

# The Purpose & Function of the Church

He that saith  
he abideth in Him  
ought himself also  
so to walk, even as He walked:

1 John 2:6

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## Forward

### The purpose and function of the church

#### **Acts 2:42**

They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer. The early disciples devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to prayer.

**The purpose of the church is to worship God.**

#### **Luke 4:8**

Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God; serve only him.' "

**Those of the church are to study God's word.**

#### **2 Timothy 2:15**

Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

**Those of the church are to love one another.**

#### **John 13:35**

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

**Those of the church are to help one another.**

#### **Galatians 6:2**

Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

**They should partake of baptism and the Lord's Supper**

### **Luke 22:19-20**

Then he took a loaf of bread; and when he had thanked God for it, he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you—an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you.

**The church should learn to live as godly people.**

### **Titus 2:11-12**

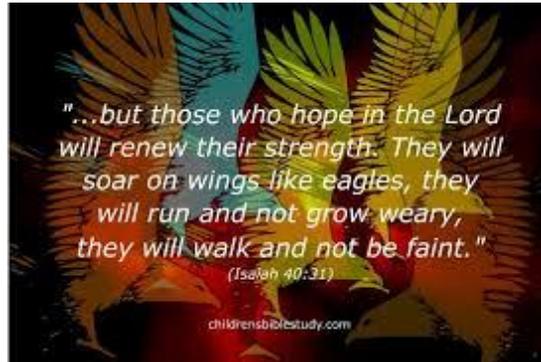
For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. [12]  
And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God,

**The church should be equipped to evangelize the world.**

### **Ephesians. 4:12**

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ,

# Chapter 1



**The church needs everyone in order to function effectively.**

## **Exodus 40:17-38**

The physical care of the tabernacle required a long list of tasks, and each was important to the work of God's house. This principle is important to remember today when God's house is the church.

There are many seemingly unimportant tasks that must be done to keep your church building maintained. Washing dishes, painting walls, or shoveling snow may not seem very spiritual. But they are vital to the ministry of the church and have an important role in our worship of God.

The tabernacle was God's home on earth. He filled it with his glory—the overpowering sense of his presence.

Almost 500 years later, Solomon built the temple, which replaced the tabernacle as the central place of worship. God also filled the temple with his glory (2 Chronicles. 5:13-14).

But when Israel turned from God, his glory and presence departed from the temple and it was destroyed by invading armies (2 Kings 25).

The temple was rebuilt in 516 B.C. God's glory returned in even greater splendor nearly five centuries later when Jesus Christ, God's Son, entered it and taught. When Jesus was crucified, God's glory again left the temple.

However, God no longer needed a physical building after Jesus rose from the dead. God's temple now is his church, the body of believers.

The Israelites were once Egyptian slaves making bricks without straw. Here they were following the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, carrying the tabernacle they had built for God.

Exodus begins in gloom and ends in glory. This parallels our progress through the Christian life. We begin as slaves to sin, are redeemed by God, and end our pilgrimage living with God forever. The lessons the Israelites learned along the way we also need to learn.

### **Prosperity dulls spiritual sensitivity of the church**

#### **Deuteronomy 6:10-13**

<sup>10</sup> And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land that he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou built not,

<sup>11</sup> And houses full of all good things, which thou filled not, and wells dug, which thou dug not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou planted not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

<sup>12</sup> Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

<sup>13</sup> Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

### **The people should not take advantage of their ministers.**

#### **Deuteronomy 18:1-8**

Moses warned the people not to forget God when they entered the promised land

and became prosperous. Prosperity, more than poverty, can dull our spiritual vision because it tends to make us self-sufficient and eager to acquire still more of everything—except God. The same thing can happen in our church. Once we become successful in terms of numbers, programs, and buildings, we can easily become self-sufficient and less sensitive to our need for God. This leads us to concentrate on self-preservation rather than thankfulness and service to God

### **Selecting positions of responsibility in the church**

#### **2 Chronicles 13:9**

Jeroboam's army was cursed because of the golden calves they carried with them. It was as though they had put sin into a physical form so they could haul it around. Consider carefully the things you cherish.

If you value anything more than God, it becomes your golden calf and will one day drag you down. Let go of anything that interferes with your relationship with God.

Abijah criticized Jeroboam's low standards in appointing priests. Anyone is qualified to represent a god that is worthless.

To represent the Lord God Almighty, however, a person must live by God's standards, not man's. Those appointed to positions of responsibility in your church should not be selected merely because they volunteer, are influential, or are highly educated. Instead they should demonstrate sound doctrine, dedication to God, and strong spiritual character

### **The church is a refuge.**

#### **Psalm 84:1, 4**

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

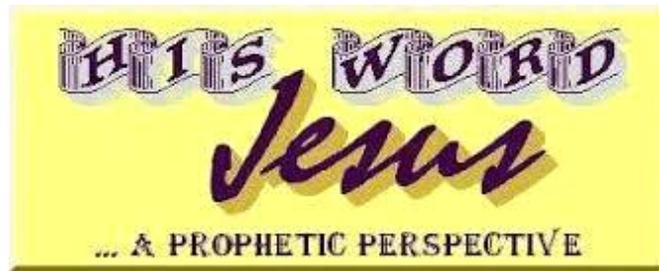
### **The church should make all they do an act of praise.**

### **Psalm 134:1-3**

Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.



## **A false perspectives of the church**

### **Jeremiah 7:9-11**

There are several parallels between how the people of Judah viewed their temple and how many today view their churches. (1) *They didn't make the temple part of their daily living.* We go to beautiful churches well-prepared for worship, but often we don't take the presence of God with us through the week. (2) *The image of the temple became more important than the substance of faith.* The image of going to church and belonging to a group can become more important than a life changed for God. (3) *The people used their temple as a sanctuary.* Many use religious affiliation as a hideout, thinking it will protect them from evil and problems.

Jesus used these words from Jeremiah 7:11 in clearing the temple (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). This passage applied to the evil in the temple in Jesus' day as well as in Jeremiah's. God's tabernacle had been at Shiloh, but Shiloh had been abandoned (Psalm 78:60; Jeremiah 26:6). If God did not preserve Shiloh because the tabernacle was there, why would he preserve Jerusalem because of the temple?

## **The rock upon which Jesus would build his church**

### **Matthew 16:18**

The rock on which Jesus would build his church has been identified as:  
Jesus himself (his work of salvation by dying for us on the cross);  
Peter (the first great leader in the church at Jerusalem);

The confession of faith that Peter gave and that all subsequent true believers should give. It seems most likely that the rock refers to Peter as the leader of the church

(for his function, not necessarily his character). Just as Peter had revealed the true identity of Christ, so Jesus revealed Peter's identity and role.

Later, Peter reminds Christians that they are the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-6).

All believers are joined into this church by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, the same faith that Peter expressed here (see also Ephes. 2:20-21). Jesus praised Peter for his confession of faith. It is faith like Peter's that is the foundation of Christ's kingdom.

### **How the church should resolve conflicts.**

#### **Matthew 18:18**

<sup>18</sup> Verily I say unto you, whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

### **Jesus the cornerstone of the church.**

This ***binding and loosing*** refers to the decisions of the church in conflicts. Among believers, there is no court of appeals beyond the church. Ideally, the church's decisions should be God-guided and based on discernment of his Word. Believers have the responsibility, therefore, to bring their problems to the church, and the church has the responsibility to use God's guidance in seeking to resolve conflicts. Handling problems God's way will have an impact now and for eternity.

#### **Matthew 21:42**

Jesus said unto them, did ye never read in the scriptures,  
The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become  
the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is  
marvelous in our eyes?

Jesus refers to himself as "the stone the builders rejected." Although Jesus was

rejected by many of his people, he will become the capstone, or cornerstone, of his new building, the church (see Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7).

### **Seeking leadership positions in the church.**

#### **Matthew 23:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

<sup>6</sup> And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

<sup>7</sup> And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Phylacteries were little leather boxes containing Scripture verses. Very religious people wore these boxes on their forehead and arms in order to obey Deut. 6:8 and Exodus 13:9, 16. But the phylacteries had become more important for the status they gave than for the truth they contained.

Jesus again exposed the hypocritical attitudes of the religious leaders. They knew the Scriptures but did not live by them. They didn't care about *being* holy—just *looking* holy in order to receive the people's admiration and praise. Today, like the Pharisees, many people who know the Bible do not let it change their lives. They say they follow Jesus, but they don't live by his standards of love. People who live this way are hypocrites. We must make sure that our actions match our beliefs.

People desire positions of leadership not only in business but also in the church. It is dangerous when love for the position grows stronger than loyalty to God. This is what happened to the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Jesus is not against all leadership—we need Christian leaders—but against leadership that serves itself rather than others.

### **The importance of regular church worship**

## **Luke 4:16**

<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Synagogues were very important in Jewish religious life. During the exile when the Jews no longer had their temple, synagogues were established as places of worship on the Sabbath and as schools for young boys during the week. Synagogues continued to exist even after the temple was rebuilt. A synagogue could be set up in any town where there were at least ten Jewish families. One leader and an assistant administered it. At the synagogue, the leader often would invite a visiting rabbi to read from the Scriptures and to teach.

Jesus went to the synagogue “as was his custom.” Even though he was the perfect Son of God, and his local synagogue undoubtedly left much to be desired, Jesus attended services every week. His example makes our excuses for not attending church sound weak and self-serving. Make regular worship a part of your life.

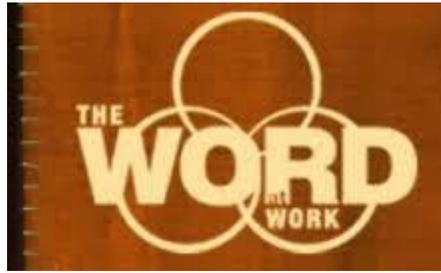
### **Does not shelter us from evil?**

## **Luke 4:33**

And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a Spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud Voice.

A man possessed by a demon was in the synagogue where Jesus was teaching. This man made his way into the place of worship and verbally abused Jesus. It is naive to think that we will be sheltered from evil in the church. Satan is happy to invade our presence wherever and whenever he can. But Jesus’ authority is much greater than Satan’s; and where Jesus is present, demons cannot stay for long.

## Chapter 3



### Supporting those who minister in the church

#### Luke 2:7

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Bands of cloth were used to keep a baby warm and give it a sense of security. These cloths were believed to protect its internal organs. The custom of wrapping infants this way is still practiced in many Midwestern countries.

This mention of the manger is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs (mangers) carved into the rock walls. Despite popular Christmas card pictures, the surroundings were dark and dirty.

This was not the atmosphere the Jews expected as the birthplace of the Messiah King. They thought their promised Messiah would be born in royal surroundings. We should not limit God by our expectations.

He is at work wherever he is needed in our sin-darkened and dirty world.

Although our first picture of Jesus is as a baby in a manger, it must not be our last. The Christ-child in the manger has been made into a beautiful Christmas scene, but we cannot leave him there.

This tiny, helpless baby lived an amazing life, died for us, ascended to heaven, and will come back to this earth as King of kings. Christ will rule the world and judge

all people according to their decisions about him.

### **Attending church for the wrong reasons.**

#### **John 2:14-16**

And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the Those who changed money.

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

The temple area was always crowded during Passover with thousands of out-of-town visitors. The religious leaders crowded it even further by allowing money changers and merchants to set up booths in the court of the Gentiles.

They rationalized this practice as a convenience for the worshipers and as a way to make money for temple upkeep. But the religious leaders did not seem to care that the court of the Gentiles was so full of merchants that foreigners found it difficult to worship. And worship was the main purpose for visiting the temple. No wonder Jesus was angry!

The temple tax had to be paid in local currency, so foreigners had to have their money changed. But the money-changers often would charge exorbitant exchange rates.

The people also were required to make sacrifices for sins. Because of the long journey, many could not bring their own animals.

Some who brought animals would have them rejected for imperfections. So animal merchants would do a flourishing business in the temple courtyard. The price of sacrificial animals was much higher in the temple area than elsewhere.

Jesus was angry at the dishonest, greedy practices of the money changers and merchants, and he particularly disliked their presence on the temple grounds. They were making a mockery of God's house of worship.

John records this first clearing, or cleansing, of the temple. A second clearing occurred at the end of Jesus' ministry, about three years later, and that event is recorded in Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48.

God's temple was being misused by people who had turned it into a marketplace. They had forgotten, or didn't care, that God's house is a place of worship, not a place for making a profit.

Our attitude toward the church is wrong if we see it as a place for personal contacts or business advantage. Make sure you attend church to worship God.

Jesus was obviously angry at the merchants who exploited those who had come to God's house to worship. There is a difference between uncontrolled rage and righteous indignation—yet both are called anger.

We must be very careful how we use the powerful emotion of anger. It is right to be angry about injustice and sin; it is wrong to be angry over trivial personal offenses.

Jesus made a whip and chased out the money-changers.

Does his example permit us to use violence against wrongdoers? Certain authority is granted to some, but not to all.

For example, the authority to use weapons and restrain people is granted to police officers, but not to the general public.

The authority to imprison people is granted to judges, but not to individual citizens.

Jesus had God's authority, something we cannot have. While we want to live like Christ, we should never try to claim his authority where it has not been given to us.

### **Love is contagious in the church.**

#### **Acts 2:47**

Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

A healthy Christian community attracts people to Christ. The Jerusalem church's zeal for worship and brotherly love was contagious. A healthy, loving church will grow in numbers. What are you doing to make your church the kind of place that will attract others to Christ?

**Some are attracted to the church for wrong reasons?**

### **Acts 5:14**

And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both (men and women.)

What makes Christianity attractive? It is easy to be drawn to churches because of programs, good speakers, size, beautiful facilities, or fellowship.

People were attracted to the early church by expressions of God's power at work, the generosity, sincerity, honesty, and unity of the members, and the character of the leaders.

Have our standards slipped? God wants to add believers to his *church*, not just newer and better programs or larger and fancier facilities.

**The church should utilize members' abilities and gifts effectively.**

### **Acts 6:2-4**

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

The Twelve" are the 11 original disciples and Matthias, who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26).

As the early church increased in size, so did its needs. One great need was to organize the distribution of food to the poor.

The apostles needed to focus on preaching, so they chose others to administer the food program. Each person has a vital part to play in the life of the church.

If you are in a position of leadership and find yourself overwhelmed by responsibilities, determine *your* God-given abilities and priorities and then find others to help.

If you are not in leadership, you have gifts that can be used by God in various areas of the church's ministry. Offer these gifts in service to him.

This administrative task was not taken lightly. Notice the requirements for the men who were to handle the food program: full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

People who carry heavy responsibilities and work closely with others should have these qualities. We must look for spiritually mature and wise men and women to lead our churches.

The apostles' priorities were correct. The ministry of the Word should never be neglected because of administrative burdens. Pastors should not try, or be expected to try, to do everything. Instead, the work of the church should be spread out among its members.

### **1 Corinthians 1:17**

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

When Paul said that Christ didn't send him to baptize, he wasn't minimizing the importance of baptism.

Baptism was commanded by Jesus himself (Matthew 28:19) and practiced by the early church (Acts 2:41).

Paul was emphasizing that no one person should do everything. Paul's gift was preaching, and that's what he did.

**Christian ministry should be a team effort; no preacher or teacher is a complete link between God and people, and no individual can do all that the apostles did. We must be content with the contribution God has given us to make, and carry it out wholeheartedly.**

Some speakers use impressive words, but they are weak on content. Paul stressed solid content and practical help for his listeners.

He wanted them to be impressed with his message, not just his style.

You don't need to be a great speaker with a large vocabulary to share the gospel effectively.

The persuasive power is in the story, not the storyteller. Paul was not against those who carefully prepare what they say (see 1 Cor. 2:6), but against those who try to impress others only with their own knowledge or speaking ability.

**The work of the church should be spread out among  
Many.**

**Acts 6:4**

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

The ministry of the Word should never be neglected because of administrative burdens. Pastors should not try, or be expected to try, to do everything. Instead, the work of the church should be spread out among its members.

**1 Corinthians 3:7-9**

So then neither is he that plants a thing, neither he that waters; but God that giveth the increase.

Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, you are God's buildings.

God's work involves many different individuals with a variety of gifts and abilities. There are no superstars in this task, only team members performing their own special roles.

We can become useful members of God's team by setting aside our desires to receive glory for what we do. Don't seek the praise that comes from people—it is comparatively worthless.

Instead, seek approval from God.

### **The role of elders in early church.**

#### **Titus 1:5**

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Crete, a small island in the Mediterranean Sea, had a large population of Jews.

The churches there were probably founded by Cretan Jews who had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:11) more than 30 years before Paul wrote this letter.

The unfinished work refers to establishing correct teaching and appointing elders in every town.

Paul had appointed elders in various churches during his journeys (Acts 14:23). He could not stay in each church, but he knew that these new churches needed strong spiritual leadership.

The men chosen were to lead the churches by teaching sound doctrine, helping believers mature spiritually, and equipping them to live for Jesus Christ despite opposition.

Paul briefly described some qualifications that the elders or overseers should have.

Paul had given Timothy a similar set of instructions for the church in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:22).

**Notice that most of the qualifications involve character,  
Rather than knowledge or skill.**

A person's life-style and relationships provide a window into his or her character. Consider these qualifications as you evaluate a person for a position of leadership in your church.

It is important to have leaders who can effectively preach God's Word, but it is even more important to have those who can live out God's Word and be examples for others to follow.

### **1 Peter 5:1**

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Elders were church officers providing supervision, protection, discipline, instruction, and direction for the other believers.

Elder simply means "older." Both Greeks and Jews gave positions of great honor to wise older men, and the Christian church continued this pattern of leadership. Elders carried great responsibility, and they were expected to be good examples.

Peter, one of Jesus' 12 disciples, was one of the three who saw Christ's glory at the transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13; 2 Peter 1:16-18).

Often the spokesman for the apostles, Peter witnessed Jesus' death and resurrection, preached at Pentecost, and became a pillar of the Jerusalem church.

But writing to the elders, he identified himself as a fellow elder, not a superior. He asked them to "be shepherds of God's flock," exactly what Jesus had told him to do (John 21:15-17).

Peter was taking his own advice as he worked along with the other elders in caring for God's faithful people. His identification with the elders is a powerful example of Christian leadership, where authority is based on service, not power (Mark 10:42-45).

### **The importance of the churches prayers.**

#### **Acts 12:5**

But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

Peter was arrested during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the week-long festival directly following Passover. This was a strategic move, since more Jews were in the city than usual, and Herod could impress the most people.

Herod's plan undoubtedly was to execute Peter, but the believers were praying for Peter's safety. The earnest prayer of the church significantly affected the outcome of these events. Prayer changes things, so pray often and with confidence.

### **Handling conflicts within the church**

#### **Acts 15:2**

Paul and Barnabas, disagreeing with them, argued Forcefully, and at length. Finally, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, and were accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.

We see both internal and external problems facing the early church. Inside, there was dishonesty (Acts 5:1-11) and administrative headaches (Acts 6:1-7).

Outside, the church was being pressured by persecution. While church leaders were careful and sensitive in dealing with the internal problems, there was not much they could do to prevent the external pressures. Through it all, the leaders kept their focus on what was most important—spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Galatians 2:2

I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I talked privately with the leaders of the church.

## Chapter 4



**Believers must abide by church decisions.**

## Acts 15:2

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

The question of whether the Gentile believers should obey the laws of Moses to be saved was an important one. The controversy intensified largely due to the success of the new Gentile churches.

The conservatives in the Jerusalem church were led by converted Pharisees.

(Acts 15:5) who preferred a legalistic religion to one based on faith alone.

If the conservatives had won, the Gentiles would have been required to be circumcised and converted to Judaism.

This would have seriously confined Christianity to simply being another sect within Judaism. There is something of a "Pharisee" in each one of us. We may unwittingly mistake upholding tradition, structure, and legal requirements for

obeying God. Make sure the gospel brings freedom and life to those you are trying to reach.

It is helpful to see how the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem resolved their conflict:

- (1) The church in Antioch sent a delegation to help seek a solution;
- (2) The delegates met with the church leaders to give their reports and set another date to continue the discussion;
- (3) Paul and Barnabas gave their report;
- (4) James summarized the reports and drew up the decision;
- (5) Everyone agreed to abide by the decision;
- (6) The council sent a letter with delegates back to Antioch to report the decision.

**This is a wise way to handle conflicts within the church.**

Problems must be confronted, and all sides of the argument must be given a fair hearing. The discussion should be held in the presence of leaders who are spiritually mature and trustworthy to make wise decisions. Everyone should then abide by the decisions.

**The church should show love to entire community.**

### **Revelation 2:5**

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Paul had once commended the church at Ephesus for its love for God and others (Ephes. 1:15), but many of the church founders had died, and many of the second-generation believers had lost their zeal for God.

They were a busy church—the members did much to benefit themselves and the community—but they were acting out of the wrong motives. Work for God must be motivated by love for God or it will not last.

Just as when a man and woman fall in love, so also new believers rejoice at their newfound forgiveness. But when we lose sight of the seriousness of sin, we begin to lose the thrill of our forgiveness (see 2 Peter 1:9).

In the first steps of your Christian life, you may have had enthusiasm without knowledge. Do you now have knowledge without enthusiasm? Both are necessary if we are to keep love for God intense and untarnished (see Hebrews 10:32, 35).

For Jesus to “remove your lampstand from its place” would mean the church would cease to be an effective church. Just as the seven-branched candlestick in the temple gave light for the priests to see, the churches were to give light to their surrounding communities.

But Jesus warned them that their lights could go out. In fact, Jesus himself would extinguish any light that did not fulfill its purpose. The church had to repent of its sins.

**Notice the source of many of the church's problems.**

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-17**

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Know you not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

**The Holy Spirit within you is God's temple.**

**1 Corinthians 1:17-18**

For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speeches and high-sounding ideas, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

I know very well how foolish the message of the cross sounds to those who are on the road to destruction. But we who are being saved recognize this message as the very power of God.

**Having favorite leaders causes division.**

**1 Corinthians 4:6-7**

Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to the Scriptures, you won't brag about one of your leaders at the expense of another.

What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?

How easy it is for us to become attached to a spiritual leader. When someone has helped us, it's natural to feel loyalty. But Paul warns against having such pride in our favorite leaders that we cause divisions in the church. Any true spiritual leader is a representative of Christ and has nothing to offer that God hasn't given him or her. Don't let your loyalty cause strife, slander, or broken relationships. Make sure that your deepest loyalties are to Christ and not to his human agents.

Those who spend more time debating church leadership than declaring Christ's message don't have Christ as their top priority.

**A church cannot tolerate sin.**

**Revelation 2:2**

"I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars.

Over a long period of time, the church in Ephesus had steadfastly refused to tolerate sin among its members.

This was not easy in a city noted for immoral sexual practices associated with the worship of the goddess Artemis.

We also are living in times of widespread sin and sexual immorality. It is popular to be open-minded toward many types of sin, calling them personal choices or alternative life-styles.

But when the body of believers begins to tolerate sin in the church, it is lowering the standards and compromising the church's witness. Remember that God's approval is infinitely more important than the world's.

Christ commended the church at Ephesus for:

- (1) Working hard,
- (2) Persevering,
- (3) Resisting sin
- (4) Critically examining the claims of false apostles, and
- (5) Enduring hardships without becoming weary.

Every church should have these characteristics. But these good efforts should spring from our love for Jesus Christ.

Both Jesus and John stressed love for one another as an authentic proof of the gospel (John 13:34; 1 John 3:18-19).

In the battle to maintain sound teaching and moral and doctrinal purity, it is possible to lose a charitable spirit.

Prolonged conflict can weaken or destroy our patience and affection. In defending the faith, guard against any structure or rigidity that weakens love.

### **How to handle church discipline**

#### **Titus 3:9-11**

Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These kinds of things are useless and a waste of time.

If anyone is causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with that person. For people like that have turned away from the truth. They are sinning, and they condemn themselves.

Paul warned Titus, as he warned Timothy, not to get involved in foolish and unprofitable arguments (2 Tim. 2:14).

This does not mean we should refuse to study, discuss, and examine different interpretations of difficult Bible passages.

Paul is warning against petty quarrels, not honest discussion that leads to wisdom. As foolish arguments develop, it is best to turn the discussion back to a helpful direction or politely excuse yourself.

The false teachers were basing their heresies on genealogies and speculations about the law (see 1 Tim. 1:3-4). Similar to the methods used by false teachers in

Ephesus and Colossal they were building their case on genealogies of angels.

We should avoid false teachers, not even bothering to react to their pretentious positions. Our overreaction can sometimes give more attention to their points of view.

A person must be warned when he or she is causing division that threatens the unity of the church.

This warning should not be a heavy-handed action, but it is intended to correct the individual's divisive nature and restore him or her to fellowship.

A person who refuses to be corrected should be put outside the fellowship. As Paul said, that person is “self-condemned”—he or she is sinning and knows it.

## Chapter 5



**Sin in the church affects all members.**

**When is it necessary to cast someone out of the church?**

### **1 Corinthians 5:5**

To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

“Hand this man over to Satan” means to exclude him from the fellowship of believers. Without the spiritual support of Christians, this man would be left alone with his sin and Satan, and perhaps this emptiness would drive him to repentance.

“That the sinful nature may be destroyed” states the hope that the experience would bring him to God to destroy his sinful nature through repentance.

*Sinful nature* could mean his body or flesh (see the NIV text note). This alternative translation would imply that Satan would afflict him physically and thus bring him to God. Putting someone out of the church should be a last resort in disciplinary action.

It should not be done out of vengeance, but out of love, just as parents punish children to correct and restore them. The church’s role should be to help, not hurt, offenders, motivating them to repent of their sins and to return to the fellowship of

the church.

### **The importance of each member.**

#### **1 Corinthians 12:14-24**

Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. [15] If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am only an ear and not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body?

Suppose the whole body was an eye—then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything?

But God made our bodies with many parts, and he has put each part just where he wants it.

What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary.

And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect from the eyes of others those parts that should not be seen, while other parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity.

#### **James 5:14-15**

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

And their prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make them well. And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

James is referring to someone who is incapacitated physically. In Scripture, oil was both a medicine (see the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37) and a symbol of the Spirit of God (as used in anointing kings, see 1 Samuel 16:1-13). Thus oil can represent both the medical and the spiritual spheres of life. Christians should not separate the physical and the spiritual—Jesus Christ is Lord over both the body and the spirit.

People in the church are not alone. Members of Christ's body should be able to count on others for support and prayer, especially when they are sick or suffering. The elders should be on call to respond to the illness of any member, and the church should stay alert to pray for the needs of all its members.

“The prayer offered in faith” does not refer to the faith of the sick person, but to the faith of the people praying. God heals, faith doesn't, and all prayers are subject to God's will.

But our prayers are part of God's healing process. That is why God often waits for our prayers of faith before intervening to heal a person.

**There is no place for disorder in the church.**

### **1 Corinthians 14:23**

Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting and hear everyone talking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy.

The way the Corinthians was speaking in tongues was helping no one because believers did not understand what was being said, and unbelievers thought that the people speaking in tongues were crazy.

Speaking in tongues was supposed to be a *sign* to unbelievers (as it was in Acts 2). After speaking in tongues, believers were supposed to explain what was said and give the credit to God.

The unsaved people would then be convinced of a spiritual reality and motivated to look further into the Christian faith. While this is one way to reach unbelievers,

## Chapter 6



### **Church people who don't believe in Jesus.**

#### **1 Cor. 15:2**

And it is this Good News that saves you if you firmly believe it—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Most churches contain people who do not yet believe. Some are moving in the direction of belief, and others are simply pretending. Imposters, however, are not to be removed (see Matthew 13:28-29), for that is the Lord's work alone.

The Good News about Jesus Christ will save us *if* we firmly believe it and faithfully follow it.

### **Church discipline should allow for restoration.**

#### **2 Cor. 2:5-7**

I am not overstating it when I say that the man who caused all the trouble hurt your entire church more than he hurt me. He was punished enough when most of you were united in your judgment against him. Now it is time to forgive him and comfort him. Otherwise he may become so discouraged that

he won't be able to recover.

Paul explained that it was time to forgive the man who had been punished by the church and had subsequently repented.

He needed forgiveness, acceptance, and comfort. Satan would gain an advantage if they permanently separated this man from the congregation rather than forgiving and restoring him.

This may have been the man who had required the disciplinary action described in 1 Cor. 5, or he may have been the chief opponent of Paul who had caused Paul the anguish described in 2 Cor. 2:1-11.

The sorrowful letter had finally brought about the repentance of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:8-14), and their discipline of the man had led to his repentance.

Church discipline should seek restoration. Two mistakes in church discipline should be avoided—being too lenient and not correcting mistakes, or being too harsh and not forgiving the sinner. There is a time to confront and a time to comfort.

### **The church is not a building but people.**

#### **Ephes. 2:19-22**

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

A church building is sometimes called God's house. In reality, God's household is

not a building, but a group of people. He lives in us and shows himself to a watching world through us. People can see that God is love and that Christ is Lord as we live in harmony with each other and in accordance with what God says in his Word. We are citizens of God's kingdom and members of his household.

### **The responsibility of the church.**

Ephes. 4:12-13

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

God has given his church an enormous responsibility—to make disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:18-20). This involves preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building, and many other tasks. If we had to fulfill this command as individuals, we might as well give up without trying—it would be impossible. But God calls us as members of his body. Some of us can do one task; some can do another. Together we can obey God more fully than any of us could alone. It is a human tendency to overestimate what we can do by ourselves and to underestimate what we can do as a group. But as the body of Christ, we can accomplish more together than we would dream possible working by ourselves. Working together, the church can express the fullness of Christ (see the note on +Ephes. 3:19).

### **The body of believers compensates for individuals' mistakes.**

#### **Ephes. 4:15-16**

Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Some Christians fear that any mistake will destroy their witness for the Lord. They see their own weaknesses, and they know that many non-Christians seem to have stronger character than they do. How can we grow up into Christ?

The answer is that Christ forms us into a body—into a group of individuals who are united in their purpose and in their love for one another and for the Lord.

## Chapter 7



### Evil forces against the church

#### **Ephes. 6:12**

For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

These who are not “flesh and blood” are demons over whom Satan has control. They are not mere fantasies—they are very real. We face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat Christ’s church. When we believe in Christ, these beings become our enemies, and they try every device to turn us away from him and back to sin.

Although we are assured of victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns, because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord’s side. We need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this by giving us his Holy Spirit within us and his armor surrounding us.

If you feel discouraged, remember Jesus’ words to Peter: “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

## **The role of deacons.**

### **1 Timothy 3:8-13**

In the same way, deacons must be people who are respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers and must not be greedy for money.

They must be committed to the revealed truths of the Christian faith and must live with a clear conscience. Before they are appointed as deacons, they should be given other responsibilities in the church as a test of their character and ability. If they do well, then they may serve as deacons.

In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not speak evil of others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.

A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

## **How church leaders should be chosen.**

### **1 Timothy 5:22**

Never be in a hurry about appointing an elder. Do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Paul says that a church should never be hasty about choosing its leaders, especially the pastor, because we may overlook major problems or sins. It is a serious responsibility to choose church leaders.

They must have strong faith and be morally upright, having the qualities described in 1 Tim. 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Not everyone who wants to be a church leader is eligible. Be certain of an applicant's qualifications before asking him or her to take a leadership position.

## **Dealing with wealthy church members.**

### **1 Timothy 6:17-19**

Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Tell them to use their money to do good for others. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them.

By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

### **Those in the church who are rich**

#### **1 Tim. 6:17-19**

Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Tell them to use their money to do well. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them.

By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life. They will not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

### **Summary:**

A church must deal with every phase of life.

Only faith in a living God can direct each life into God's fullness.

If you do not know God's calling on your life,

Accept his forgiveness, and in faith allow him to direct you.

### **References:**

**Holy Bible: King James Translation**

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**Additional comments and charts are taken from:**

*Life Application Study Bible. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print*

<sup>9</sup>That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved.

<sup>10</sup>For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

