him.

1. It is a relational covenant

Heb 8:8-13 is a quote from Jer 31:31-34. A main feature of the covenant is that we will know God.

Know - to be aware of, to know, to be aware of or acquainted with as by sight experience or report (relationship).

Jesus said that knowing God is what eternal life is all about. Jn 17:1-3

2. The idea of reconciliation is the establishment of right relationships. 2 Cor 5:17-20

Reconciliation - The establishment of friendly relations between parties who are at variance with each other.

Prior to us coming into right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we were at variance with God. Rom 5:10, Rom 8:7, Col 1:21.

B. The New Covenant has a horizontal aspect in relationships.

It is designed to bring us into a new/right relationship with one another. 1 Cor 10:16-17, 1 Cor 12:12-13, Eph 2:12-22

His work was designed to make us one and establish peace.

C. Biblical salvation is relational, a way of life relating with God and with His people He joins you to.

II. IN THE NEW COVENANT, THE DUAL ASPECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ARE INTERRELATED

A. Both aspects of relationships affect each other.

- *Mat 5:21-24 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' (22) "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (23) "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. **Gift** - act of service or worship.*
- *1 Peter 3:7-8 You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; (NASB)*

1. *The way we relate to one another indicates how we relate to God.*

1 Jn 4:7-21 This is how we know we love God.

2. *Forgiving others plays an important role in God forgiving us. Mk 11:24-26*

Mt 18:21-35 This is the nature of the Kingdom and how it works.

Mt 6:12-15 The Lord's prayer "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

B. God's highest priority for us is walking in right relationships.

- *Matthew 22:37-40 And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (NASB)*
Rom 13:8-10

Jn 13:15, 33-35 Walking in right relationships is the way the world will know we are His disciples. Mk 12:13, 28-34

III. ONE OF THE AIMS OF REGENERATION (BEING BORN AGAIN) IS SO WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO WALK IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

A. Scriptures relating to this.

- 1 Pet 1:22-23 He connects being born again to walking in right relationships with one another.
- Rom 5:5 "and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
- Col 3:9-23
- Eph 4:22-32

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How would you advise someone who consistently fights with their spouse but claims they were okay with God?
2. How would you advise someone gifted in areas like singing or preaching but has difficulty getting along with people?
3. What should someone do if they are assigned to lead a group, like a small group or Bible study, but have an unresolved sin issue with someone?
4. What are some ways that we "do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:25) listed in the context of that passage?
5. Can someone be right with God while at the same time they are not right with a brother or sister? Why or why not?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND RELATIONSHIPS

PREFACE: The New Testament gives us several symbolic expressions of the Church. The New Testament describes the Church as the Temple of God, Spiritual House, God's Dwelling Place, The Building or House of God, etc. One of the most prominent descriptions of the Church in the New Testament is the Body of Christ. As we look at the Church as the Body of Christ, we will see that just like a human body, it takes relationships between the body parts for it to work as it was designed. This is an unmistakable expression of the relational nature of the Church.

I. PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

A. The main purpose of the Church (Body of Christ) is to express the truth and life of Christ (the Head) within it.

- *1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (NASB)*
- *1 Timothy 3:15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (NASB)*
- *Philippians 2:15-16 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. (NASB)*

Eph 2:19-22, 3:10-11

In the same way, we are concerned about the appearance of our human body because we want the real us on the inside to be favorably received by others. We want a good representation of ourselves to others.

II. PAUL'S REVELATION OF THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

A. Paul carried revelation of the Church as the Body of Christ.

1. Eph 4:12-16
2. Eph 3:3-6
3. 1 Cor 12:12-13
4. Col 1:18; 2:18-19

B. Biblical truths about the Body of Christ.

1. Each believer was born again to be a functioning part of Christ's Body.

- *1 Corinthians 10:17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (NASB)*
- *Romans 12:4-5 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (NASB)*
- *1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (NASB) "Now you are Christ's Body and each of you a limb or organ of it." (NEB)*

2. The purpose of the body is to present the life within it.

- *Ephesians 3:10-11 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, (NASB)*

3. Each member is equipped with giftings and talents to be used in building up the Body.

As in the human body every part is to actively contribute toward the welfare/well-being of the body. 1 Cor 12:14-27, Rom 12:4-10

- *1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (NASB)*
- *1 Cor 12:12,26 "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church...What is the outcome then brethren? When you assemble...let all things be done for edification."*

4. With the awareness of God's design of the Body of Christ we are to be joined practically or built together in the Church.

Eph 2:21-22

1 Pet 2:4-6

This means being built together in relationships.

5. There is a built-in design for protection and accountability that helps keep us faithful to God.

- *Hebrews 3:12-13 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. (13) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
- *Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,... (24) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another;*
- *Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

There is a built-in DNA in a human body to help every part to operate in its created place and design. In Christ's body, the Holy Spirit is also pressing us towards connection in our proper place.

III. RELATIONSHIPS AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

A. As in the human body it takes relationships between the members for it to work. Eph 4:16, Col 2:18-19

If our body parts weren't connected and interacting, we would cease to exist.

Church is more than just a meeting with superficial relationships but is a way of life. As in the human body, the relationships between the body members are an everyday way of life. We would die if our human body only functioned for an hour on Sunday mornings.

B. It is a mistake for Christians to think that they only need a relationship with the Head (Christ) and not the Body (Church).

This is a wrong mentality that is foreign to the New Testament picture of Salvation in which you are brought into a new relationship with Christ and His Body.

C. The picture of the human body gives us insight into the relational nature of the Church.

"The human body has systems made up of organs, made up of numerous groups of specialized cells all working together for the homeostasis or effectively-balanced system of operations for the efficient maintenance of the body as a whole. Only in a diseased or pathological organ do the cells or systems work for their own benefit; and when they do the body cannot last long. Malignancy, when it occurs, must either be eradicated, or the body will suffer doom. Never in a healthy situation do the components of the body work outside of the best interest of the body as a whole. The brain, in conjunction with the nervous system, effectively communicates the best use of limited resources and where the best expenditures of energy and effort, should be allocated, to benefit the needs of the body most. Christ as the head does the same for His body and only, He has perfect knowledge in determining who should do what, and when, not us in our limited and finite scope of information and mindset."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How would you define the main purpose of your human body and how does that correspond with the purpose of the body of Christ?
2. What is the purpose of your human body parts relating and working together and what would happen if they no longer wanted to relate and function together?
3. What would happen if parts of your human body either did not want to function or were unable to function? How does our cultural concept of church help contribute to the inactivity of certain body parts?
4. What would happen to your human body if certain body parts claimed that they only need to relate to our head but not the other body parts? Have you ever known someone with that mentality? What are the consequences of someone who only wants to relate with the head, Jesus, but doesn't see the need to relate with other parts of His body?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

PREFACE: In due time, every true believer in Christ must consider the question of church membership. Viewpoints toward church membership vary. Some hold that a membership card from a church means they are members whether they attend services or not. Others run to the opposite extreme and disdain any effort to organize or account for those considered members. Let us try to gain insights from the Scriptures in this area.

I. RECORDS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

A. The Gospels and the Book of Acts imply some definite evidence of both numbering and identification.

1. Jesus chose 12 Apostles, named and numbered. Lk 9:1, 2
2. Jesus later chose 70 others as His own. Lk 10:12
3. Over 500 brethren saw Jesus in His ascension. I Cor 15:33
4. Before Pentecost 120 disciples gathered in the Upper Room. Acts 1:15 (The number of the names were about 120).
5. At and after Pentecost multitudes were brought to Christ and into the church which He said He would build.
6. There were added unto them (the 120) about 3000 souls. Acts 2:41, 47
7. About 5000 believed also in Acts 4:4.
8. The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. Acts 6:7
9. At least 10,000 believers were numbered in these Scriptures.

II. IS IT SCRIPTURAL TO HAVE SOME KIND OF CHURCH ROLL OR RECORD?

A. The Old Testament.

1. *The Israelites had their names in the Books of Genealogy of the Nation. They were numbered before the Lord. Num 1 & 2*
2. *The Levites were also numbered before the Lord before they could minister in the priestly offices. Num 3*
3. *Everyone numbered in Israel had to be redeemed with silver. Ex 20:11-16*
4. *The remnant from Babylon had to be registered in the book in order to minister in the priesthood. Ezra 2:62, 63; Neh 7*

B. The New Testament.

1. *The Church of the Firstborn have their names written in heaven. Heb 12:22-24*

2. *The redeemed of all ages have their names also written in the Book of Life. Phil 4:3; Rev 13:8; Rev 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27*

There is evident scriptural evidence of numbering and accounting of membership. It is also worthy of note that legal requirements stipulate that proper records of membership be kept concerning Church funds, holding of property, taxes, etc. This cannot be just an invisible, mystical method of record-keeping!

III. MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership qualifications.

1. Spiritual membership. One cannot join Christ's Church, like a club, etc. One joins in the Spirit and by the Spirit. They were added to the Lord - Acts 4:14; 11:24

2. Practical membership. In Acts, we see practical visible expressions of membership.

The New Testament Experience of Christians was that they were added and devoted to Local Churches. Acts 2:41-47 Acts 5:14 *Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.*

- **Added** - to put to, to join with, to gather with. Like a marriage 2 people are added together.
- **Devoted** - to adhere to, to be an adherent, to be devoted or consistent to, to show oneself courageous for.

In Acts 2 we see irrefutable evidence that the apostles linked entrance into the Kingdom with becoming part of the church. Church life wasn't an extracurricular activity to add to an already packed schedule.

B. Practical aspects of membership.

1. Vision - Prov 29:18 Church membership requires an understanding of the vision God has given the leadership and a willingness to flow in that vision.

2. Oversight - Eph 4:11-16 Church membership requires that we recognize the God-given authority of the eldership of the local church and that we be willing to submit ourselves to their leadership for development and growth.

3. Relationships - Acts 4:32-35 Church membership is not purchased nor attained by attendance. It is the fruit of the giving of lives, one to another. Members are those in Christ and, with each other, seek to see the kingdom of God advanced in the earth.

4. Instruction - Heb 5:12-6:3 Church membership involves instruction to all within the local church to develop and mature it's members. This instruction includes both sound doctrine and practical application. The instruction is reinforced by example and directed towards developing vision, unity, right relationships, and understanding.

5. Support - Acts 2:44; Rom 15:27; 2 Cor 8 Support for the church is not a legalistic requirement to prove our membership but is the natural expression of commitment, life, relationships, and maturity we develop as we grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

C. Reasons why some might reject the idea of practical church membership.

- Fear of being hurt.
- Do not believe it is Scriptural.
- Not submissive in Spirit.
- Desire to be self-governing, self-directing, lawless.
- Do not want to support the church financially, tithes and offerings.
- Do not desire to come under correction, discipline or protection.
- Do not want to be committed to anything local or visible.

One cannot expect to receive all the blessings and benefits of the Lord's Church when one is not willing to be committed to the responsibilities of membership.

D. Confirmation of membership.

To confirm means to "make firm, or firmer, strengthen, establish, verify; to ratify." The New Century Dict. adds, "To make valid or binding by some formal or legal act".

The scriptures are full of examples of confirmations. While we do not have any specific pattern from Scripture of how local church membership was confirmed, we can gain some general ideas of what confirmation should contain.

1. Laying on of hands of the oversight and prayer.

2. Extending the right hand of fellowship. Gal 2:8, 9

3. Verbal commitment, or public affirmation, whereby the believer enters into a covenant relationship and is willing to receive the privileges, assume the responsibilities, and accept the discipline of the local church member.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How would you address someone who thinks, "I can be part of the universal church without being part of any local church?"
2. Can someone be a part of a local church that doesn't attend gatherings or serve? Why or why not?
3. Can one be a local church member who isn't born again? Why or why not?
4. What are aspects of the confirming process of membership, and why are they important?
5. How would you approach someone who wants to be "added" to membership but doesn't want to "be devoted" to a way of life with that church?
6. How would you advise someone who wants to be a local church member but doesn't think that God calls any leaders to lead?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

BIBLICAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT

PREFACE: As we look across the landscape of the church, we see many different ideas regarding the church's government. We need to attempt to return to New Testament patterns of church government if we are to build according to Christ's design. Without government, there would be lawlessness, anarchy, and disorder. God's government on earth and in the church is expressed through delegated authority. This authority is delegated to those God appoints to be leaders in the church.

In the past 40-50 years the "Church Growth Movement" has fostered more business models for church government. Spiritual Leadership is different than business models etc. Spiritual Leadership is *caring for and motivating God's people through teaching, exhorting, encouraging, and example, to pursue God's agenda for their lives individually and corporately.*

Two errors in the Body of Christ when it comes to approaching leadership.

- **Over glamorize it** – "The man of God" – Jesus spoke of this as the way the Gentiles (those outside of God) approach the concept of leadership Mt 20:25, Mk 10:42, Lk 22:25.
- **Undervalue it** – In our culture that has an "anti-authority" posture that prizes independence. Add to that all the leadership scandals in both Charismatic and the Catholic Church, leading to a devaluing of leadership.

A pattern that runs through Scripture and the history of God's people, "as go the leaders, so goes the people."

This is why the book of Hebrews ends with people needing to take the correct posture toward leaders.

- *Heb 13:7-9 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (9) Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings*
- *Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

I. LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

A. Two leadership gifts/graces are defined within the organization of the local church.

It is important to note that the rise of the Synagogue system in the Intertestamental period (400 years between the Old and New Testament) formed a backdrop (God-designed structure for the local religious life of God's people in various places) of understanding for the local church. The Synagogue had a system similar to local churches regarding leadership, discipline, education, and instruction.

The New Testament indicates the office of an Elder/Bishop with the Deacons intricately connected with it.

1. Elder/Bishop

2. Deacon

- *Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (elders/bishops) and deacons: (NASB) Acts 14:23; 20:28; 15:22-23; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-2; 1Thes 5:12*

B. Three New Testament terms (Greek words) to designate the office of Eldership.

1. Greek "presbuteros" Elder - speaks of "senior" or maturity and experience, an older man. This speaks of the man.

2. Greek "episkopos" Bishop/Overseer - Greek epi - over, skopeo - to look or watch. This term speaks of the leaders' responsibility to watch over, protect, care for, and feed the flock. This speaks of the office.

This term is used in the same sense as an Elder in the Scriptures. Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim 3:1; I Peter 5:1-2

3. Greek "poimen" Pastor/Shepherd - One who is a feeder. This speaks of what He is doing.

The Scriptures show us the interrelatedness of these three words.

- *Acts 20:17-28 "take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost made you overseers (episkopos) to feed (poimen) the church of God.*

- *1 Peter 5:1-2 "I exhort the elders (presbuteros)...feed (poimen) the flock of God which is among you, exercising oversight (episkopos) not under compulsion.*
- *Titus 1:5-7 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint Elders (presbuteros) in every city as I directed you...For the overseer (episkopos) must be above reproach,... I Tim 3:1 "office of an overseer (episkope)*

C. Functions of Eldership

- 1. Ruling** - 1 Tim 5:17. The elders form the government of the Local Church. They have authority that comes from God. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-4
- 2. Teaching - or feeding**- 1 Tim 3:1-2; Heb 5:12-14; Jn 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Thes 5:12
- 3. Leading and guiding the church forward** - Heb 13:17
- 4. Being examples** - 1 Tim 4:12
- 5. Serving the people of God** - Lk 22:25-27; Jn 13:1-20 Jesus washing the disciple's feet.

Eldership is more about function than an office. Holding an office without actively functioning in it is not the Biblical design.

Some of the ways you can express the functions/responsibilities of an Elder are: Making decisions; being responsible for all that goes on in the church; leading, guiding, and setting direction/vision of the Church; ruling or making decisions on a variety of issues including discipline of members; serving and not being served.

D. Scriptures indicate a plurality of Eldership. They work as a team (this expresses the identity of God).

1. *Acts 14:23 "Elders in every city"*
2. *Acts 15:4-23 "Elders in Jerusalem"*
3. *Acts 16:4 "Elders in Jerusalem"*
4. *Acts 20:17 "Elders of Ephesus"*
5. *1 Tim 5:1, 17-21 "Let the Elders rule"*
6. *James 5:14 "Call for the Elders of the Church"*
7. *1 Pet 5:1 "The Elders which are among you"*
8. *Titus 1:5-11 "Ordain Elders in every city"*
9. *Heb 13:17 "obey them that rule"*

As in any team, including a leadership team, there is a leader. Elders tend to have different measures and areas of rule according to calling. Elders are equal in value but not in authority or gifting. Elders lead as a team. They carry out their function through prayerful discussions of issues. They come to one mind on matters and the team leader pulls together the direction.

E. What is a Deacon?

Over the last 2000 years of church history, various movements have taken Biblical terms like "Elder" and "Deacon," and applied them to different positions and people. Unfortunately, the applications of the terms are varied. This is especially true for Deacons. In much of recent history (the past 200 years) the role of deacons has been greatly minimized compared to what we see in Scripture. In many Charismatic and Evangelical circles, the term "deacon" has been applied to people who took care of serving the practical needs of the church (give them a title and they will feel better about serving). Some saw them as groups who help keep the spiritual leaders in check in the worst-case scenarios. Others saw them as groups who provided leadership in the practical business areas of the church.

The Greek word for Deacon is "Diakonos" - to be an attendant, to wait upon. In other words, they are a servant or renders service.

Three main passages where the official idea of Deacons is used.

- *Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (elders) and deacons (Diakonos 1249).*
- *1Ti 3:8 Deacons (Diakonos 1249) likewise must be...10-13 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. (11) Women (female deacons) must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.... (13) For those who have served well as deacons (Diakonos 1249) obtain for themselves a high standing.*
- *Rom 16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant (Diakonos 1249) of the church which is at Cenchrea (2) that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*

First NT application of the idea of the Deacon

- *Act 6:1...(2) So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve (Gk 1247 Diakonos) tables. (3) "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task...(5) The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose... (6) And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them*

Why did they instinctively know to move in this direction?

The synagogue system provided a backdrop of understanding for the early church. The Synagogue system was the cradle of knowledge for the early local church. During the 600 years before the church was birthed (the captivity and intertestamental period) we see the rise of the Synagogue system. God's people were scattered around the empire and the temple and Jerusalem had been destroyed. Even after Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt, God's people still lived in various towns. To maintain their identity and share their common life in God together (like the local church) they gathered (root word for Synagogue) in various places. This was the experience Jesus was raised in.

Jesus announced that the church would serve a similar function as the Synagogue. In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus described how the local church conducts discipline and said that wherever two or three were "gathered together" (Gk Sunago which was the verb form of Synagogue) He would be in their midst.

Paul and Peter describe the church as fulfilling the temple's function where He dwells.

- *1Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*
- *Ephesians 2:20-22...(22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*
- *1Peter 2:4-5...(5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

In the Synagogue system, there were appointed people who cared for the daily administration of alms for the poor and needy, just like the Apostles appointed the seven in Acts 6. This was where they instinctively got the idea.

Evolving Idea of Deacons in local churches

Three Greek words that are translated as minister or servant in KJV, NIV, NASV

- **Diakoneo** (G1247) --"To be an attendant, to wait upon." - General way of serving Luke 22:24-2
- **Diakonia** (G1248) --"Service or attendant as a servant."- General manner of serving Acts 6:4
- **Diakonos** (G1249) --"A waiter, attendant, servant or minister." Refers to someone who is serving. Philipines 1:1, 1 Tim 3:8.

Two ways the words are used in NT

- 1. Unofficial way** - the general idea of serving
- 2. Official way** - a certain group of people who have proven themselves as having a specific grace to play a role in serving. Romans 16:2, Phil 1:1, 1 Tim 3:8.

In the official way, they were gifted people who carried great administrative responsibilities and other functions their calling enabled them to do.

Five New Testament facts reveal that deacons' idea has been minimized and the Biblical patterns need restored.

1. Acts 6 group (most of the orthodox church see this group as the first deacon ministry) administrated the feeding of over 5000 people daily. This was no small task. Can you imagine feeding 5000 people daily with no Wal-Marts or Grocery stores? It was an administrative miracle.

2. Stephen, who was part of the Acts 6 group and he preached, moved in signs and wonders and initiated significant breakthroughs in the Spiritual realm.

- *Acts 6:8 NASB And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.*

3. Philip leads significant spiritual breakthroughs and is the only person identified as an Ephesians 4 evangelist in the New Testament. He was also later a leader in the church in Caesarea

- *Act 8:5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.*
- *Act 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.*

4. Phoebe was identified as a significant enough deaconess among churches that Paul appealed to the Romans to receive and support her.

*Rom 16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant (Diakonos) of the church which is at Cenchrea (2) that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and **that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you**; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*

5. The qualifications for elders and deacons reveal a very high standard.

Of the 25 qualifications listed for elders and deacons seen in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 Titus 1:5-9 Acts 6, seven of them applied to both (Not addicted to wine,

not fond of sordid gain, tested, above reproach, husband of one wife, good managers of children and household, and a good reputation).

Interaction between Elders and Deacons - One way to show the relationship between elders and deacons is to see the relationship between a husband and wife in a home. Paul says local churches operate like a natural household 1 Timothy 3:15. The husband is the head (leader), but the wife has a co-leader who carries great responsibility and administration in leading the home. The husband carries the final responsibility for the decisions (headship), yet the wife is fully involved and leads with him.

F. How the church responds to the leadership.

1. *Submitting to the leadership of the elders. Heb 13:17*
2. *Following their example. Heb 13:17*
3. *Expressing love and appreciation, praying for them, and helping them. 1 Thes 5:12-13*
4. *Being generous towards them means they don't have to live under unnecessary financial pressure. Gal 6:6, 1 Cor 9:9, 1 Tim 5:17-18*

G. Qualifications for Elders and Deacons.

1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 show the moral, domestic, and spiritual qualifications of those who are elders and deacons in the church.

One of the major qualifications has to do with the way they rule in their home. Paul said if they didn't know how to manage their own home well, they wouldn't be able to manage God's home the church. 1 Timothy 3:4-5. You might say this: "***The way they treat their bride is how they will treat His bride, and how they run their home is how they will run His home.***"

H. Setting in of Elders and Deacons (Ordination).

A simple way to summarize the NT examples of ordination is that it has three elements.

- 1. There is a grace and calling of God.**
- 2. It has recognition by a church body.** (Hard to say you are a doctor if you can't get patients).
- 3. It is confirmed by proven leadership (locally and extra locally).**

A good rule of thumb regarding proven ministries that confirm is "have they built a healthy church." In other words, it is hard to recognize grace in someone to build a local church if you have never had the experience of building one.

It is recognized by the existing leadership, the church body, and the extra local leaders of what they have the grace, calling, and character to do. They should have already been doing elder-type things without the title. It is local church-based and doesn't transfer from one body to another. It is based on the need of the local church.

Setting-in or ordination. This is a special time of setting needed and qualified leaders aside to do the work at hand. It is a time of impartation and recognition as they are set apart 1 Timothy 4:4. There must be carefulness of laying hands on a novice. 1 Timothy 5:2. If we lay hands too soon on someone who isn't proved they will tend to fall into the same condemnation that motivated Satan (the biggest thing is pride).

II. THE FIVE FOLD ASCENSION GIFT MINISTRIES OF EPHESIANS 4

Paul speaks of the gift ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher, as given to equip the church. This means their primary function is to train, enable, motivate, discipline, and instruct the church so that they will be able to carry out the work of the ministry of building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11,12).

We also note that God calls certain of the elders to those functions and that there seems to be an overlap of ministry at times. Eph 1:1; Gal 1:1; 2 Tim 1:11; I Pet 1:1,5:1

A. Apostle - "one who is sent" Eph 4:11; I Cor 12:28; Acts 14:23; 15:12; Gal 2:4-14

Apostolic ministry typically functions in:

- 1. Appointing and training leaders.*
- 2. Establishing churches.*
- 3. Strengthening existing churches.*
- 4. Administrating leadership.*
- 5. Formulating doctrine.*
- 6. Administrating churches.*

B. Prophet - "bubble up and gush forth"

A prophet is God's mouthpiece, speaking on His behalf.

A Prophet typically:

- 1. Works alongside apostles in foundational ministry.*** Eph 2:20; Acts 15:32
- 2. Receives revelation to direct, warn, inform, edify, exhort, and console God's people.*** Eph 3:3-5; Acts 15:32; 11:28; 13:1,2; 21:10,11

3. Sometimes, prophets receive revelation to foretell future events.
Acts 11:27-28

C. Evangelist - "a messenger of good, one who proclaims good news."

Philip's ministry is the best Scriptural example of an evangelist (the only one mentioned with this title). Acts 6:5; 8:26-40; 21:8

Philip was not a one-man show; he asked Peter and John to come and help his situation with the Samaritans.

Evangelists not only do the work themselves but are to equip the church to do the work.

D. Pastor - 'one who feeds and cares for the sheep'

1. He shepherds the local church. *Ezek 34:12-16*

2. He discerns false ministers. *Rev 2:2*

3. He is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. *Jn 10:10*

E. Teacher - "one who is skilled and gifted in the exposition of the Word of God."

1. He has insight into God's Word and an ability to convey God's message.

2. He has a concern for exactness, and also the ability to bring various parts of truth into a comprehensive, understandable whole.

All these ministries are primarily responsible for equipping the saints in the local churches. As we come into more insight into these ministries, we need to be flexible in how we view them. Our focus on these ministries should not be so much on clarity of title or guidelines but on function.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Much of the church world sees leadership as a "One Man/Woman Pastor/Leader." What are the problems with this approach and why is it so dangerous?

2. How does a typical evangelical or charismatic church see elders, and how is it different than the New Testament?

3. How does a typical evangelical or charismatic church see deacons, and how is it different than the New Testament?
4. What are some of the problems associated with local churches setting in leadership, but they do not believe in the 5-fold ministries in Ephesians 4:11-12?
5. How has the church world minimized a deacon's office in general?
6. When people see those in the congregation who seem to have good businesses or are stable and successful, they are often put in positions of governmental authority. What is the potential problem with this?
7. How would you advise someone in a church that doesn't believe in New Testament eldership or the 5-fold ministry?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

GODLY LEGACY

PREFACE: One of the most neglected areas among the people of God is the whole focus on Godly Legacy. A short-sightedness has come upon the contemporary church regarding the generations behind us. This starkly contrasts to the Biblical perspective that focuses on leaving a spiritual inheritance to the coming generations. The Bible speaks much about the idea of legacy, which is the handing down the faith to generations behind us. God has always been multigenerational in focus and commands us to be. There is no success without a successor.

I. GOD'S CALL UPON HIS PEOPLE IS MULTIGENERATIONAL IN FOCUS

- *Deuteronomy 6:1-7 Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that your son and grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments,... Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach (impress) them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you shall rise up.*
- *Psalms 78:1-6 Listen, O My people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth...I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works which He has done. For He establishes a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children.*

A. God always has a multigenerational perspective.

He refers to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He defines Himself generationally.

Throughout the Bible, God always considers things in light of how they affect generations. He views things generationally.

B. In the Bible, there is always a view toward lineage.

There is always a concern for the generations coming behind.

There was always a focus and mandate to deposit into the generations coming behind us.

- *Titus 2:1-7 Older men are to be,... teaching what is good, that they may encourage (train) the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored. Likewise (the old men) urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with all purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.*
- *2 Timothy 1:4 I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.*

C. God designs the church to be multigenerational in focus.

We are failing if we are not thinking about the generations behind us.

There is no success without a successor.

To be multigenerational, we must understand two words, Destiny and Legacy

- **Destiny** – What you are heading for, your goal, vision, your journey.
- **Legacy** – Anything handed down from an ancestor or predecessor. What you leave behind.

Christ's first instruction to Peter (an Apostle) after He rose from the dead and before He ascended was to feed the lambs (young sheep). *If you are too big or important to care for the lambs, you are too big and important.*

- *John 21:15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, {son} of John, do you love Me more than these?" He*

said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

- In the House of God, the younger generations behind us are not to be tolerated but celebrated. They are our future. Children are a gift of God and the blessing of the Lord.

II. TO BE MULTIGENERATIONAL IN FOCUS, WE MUST BEGIN TO THINK LIKE A PATRIARCH

A. Having a Patriarchal mindset

Patriarch – A Patriarch was a founding father, or ruling ancestor.

The Patriarchs were always thinking about the generations and lineage behind them. They were constantly concerned with the line of descent by which the covenant was perpetuated. They worked to make sure they succeeded. (Abraham - Genesis 15:1-19)

Having a Patriarchal mindset isn't a matter of age but focus.

The enemy's trick is to get us so focused on the current generation that we lose the seed.

B. There are to be no generation gaps in the House of God.

The prophetic picture of God's design is for the generations to be together. Zechariah 8:1-6 – The elderly and the children are together.

The New Testament exhortation outlined in Titus 2 - Older with the younger, teaching them.

C. The great danger of growing older with the spirit of the age instead of the Biblical design.

When people grow older, they isolate themselves from the generations in our culture.

Sometimes this is aided by an attitude in Christians as they get older that tries to preserve their generation instead of understanding their call to compel the coming generation.

Aspects of the spirit of the age in people as they grow older that rob them of the purpose of God for legacy in His house:

1. Failure to run your race to the end. "Draw Back spirit"

This is the opposite attitude Caleb had when at the age of 85. He still wanted to fight for the inheritance he was yet to possess. Joshua 14:10-13

Paul also had an attitude that wanted to run his race up until the end, which caused him to have a "press on" attitude. Philippians 3:7-15

Nothing is more damaging to the younger generations than to see someone older than them living a halfhearted commitment or someone who slipped into spiritual retirement mode.

2. Lack of concern about inheritance. This is exemplified in the bumper sticker "I'm spending my children's inheritance."

It is a retirement mentality – "I have paid my dues and sacrificed enough; now it is time for me to enjoy life.

When they get older, why do people withdraw from the younger generation and travel around the country looking at rocks and buildings when they have so much wisdom that the younger generation needs?

3. Short-term thinking.

4. Concern with preserving your generation instead of compelling the next.

You always fight to preserve your style of church, music, etc. The old is always better.

D. Three types of relationships every member should seek to walk in regarding legacy.

- **Paul** – The people ahead of you in the Lord are willing to build into your life. Not necessarily more intelligent or gifted than you, but are further down the road of life. These can be spiritual fathers
- **Barnabbas** – People who are brothers and sisters to you on equal footing. They are not impressed or intimidated by you. They are willing to keep you honest
- **Timothys** – Those spiritually younger than you in whom you are pouring your life and help.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Why are there generation gaps?
2. What are some practical things we can do to eliminate generation gaps?
3. How does our culture's views of retirement work against the Biblical multigenerational design?
4. Why do some older people not want to be around younger people?
5. How can older people recognize "Timothy's" in their lives?
6. How can "Timothy's" identify "Paul's" in their lives?
7. What should a younger saint do when they have no older saints in their life?
8. How would you advise a church/leader (there are many like this in America today) who only wants to be a young person church with an appealing youth branding?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

THE WORD OF GOD

PREFACE: The word of God is one of the most critical areas of the believer's life. The only sure revelation we have of God is through His Word. His Word contains everything He wants us to know about Himself, humankind, and what is required of us. The standard of His Word must measure all our ideas or revelations.

I. WHY IS THE WORD OF GOD IMPORTANT?

A. It is God's word to mankind.

- *2 Timothy 3:16-17 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (NASB)*

The purpose of the Bible is to reveal God. God has made known His nature, thoughts, feelings, and actions through the Bible. He also shows mankind's state, need, and what the Lord requires of him through it.

The Bible is our only objective basis of faith and practice. Without the written word, man would be left with an inadequate revelation of God that is subject to the whims of humanity's faulty reasoning and imagination. Objective - unbiased, not affected by personal feelings or prejudice, based on facts.

Without the Bible, man will tend to make God in his image.

B. It is active and alive.

- *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (NASB)*

C. It effectually works in those who believe.

- *1 Thessalonians 2:13 And for this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you*

accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. (NASB)

- *James 1:21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (NASB)*

D. It is good for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. 2 Tim 3:16

E. It cleanses and purifies us. Jn 15:3; Ps 119:9; Eph 5:26

II. THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. There is a single theme that runs throughout the Bible that shows a remarkable unity.

The theme of redemptive history through God's family, with Christ fulfilling God's plan, is the consistent theme.

- *John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; (NASB)*
- *John 5:46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. (NASB)*
- *Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (NASB)*

This remarkable unity indicates Divine inspiration, particularly when you consider that it is composed of 66 books written over approximately 1600 years by about 40 different men. No other collection of writings can claim such unity in such circumstances.

III. THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

A. The Bible does not merely contain the word of God; it is the word of God.

B. All of it is Divinely inspired and free of error.

If God inspires only part of it and is partially true, then we would be left the victim of constantly changing human intellectual guesses as to what part is the word of God.

The inspiration of God gives all Scripture. It is not merely a collection of human thoughts and experiences. The Spirit of God moved upon men to write.

The concept of God inspiring the Scriptures goes back to the original manuscripts and leads to the conclusion that error does not exist in the Scriptures as originally given. The Bible is the most copied, the most scrutinized historical book we have, and by far the most accurate.

IV. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. The Bible has always been viewed as an authority for belief and practice throughout Christendom.

Some groups give it only limited authority, subjecting it to human thought and decision, ecclesiastical structure, and church traditions.

The proper Biblical view is that the scriptures are the authority, given by the inspiration of God, and our objective basis for faith and practice.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. If God's word contains the revelation of Him that He desires us to know, what do you do when someone has a revelation that contradicts His word?
2. God's word is "our objective basis of faith and practice." What do you do when you have subjective feelings or emotions that contradict His word?
3. Paul indicates that God's word is "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:11-17), an offensive weapon. How do you use God's word/sword in Spiritual warfare? How or when did Jesus use the word of God as an offensive weapon?
4. God's word is like His language through which He communicates with us. How does that affect our ability to communicate well if we relate with someone but don't know their language?
5. The Bible says that His word is "a lamp (smaller light) to our feet and a light (big light like the sun) to our path" (Psalms 119:1-5). How does the Bible guide us like a smaller light for our steps and a bigger light (like the sun) in our overall path (walk)?

Foundations of Healthy Church Life

BECOMING A MISSIONAL PEOPLE

PREFACE: When we consider the idea of missions, a “missionary mystique” often robs God’s people of proper motivation. A mystique means “a special quality or air that makes somebody or something appear mysterious and special.” Most people think of missions as a special call for a few people who go to far away places and do extraordinary things. The truth is that mission is the call upon all the church. Every day, everyone is sent into the world on a mission trip to bring influence. Every day, far and near, across the street or the ocean. A wrong concept of missions develops a class distinction between special Christian Missionaries (unique people called to far away places) and the rest of us who live and work in everyday local places.

I. JESUS CALLED ALL HIS PEOPLE/CHURCH TO MISSIONS

A. In the same way Jesus was sent into the world on the Father’s mission, we are sent into the world on the Father’s mission

- *John 17:18-19 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*
- *Joh 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"*
- *Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses **both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**"*

B. Our call to missions is everyday, everywhere, all the time

Many incorrectly think they are only on a mission trip when they go elsewhere. The Biblical perspective is that we are on a mission trip every day from the time our feet hit the floor until the time we go back to bed. Every day, when we get up and interact with our family, go to work, go to school, or go to the marketplace, we are on a mission trip as ambassadors of Christ, trying to demonstrate the Kingdom and see humanity reconciled to God.

- *2Co 5:18-20 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... (20)*

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were appealing to us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

C. The call contains the idea of being salt and light

- *Mat 5:13-16 MKJV You are the salt of the earth,...(14) You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden... (16) Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven*

Light speaks of being sanctified and distinct (holy).

We are to demonstrate God's light through how we live and relate with people. We live differently under Christ's Lordship in our attitudes, behavior, and how we relate in our families, church, and workplaces.

The idea of salt speaks of our contact with and influence on others.

Salt had to be rubbed on things to do its work of preserving. We interact with people outside of Christ every day. Our relational interactions help us rub our salt on them to influence them with the Kingdom.

We can commit two errors in this call. We can so withdraw from the world that our salt can't rub on them. We can also be so immersed in the world that we lose our distinctive light. God wants us to walk in both.

D. The call is both far and near

- *Act 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

The idea of "both in" Jerusalem (locally), Judea and Samaria (closer geographic area), and the remotest part of the earth (across the oceans and to far away places) means it is going simultaneously. We are concerned and working simultaneously in both near and far areas, not one to the exclusion of the other.

We must avoid the two extremes of the "**missionary mystique**" (missions is only at far away places that few can go to) and the "parish mentality" that only sees their local area and doesn't care for the ends of the earth.

E. The call is to be a family on a mission

In the gospels, Jesus sent people out two by two

- *Mark 6:7 And He *summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Luke 10:1 Now after this, the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He was going to come.*

It was never God's will for man to be alone. God sends us out with a message and a friend. Jesus needed a small group of closely related people on His mission, and so do we.

We are to live the pattern of a family together on His mission

In the original creation mandate from the book of Genesis 1-2 is the foundation of missions (be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, rule over and subdue it). God's pattern in Genesis was to establish family relationships first, then sends them on a mission.

Traditional missions put forth an independent idea that we become superstar missionaries for Jesus. God isn't as interested in making superstars for Jesus but in building super people who will demonstrate and declare the gospel on mission.

There is a principle in Matthew 9-11 and other gospel accounts of how Jesus sent the disciples on mission trips. He sent people out in pairs, and later, He and the rest of the group joined them in work.

This has the vital connection of mission with the family He joins us to.

II. FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION IS MORE THAN JUST PREACHING

A. There are four post-resurrection commissioning of Jesus in the gospels

They are all part of the commissioning of Jesus. The church usually focuses on only two of the four.

- *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. (16) "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*
- *Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

Focusing on these two commissions has historically brought expressions of accomplishment through meetings, crusades, and rallies that include preaching the gospel, baptizing, proclaiming forgiveness of sins, and repentance.

B. The two commissions we often forget

- *Matthew 28:18-20 "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,*

baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you

- *John 21:15-17 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs." (16) ...He *said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." (17)...." Jesus *said to him, "Tend My sheep.*

Matthew and John's rendition of Jesus' commission had elements that are impossible to accomplish at events, crusades, and rallies.

In Matthew 28 making disciples and teaching them to observe all Christ commanded

It is a process not an event. Even now Jesus is still making us disciples and teaching us to observe all He commanded.

In John 21, caring for lambs (young) and sheep (older) is also an everyday process.

The Biblical perspective of God's people is that we are sheep who live in flocks that belong to the great shepherd Jesus. He delegates shepherds on earth to take care of those flocks.

- *1Pe 5:1-8 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder...(2) shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily,...(3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

For both the Matthew 28 and John 21 commissions to occur, it necessitates the establishment of local churches (local flocks of sheep) and the continued building of local churches where discipleship and tending the flock can occur.

III. LUKE 10 Matthew 9-11 PATTERN FOR MISSIONS

Perhaps the most significant mission field in the world is right under your nose. It is every day in our normal sphere of life.

A. Luke 10 Sending the Seventy, Mt 9-11 Sending the Twelve: The essence of their calling/function is extending God's Kingdom as they minister to people.

B. Seventy: *Luke 10:1-17 NASB Now after this, the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place*

where He Himself (with the others) was going to come. (2) And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ...(5) "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' (6) "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. (7) "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. 8) "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; (9) and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ...(16) "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." (17) The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

C. The Twelve: *Mat 9-11 9:35-38 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (36) Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. (37) Then He *said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. (38) "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

Mat 10:1-42 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.... 7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give....11 "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city... (remember that He sent them out two by two) 12 "As you enter the house, give it your greeting. 13 "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

It doesn't end with everybody just scattering out and doing their own thing. There was a sense of being yoked together (Jesus and the twelve) as they continuing to participate in the work. Jesus and the others began to go into these new places of labor.

Mat 11:1 When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities (the cities they had just went to).

Matthew Henry comments on this passage "Christ departed, *to teach and preach* in the cities whither he sent his disciples before him to *work miracles* (Mat 10:1-8), and so to raise people's expectations, and to make way for his entertainment"

D. Elements of the Luke 10 Matthew 9-11 pattern:

1. Out of the meeting and into the home - We need to meet people in their circle of life. Lk 10: 5-7 *"Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'* (6) *"If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.* (7) *"Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.* (Mt 10:11-13)

We then enter into receptive places with people.

- *Luk 10:8-9 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; (9) and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*

Mealtime in that day was the means of relating with people and eating food. Eating what is set before you means that you connect with people where they are. As we do that, we are to look for ways to bring healing, both physical and emotional, and healing from sin. It may be as simple as praying with someone about something. Most unbelievers will not refuse someone praying for them if you just ask. Jesus blessed people (unbelievers) by feeding them and healing them. He didn't withhold blessings because of their sin.

2. We are to bring blessing to people Luke 10:5, Mt 10:13 "Peace be to this house." - As we interact with people, we bring God's blessing of peace. It is first of all, releasing the Prince of Peace into the lives and atmosphere of the house. Giving the blessing of peace is not just flattery but a blessing. We encourage them with God's perspective. It has to do with speaking positive words to someone. It can be a compliment or a word of encouragement. The idea of a spoken blessing gives people a sense of hope. It isn't just flattery but has substance. God's blessing will be in stark contrast to what they hear regularly.

3. Find ways to bring healing and deliverance into their lives - *Luke 10:9,17 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'* ... (17) *The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."* We counsel with people, help dispel lies that are controlling them, and bring healing in all areas, physically, emotionally, and relationally. This is done through prayer, fellowship, and bringing the word of God. (Mt 10:1)

4. Proclaim the Kingdom (the rule of Christ) - *Luke 10:9,17 and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*(Mt 10:7-8) We labor to see Christ's rule explained and embraced in every area of their lives.

Speaking of the Kingdom isn't just giving the four points of salvation. It also brings up the positive testimonies of how the rule of Jesus in our lives or the

lives of others has brought life and change. Interacting, blessing and healing people help build a platform from which we speak of the Kingdom.

We also must look for ways to preach the gospel because it is the only way to the new birth and entry into Kingdom. *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

IV. THE SUPERNATURAL AND MISSIONS

- *1Co 4:20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.*
- *1Th 1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.*

A. We must not forget the supernatural

We serve a supernatural God who has given us supernatural power and a supernatural gospel. Missions contain good works but also works of power. We need both. It is feeding the hungry, serving practical needs, and bringing justice and relief to suffering, but it is also healing the sick, casting out devils, and seeing God's supernatural works of faith with power.

- *2Th 1:11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,*

B. God's power is not just to happen in church meetings and buildings but in the marketplace

There were 43 - Supernatural occurrences in the book of Acts (Angels moving, Spirit moving, healing, deliverances, supernatural protection, visions, trances, etc.), 35 occurred in marketplace and homes, 7 occurred at a gathering of the church, 1 occurred in a religious building (Synagogue).

C. God wants to release the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit through His people

It begins with drinking the Spirit from Jesus and expecting it to flow through us.

- *John 7:37-39..., "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his*

innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (39) But this He spoke of the Spirit.

Prayer for people is a critical touchpoint to releasing supernatural power. We need to lay hands on people and pray outside of church buildings expecting them to be healed, delivered, and filled with the Spirit. We pray in faith expecting God's power to flow through us.

We also need to expect Spiritual gifts to flow in everyday life at work and in the marketplace. We look for prophetic words, words of knowledge, words of wisdom and supernatural utterances.

- *Eph 6:19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How does the "Missionary Mystique" (Missions is for a few special people who work in far away places) affect the motivation for missions in the everyday church member?
2. What are the main ideas of the Matthew 9-11, Luke 9-10 pattern of mission?
3. How can we cultivate moving in God's supernatural power more on mission?
4. Why does eating together with others seem so crucial to missions? The entire book of Luke reveals Jesus going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.
5. What practical things can you do regularly to be more effective in your neighborhood?
6. How have Christians minimized the idea of missions in their workplace? What has been the result?

