

The Gospel and Culture Part 2: The Church and Why It's Essential

Goals of the Series

- ❖ To submit fully to the teaching from God's Word
- ❖ To discover what God's Word says about modern cultural topics
- ❖ How are we as Christians to engage with each of these topics
- ❖ Become equipped to take the Gospel in the culture
- ❖ Let the Word of God be our ONLY source of authority

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. - 1 John 2:15-17

"I believe that one reason why the Church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and [you] will find a little marginal note [that says]: 'In this age [people] could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended.' Never were there good times when the Church and the world were joined in marriage with one another." Charles Spurgeon

Goals of this Particular Night

- ❖ Discover why the Church is essential
- ❖ What is "Church?"
- ❖ What is a Church supposed to do?
- ❖ Who's in charge?
- ❖ What's my role to play now?

Questions/concerns/challenges

- ❖ Church isn't that important
- ❖ Church is full of hypocrites
- ❖ Churches tend to be cliquish
- ❖ Some Churches are extremely different from other Churches
- ❖ We tend to choose a Church based on our comforts
- ❖ What kind of Church honors God above all?
- ❖ How do I pick the right Church?
- ❖ Is Church really that essential?

What is a Church? (The Gospel defined)

- ❖ ἐκκλησία - an assembly, congregation, literally – “called out ones”
 - Appears 114 times in the NT, 2 times referring to OT assembly, 3 times referencing secular assembly, and 109 times referencing the gathering of Christians

- ❖ The Church is a group of people.
 - People that at one time:
 - Rebelled against Him (Gen 3:1-6)
 - Separated ourselves from God (Rom. 3:23)
 - Worshipped other “gods” (Rom. 1:20-23)
 - Worshipped ourselves in our sin (Eph. 2:1-3)
 - Despised His righteousness (Rom. 3:10-12)
 - BUT by God's grace and love, He:
 - Sacrificed Himself (1 Tim. 2:5)
 - Substituted Himself for us (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - Puts His Spirit in us (Acts 1:8)
 - Brought us back to life (Eph. 2:4-5)
 - Changes our hearts, desires, affections (Heb. 8:10-12)
 - Reverses our guilty status (Justification) (Rom. 8:30-29)
 - Adopts us into His family (Rom. 8:15-17)
 - Unites us with Christ (Gal. 2:20)
 - Makes us more like Christ each day (Sanctification) (Phil 1:6)
 - Preserves in our faith (John 6:38-40)
 - Resurrects our bodies and ushers us into the New Creation (1 Cor. 15:51-52)
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- ❖ The Church is the people who have **repented** of their old sin and **committed** to their life to following Christ as **Lord** and **Savior**.

The New Testament Church

❖ A people

1 Peter 2:9-10 - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- Who have been called out

Romans 1:5-6 - Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles, including you who are also called by Jesus Christ

❖ A family (sons and daughters, brothers and sisters)

Galatians 3:26 - for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 - Don't rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity.

❖ A bride

Ephesians 5:25-27 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless.

❖ A building

1 Corinthians 3:9 - For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building.

❖ A house

Hebrews 3:3-6 - For Jesus is considered worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder has more honor than the house. Now every house is built by someone, but the one who built everything is God. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's household, as a testimony to what would be said in the

future. But Christ was faithful as a Son over his household. And we are that household if we hold on to our confidence and the hope in which we boast.

❖ A temple

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and that is what you are.

❖ A field

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 - I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

❖ A tree

John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me

❖ A priesthood

Revelation 5:10 - You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth.

1 Peter 2:9- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

❖ A Body

Ephesians 1:22-23 - And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

➤ A diverse body

Romans 12:4-5 - Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

- A united body

Ephesians 4:4-6 - There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

- Universal and Local
 - In a house

Romans 16:5 - Greet also the Church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epaphroditus, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia

- In a city

1 Corinthians 1:2 - To the Church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours.

- In a region

Acts 9:31 - So the Church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

- In the world

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her

- ❖ The dominant emphasis in the New Testament is on the local Church.
 - Out of the 114 times ekklesia is mentioned in the NT, at least 90 of them refer to specific local gatherings of believers.

- Invisible: The Church as God sees from Heaven

2 Timothy 2:19 - Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, bearing this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.

- This includes every true believer
- Visible: The Church as we see it on earth

- Includes false believers

Acts 20:29-30 - I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will rise up even from your own number and distort the truth to lure the disciples into following them.

- ❖ The Church is built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ

Matthew 16:15-17 - But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

- ❖ The Church is empowered by the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

What does a Church do? (The Gospel Experienced)

- ❖ 1. The Church evangelizes

- We are given a brand-new authority under the New Covenant

Joel 2:28-32 - After this I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions. I will even pour out my Spirit on the male and female slaves in those days. I will display wonders in the heavens and on the earth: blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved

Acts 2:17-21 - And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. I will even

*pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and **they will prophesy**. I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

- The Church proclaims the Gospel

Luke 24:46-49 - He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high."

- Empowered by God to do so!

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- The Church proclaims to all nations

Matthew 24:14 - This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

❖ 2. The Church baptizes

- Baptism is our declaration that we belong to Jesus

Acts 19:5 - When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

- We follow the example Christ gave us

Matthew 3:13-17 - Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?" Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized. When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on

him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

- We obey the command Christ gave us

Matthew 28:19-20 - Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

- We unite with other believers in Christ

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 - For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink.

- Baptism illustrates the Gospel
 - Into the water: Identify with His death
 - Out of the water: Participation in His resurrection

- The Church baptizes believers

Acts 2:41 - So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

- Believers are baptized as soon as they trust in Christ for salvation and testify to their salvation

Acts 8:36-38 - As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's water. What would keep me from being baptized?" So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Acts 9:18 - At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized.

Acts 10:47-48 - "Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

❖ 3. The Church teaches

- The Church devotes herself to the teaching of God's word

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

- The Church is saved by the Word of God

Romans 10:17 - So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

- The Church is sanctified and matures by the Word of God

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- The Church is equipped by the Word of God

2 Timothy 4:2-4 - Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.

- The Word of God contains everything the Church needs

2 Peter 1:3 - His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

- The Church is powerless when the teaching of the Word of God is forgotten

Proverbs 29:18 - Without revelation people run wild, but one who follows divine instruction will be happy.

- The Church craves the Word of God

1 Peter 2:1-3 - Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that

by it you may grow up into your salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

❖ 4. The Church loves one another

- The Church devotes herself to fellowship

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

- The Church's common foundation is Christ

Acts 4:32 - Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.

- The Church regularly meets together

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- We love one another

John 13:34-35 - "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- We host one another

1 Peter 4:9 - Be hospitable to one another without complaining.

- We greet one another

1 Corinthians 16:20 - All the brothers and sisters send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

- We welcome one another

Romans 15:7 - Therefore welcome one another, just as Christ also welcomed you, to the glory of God.

- We honor one another

Romans 12:10 - Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.

- We serve one another

Galatians 5:13 - For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.

- We instruct one another

Romans 15:14 - My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.

- We forgive one another

Colossians 3:13 - bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

- We submit to one another

Ephesians 5:21 - submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.

- We spur on one another

Hebrews 10:24 - And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works

- We promote peace with one another

1 Thessalonians 5:13 - Be at peace among yourselves.

- We bear each other's burdens

Galatians 6:2 - Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ

- We encourage one another

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.

- We comfort one another

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know

- We suffer together

1 Corinthians 12:26 - So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it

- We pray and confess to one another

James 5:16 - Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

- We esteem one another

Philippians 2:3 - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves

- We edify one another

Romans 14:19 - So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another

- We teach one another

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

- We are kind to one another

Ephesians 4:32 - And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

- We serve alongside one another

Romans 12:3-8 - For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

- We have diverse number of gifts

1 Peter 4:10 - Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

- No one is inferior. No one is superior. We need each other

1 Corinthians 12:15-26 - If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect, which our respectable parts do not need. Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

- We give to one another
 - We give to the Church

1 Corinthians 16:2 - On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come.

- The Church responsibly distributes our giving

2 Corinthians 8:20-21 - We are taking this precaution so that no one will criticize us about this large sum that we are administering. Indeed, we are giving careful thought to do what is right, not only before the Lord but also before people.

- Since we have been given much from God, we now give to others

Acts 2:44-45 - Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.

- We give willingly and cheerfully
 - We are not forced by God to give
 - We are freed by God to give

- We discipline one another

Matthew 18:15-20 - If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he won't listen, take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. If he doesn't pay attention to them, tell the Church. If he doesn't pay attention even to the Church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.

- Out of love

Hebrews 12:6 - for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives.

- To restore

Galatians 6:1-5 - Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted. Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else. For each person will have to carry his own load.

- To promote holiness

2 Thessalonians 3:6 - Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us.

- In hopes of ultimately restoring a lost brother or sister

James 5:19-20 - My brothers and sisters, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, let that person know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

❖ 5. The Church worships

- We worship through music

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

- We worship through an orderly service

1 Corinthians 14:33 - since God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

- We worship by the way we live our lives

Ephesians 1:12 - so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory

- We worship in our diversity
 - Local Churches will have different styles of worship
 - Our response is to focus on our love for Christ
 - We stay united around the primary foundational doctrines
 - We serve alongside one another to advance the Gospel
- We worship through the Lord's Supper
 - The Church devotes herself to the Lord's Supper

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

- Baptism demonstrates initial identification with Christ and His Church.
- Communion celebrates continual identification with Christ and His Church

1 Corinthians 11:23-32 - For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged, but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world.

"One bread. The one body which we, being many, are. Remember that bread is not made from one grain, but from many. So too with the wine. Brothers and sisters, just remind yourselves what wine is made from; many grapes hang in the bunch, but the juice is poured together in one vessel. That too is how the Lord Christ signified us, how He wished us to belong to Him, how He consecrated the sacrament of our peace and unity on His table" - Augustine

- Believers alone participate in the Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 - Isn't the cup of blessing that we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Isn't the loaf of bread that we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one loaf of bread, we who are many are one body, because we all share the one loaf of bread.

- We remember the sacrifice the Jesus
- We renew our commitment to Christ and the Church
- We rejoice that He has set us free and is coming back

❖ 6. The Church prays

- The Church devotes herself to prayer

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

- We pray to God who is sovereign over everything in the world

Psalms 24:1 - The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants too.

- We pray to the God who supplies our need

Acts 17:25 - Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else.

- We pray because we are dependent on God's power

Acts 4:29-31 - Now, Lord, take note of their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with complete confidence. Stretch out your hand to bring healing and enable signs and wonders to be performed through the name of Jesus, your holy servant." After they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking God's word with confidence.

- We pray because we are desperate for God's grace

Acts 20:24 - But nothing, not even my life, is more important than my completing my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus: to testify about the good news of God's grace.

- We pray because we are devoted to God's mission

Acts 13:1 - The Church at Antioch included prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (nicknamed Niger), Lucius from Cyrene, Manaen (a childhood friend of Herod the ruler), and Saul. As they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul to the work I have called them to undertake." After they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on these two and sent them off.

- We pray for:
 - The success of God's Word
 - The needs of others locally and globally
 - The spread of God's worship

Habakkuk 2:14 - But the land will be full of the knowledge of the Lord's glory, just as water covers the sea.

"When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people" – Jonathan Edwards

❖ 7. The Church multiplies

- The Lord adds to His Church

Acts 2:47 - They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

Acts 4:4 - Many who heard the word became believers, and their number grew to about five thousand.

Acts 5:14 - And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women

Acts 6:1 - Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

Acts 6:7 - And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 9:31 - So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Acts 11:24 - And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Acts 12:24 - But the word of God increased and multiplied.

Acts 16:5 - So the Churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

Acts 19:20 - So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily

Acts 28:30-31 - He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hinderance

- The Church is not built on gimmicks or crowd-drawing techniques
 - It's not about how many people are coming
 - It's about what kind of people we are producing
- A Dangerous approach to Church:
 - We view the leaders as professionals and the members as spectators
 - Success is measured by what happens indoors instead of when we go out
- A Biblical approach to Church:
 - Believers are gathered to train one another in the Gospel
 - Believers scatter to proclaim the Gospel to the world

Acts 8:1-4 - Saul agreed with putting him to death. On that day a severe persecution broke out against the Church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the land of Judea and Samaria. Devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. Saul, however, was ravaging the Church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison. So those who were scattered went on their way preaching the word.

Who leads the Church? (The Gospel Modeled)

- ❖ Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of the Church

Ephesians 4:15-16 - But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.

- ❖ But in His perfect plan, He appoints leaders in the Church

- Elders – servant leaders in the Church, wholeheartedly committed to accomplishing the mission of Christ

1 Timothy 3:1-7 - This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's Church?) He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.

- Elders lead under the authority of Christ
- Elders care for the body of Christ
- Elders teach the Word of Christ
- Elders model the character of Christ

- Deacons – lead servants, use their gifts to build up the body of Christ

1 Timothy 3:8-13 - Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. Wives, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. For those who have served well as

deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

- Deacons meet needs according to the Word
- Deacons support the ministry of the Word
- Deacons unify the body around the Word

➤ Yet, all members are ministers of the Gospel

Ephesians 4:11-14 - And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness.

- Leaders serve the members
- Members submit to their leaders

Why is it essential?

- ❖ The Church is God's plan for the Kingdom of God to advance, the people of God to mature, and for Christ to be glorified on this earth!
 - The Church is plan A.
 - There is no plan B!

Ephesians 3:8-11 - This grace was given to me—the least of all the saints—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ, and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the Church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. This is according to his eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Objections/Questions

- ❖ What about women pastors?
 - Certain passages can't be ignored

1 Timothy 2:11 - A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 - the women should be silent in the Churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says. If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the Church.

- God created men and women with equal value and equal dignity

Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

- God created men and women with different complementary roles

Genesis 2:15-18 - The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die." Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him."

- The Bible prohibits women as overseers and Elders of the Church because this defies God's designed roles for men and women
- Women should lead and speak in various settings in the Church under the leadership of the Elders

1 Corinthians 11:5 - Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since that is one and the same as having her head shaved.

Titus 2:3 - In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered.

Romans 16:1 - I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the Church in Cenchreae. So you should welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may require your help. For indeed she has been a benefactor of many—and of me also.

Acts 18:24-26 - Now a Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was competent in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. He

had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately about Jesus, although he knew only John's baptism. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately.

- ❖ What about baptizing infants?
 - Main argument:
 - Baptism is new circumcision
 - Households are baptized in NT such as the family of Philippian jailer in Acts 16
 - Biblical response
 - Baptism is new covenant practice that follows spiritual birth, not physical birth
 - Only professing believers baptized in New Testament

- ❖ Can I just watch a Church I really like online and be part of that Church?
 - Church is not about being a consumer, but a contributor

- ❖ How do I find the right Church?
 - Attend a few weeks in a row
 - Does the Church teach and practice what aligns with Scripture?
 - Are they emphasizing what Scripture emphasizes?
 - Are they fulfilling what a Church does?
 - Are they fulfilling the Great Commission?
 - Invest yourself in this Church
 - Join a small group
 - Be accountable
 - Submit to the leadership
 - Make a disciple
 - Serve the body

Practical Takeaways

- ❖ What can I do right now?
 - Speak highly of the Church
 - Christ loves His Church

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her

- The future of the Church is strong

Revelation 7:9-10 - After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

- Share the Gospel with others

Psalms 34:1-3 - I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will boast in the Lord; the humble will hear and be glad. Proclaim the Lord's greatness with me; let us exalt his name together.

- Show the Gospel to others

Matthew 25:35-40 - "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me." "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?' "And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

- Teach the Gospel to others

2 Timothy 2:1-2 - You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- Be prepared to suffer for the sake of the Gospel

Matthew 24:9-13 - "Then they will hand you over to be persecuted, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one another. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

- Long for the end of the world

Matthew 24:14 - This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- Christ will return for His Church

Matthew 24:31 - He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- We will reign forever

Revelation 5:9-10 - And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth.

- We will rejoice forever in our God

Revelation 22:3-5 - and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever.

The Church's constant cry until that day comes: **AMEN! COME, LORD JESUS!**

Our Savior's faithful response: **YES I AM COMING SOON!**

Recommended Reading

For further study on the topics covered in tonight's sessions, see the resources listed below. Please note, however, that Hope Chapel Youth ministry does not endorse everything contained in these resources. As always, we urge you to examine these resources and the topics covered in this study in light of the truths of God's Word.

- ❖ *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* - Mark Dever
- ❖ *Building Healthy Church Series* - Various Authors
- ❖ *The Trellis and the Vine* - Colin Marshall and Tony Payne
- ❖ *What is a Healthy Church Member?* - Thabiti Anyabwile
- ❖ *Letters to the Church* - Francis Chan
- ❖ *50 Crucial Questions* - John Piper and Wayne Grudem

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