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THE CHURCH: ITS NATURE, MISSION, AND PURPOSE

by

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The church is the only organization Jesus Christ founded. It is more than simply an organization: the church is "the body of Christ"—the visible manifestation of Christ on the earth. As such, the church is of supreme importance. This book discusses the nature of the church, its characteristics, organization, leadership, and administration (church discipline, baptism, and the Lord's Supper). It also explains the four primary missions and purposes of the church: worship; discipleship; mission; and unity (wholeness). An appendix includes a list and description of discipleship resources and courses available for free online.

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I. <u>The Church: Introduction</u>

• "The church is not a building. The church is people. . . . *Ekklesia,* the Greek word translated 'church' in the New Testament, never refers to a building or structure. An *ekklesia* was a gathering of people. . . . But it is more than simply a collection of people; it is a new community. . . . When we become followers of Christ, we become members of His church—and our commitment to the church is indistinguishable from our commitment to Him [see **Matt 16:15-18; 22:36-40; 25:31-46; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Gal 6:10; 1 John 3:14; 4:19-20**]." (Colson 1992: 64-65)

• "The biblical gospel is much more than personal conversion to gain a reservation in heaven. It is conversion to Jesus Christ as Lord. . . . The gospel converts our hearts, minds, and money, but it also converts us to something. When we are converted, we are converted to Christ, to church, and to mission. . . . Failure to convert to the church and to mission is a failure to grasp the gospel." (Dodson 2012: 108, 116)

• "It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, the proclaimers of the Gospel in heathen lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 18)

A. *The church is universal and local, invisible and visible*

The church is both universal and local. It is "the whole body of those who through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life. It includes all such persons, whether in heaven or on earth. While universal in nature, it finds expression in local groupings of believers that display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole." (Erickson 1998: 1044)

1. <u>The church as universal.</u> Multiple passages in the Bible indicate the universal nature of the church. In **Matt 16:18** Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades will not overpower it."* Christ describes the church as "his" in the singular, not the plural. The universal nature of the church is reinforced in such passages as **Eph 1:22-23** (*"He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all"*); **Eph 3:10** (*"The manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places"*); **Eph 3:21** (*"To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever"*); **Eph 4:4** (*"There is one body"*); **Eph 5:23** (*"Christ . . . is the head of the church"*); **Eph 5:25** (*"Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"*); see also **Col 1:18, 24; Heb 12:22-23**.

2. <u>The church is local.</u> Jesus speaks of the church in local terms in connection with church discipline. If someone sins but does not listen to the person he sinned against or even to corroborating witnesses, then one is to *"tell it to the church."* The Bible elsewhere describes the church in local terms, i.e., the church of broad geographic areas, cities, or even homes. **Acts 9:31** speaks of *"the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."* **Rev 1:4** speaks of *"the seven churches that are in Asia"* (see also **1 Cor 16:19**). **Gal 1:2** speaks of *"the churches of Galatia."* **1 Cor 1:2** speaks of *"the church of God which is in Corinth."* **1 Thess 1:1** speaks of *"the church of the Thessalonians."* **Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15;** and **Philemon 2** all speak of churches that meet in homes.

3. <u>The church is both invisible and visible.</u> The universal church ultimately is invisible. This is so because the members of the universal church *"are enrolled in heaven"* (**Heb 12:23**), and *"the Lord knows those who are His"* (**2 Tim 2:19**; see also **Matt 7:21-23; Luke 13:25-27**). Wayne Grudem describes it like this: "The invisible church is the church as God sees it [and] the visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it" (Grudem 1994: 855, 856).

This means that there *should be* as much overlap as possible between the two: true believers should be members of a visible local church, and all members of a visible local church should be truly saved. Unfortunately, both Scripture and experience show us that this ideal overlap is not always a reality. Thus, Jesus warned of *"false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves"* (**Matt 7:15**; see also **Acts 20:29-30** [*"I (Paul) know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them"*]). Jesus also told the parable of the wheat and the tares (**Matt 13:24-30, 36-43**) to the effect that only at the final judgment will the church be purified, because only the Lord knows the heart of the people (see **1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-4; 5:1-7; 11:17-22; 1 Tim 1:3, 19-20; 4:1-3; 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:16-18; Jude 12-13; Rev 2:14-15, 20-21; 3:3-4, 15-17** which describe divisions, factions, immorality, and false teaching within different churches). Because of this situation, church leaders need to be aware of the "fruit" of their own lives and the lives

of the people in the church (see **Matt 7:16-20; 21:43; Luke 6:43-44; John 15:4-5; Gal 5:22-23; 1 Tim 4:15-16**); biblical "warning" passages need to be preached (e.g., **Matt 7:21-23; Mark 4:1-29; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:16-21; Eph 5:5; Heb 2:1-14; 13:4; Jas 4:4; Rev 21:8**); and all church members need to be discipled well in the gospel and the implications of the gospel for how we are to live our lives. The church needs to do all it can to move its members closer to Christlikeness.

B. *Biblical metaphors for, and descriptions of, the church*

The NT includes several descriptive metaphors for the church:

- Agricultural metaphors: God's field (**1 Cor 3:9**); Olive tree (**Rom 11:17-24**); God's vine (**John 15:1-5**); God's harvest (**Matt 13:1-30; John 4:35; 1 Cor 3:6-8**).
- Livestock metaphors: God's flock (**Luke 12:32; John 10:15-16; 1 Pet 5:2-3**).
- Political metaphors: Royal priesthood, kingdom, or holy nation (**1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10**); commonwealth of Israel (**Eph 2:12, 19**); the Israel of God (**Gal 6:16**).[1]
- Architectural metaphors: God's house, building, temple, or tabernacle (**1 Cor 3:9, 16, 17; 2 Cor 5:1; 6:16; Eph 2:21-22; 2 Thess 2:4; Heb 3:3-6; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 19; 13:6**); the pillar and support of the truth (**1 Tim 3:15**).
- Relational and family metaphors: Bride or wife of Christ (**2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-32; Rev 21:2, 9**); Sons or children of God (**Rom 8:14, 16; 9:26; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2**); People of God (**Rom 9:25; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9-10**); Household or family of God (**Matt 12:49-50; 2 Cor 6:18; Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2**).[2]
- Body metaphors: Body of Christ (**Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 15-16; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15**).

The most developed metaphors for the church are the architectural, relational and family, and body metaphors. Each of these metaphors is developed primarily for relational reasons. Just as Christ is not divided (**1 Cor 1:13**)**,** so a body is united with its head, the members of a body are united with each other, a husband is intimately united with his wife, and "living stones" are all perfectly fitted into a holy temple. They stress our supreme love and devotion to and our intimate unity with God and Christ (**Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27-28**) and with each other (**Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27-28; Gal 5:14**). The result of this relational emphasis is that we are to become like Jesus (**Rom 8:29**) and *"be holy, for I [God] am holy"* (**Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1 Pet 1:15-16**). The reason for this is that the heart of God's covenant with his people has always been *"I will be their God, and they shall be My people"* (**Gen 17:8; Exod 6:7; 29:45; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:19-20; 14:10-11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Hos 2:23; Zech 8:8; 13:9; 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 8:10; Rev 21:3**).

All of the metaphors and descriptions of the church have practical implications: "The fact that the church is like a family should increase our love and fellowship with one another. The thought that the church is like the bride of Christ should stimulate us to strive for greater purity and holiness, and also greater love for Christ and submission to him. The image of the church as branches in a vine should cause us to rest in him more fully. The idea of an agricultural crop should encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life and obtaining for ourselves and others the proper nutrients to grow. The picture of the church as God's new temple should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet. The concept of the church as a priesthood should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to him (see Heb. 13:15-16). The metaphor of the church as the body of Christ should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body." (Grudem 1994: 859)

C. *The distinguishing characteristics of the church*

The last paragraph of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (AD 325/381) states, "I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church."[3] This suggests four distinguishing characteristics of the true church in both its

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[1] The church as the new, true, spiritual Israel is seen in many ways. For example, the NT takes the great OT covenant ideas, terms, signs, and prophecies that had related to Israel and applies them to the church. The church as the new, true, spiritual Israel is discussed in detail in Menn 2016: 49-59.

[2] Dhati Lewis points out, "Of all the word pictures and metaphors used to describe the church, one stands out above the rest: family. In fact, it is so much of the essence of the church that it cannot even properly be called a metaphor. Metaphors describe what the church is like or similar to—light, flock, field, building—but family is not metaphorical; it is a literal description of the phenomena we know as church." (Lewis 2015: n.p.; the same could be said for the descriptions of the church as the children of God and the people of God)

[3] The term "catholic" means "universal," and must be distinguished from the modern Roman Catholic Church. "Catholic" is

universal and local aspects. The church is: (1) one; (2) holy; (3) catholic (i.e., universal); and (4) apostolic.[4]

- Oneness. Oneness suggests the universal and invisible nature of the church (see above). However, oneness also applies at the local church level as indicated in **Eph 4:4-6**: *[4] There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.* These are things that all Christians and all true churches have in common. Unfortunately, at the visible and local level, oneness is impaired by divisions between large groups of churches (the Great Schism of 1054 between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches and the Reformation of the 1500s between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches) and divisions between denominations and even within local churches.

- Holiness. Holiness stems from the fact that the sins of Christians have been atoned for by the death of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit now indwells believers. We are to *"be holy, for I [God] am holy"* (**Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1 Pet 1:15-16**). In this life, however, no one is perfectly sanctified, and there are tares among the wheat and wolves among the sheep in the visible church.

- Catholicity (universality). In the New Covenant, the people of God are no longer identified with one nation (Israel) but now are *"from every tribe and tongue and people and nation"* (**Rev 5:9;** see also **Rev 7:9**). There are churches now in all areas of the world.

- Apostolicity. **Eph 2:20** says that the church has been *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone."* **Rev 21:14** similarly says that *"the wall of the city [New Jerusalem] had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."* Some churches (particularly Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican Churches) emphasize *apostolic succession*, i.e., Peter and the other original apostles appointed their successors, which practice has been followed down to today.[5] Most other churches (Protestant and Pentecostal) have followed the lead of Luther and Calvin in emphasizing commitment to *apostolic truth* as the distinguishing marks of the true church, specifically, the Word of God being taught and sacraments being properly administered. Thus, the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (the Lutheran statement of faith) defined the church as "apostolic" where "the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered" (Augsburg 1530: Art. 7). John Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* similarly stated, "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists" (Calvin 1960: 4.1.9).

These two marks of the church—the Word of God being taught and sacraments being rightly administered—clearly are important: "Certainly if the Word of God is not being preached, but simply false doctrines or doctrines of men, then there is no true church. In some cases we might have difficulty determining just how much wrong doctrine can be tolerated before a church can no longer be considered a true church, but there are many clear cases where we can say that a true church does not exist. . . . The second mark of the church, the right administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper) was probably stated in opposition to the Roman Catholic view that saving grace came through the sacraments and thereby the sacraments were made 'works' by which we earned merit for salvation. In this way, the Roman Catholic Church was insisting on payment rather than teaching faith as the means of obtaining salvation. But another reason exists for including the sacraments as a mark of the church. Once an organization begins to practice baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is a continuing organization and is *attempting to function as a church* [as opposed to, for example, a parachurch ministry]. . . . Baptism and the Lord's Supper also serve as 'membership controls' for the church. Baptism is the means for admitting people into the church, and the Lord's Supper is the means for allowing people to give a sign of continuing in the membership of the church." (Grudem 1994: 865-66)

Some of the Reformers added a third mark of the true church to the Word being truly taught and the sacraments being rightly administered, namely, church discipline being properly exercised. This found expression in both the Scots Confession (1560) and the Belgic Confession (1561): "First, the true preaching of the Word of God, in

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the term generally used for approximately the first 1000 years of church history to describe the orthodox Christian faith, particularly as that faith was defined in the universal creeds and developed at the ecumenical councils.

[4] Timothy George discusses these four aspects of the church in a *Christianity Today* article entitled "What I'd Like to Tell the Pope About the Church," available online (George 1998).

[5] Michael Holmes points out, "Claims that these bishops and their predecessors could be traced back in an unbroken chain to the apostles themselves apparently represent later after-the-fact efforts to justify the new development in church organization that these monarchical bishops represent. . . . It is interesting that Ignatius [Bishop of Antioch; died c. AD 110] provides a theological rationale for the authority and place of the bishop and does not base it, as his near contemporary Clement of Rome [Bishop of Rome; died AD 99] does, upon the concept of apostolic succession." (Holmes 1989: 9, 81)

which God has revealed himself to us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts; and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished." (Scots 1560: Art. 18) "The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto corrected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church." (Belgic 1561: Art. 29)

II. The Church: Its Characteristics, Organization, Leadership, and Administration

A. *Church organization and government*
        When the Bible was written, the church was in its infancy.[6] The original apostles (the Twelve) were still alive. Further, the NT epistles are what are known as "occasional" letters, which means they were written to specific churches or individuals as a result of some particular problem or issue that occasioned them. Although some passages touch on the issue of church organization and government, the Bible does not give us a systematic and comprehensive discussion of the proper governmental organization for the church. Additionally, the circumstances of the churches throughout the Roman Empire differed: in some areas there was persecution, in some areas there was not; some churches met in homes, some were larger; some were in urban areas, some were in rural areas; the first church in Jerusalem was largely Jewish, most other churches throughout the empire were largely Gentile. Consequently, throughout church history there have been different forms of church organization and government, and even within different church traditions the form of church government has changed or evolved over time.
        The Bible essentially refers to two offices or levels of leadership in the NT church. The Greek words for the top level of church leadership are *episkopos* which is translated "overseer" or "bishop" and *presbuteros* which is translated "elder." The two words appear to be equivalent in meaning and are used interchangeably (see **Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7**). These are the people who generally set policy and engage in the ministry of the Word (preaching, teaching, counseling, evangelizing, discipling, etc.).
        "There is quite a consistent pattern of *plural elders* as the main governing group in the New Testament churches" (Grudem 1994: 912). Wherever the church is mentioned in the book of Acts, and whenever Paul and others formed new churches, they always appointed multiple elders (see **Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2-6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17-18; 21:18; Titus 1:5**). In **1 Tim 5:17** and **James 5:14** "elders" is plural. Similarly, in **1 Tim 4:14** when Timothy was ordained "the presbytery" (or, "board of elders") laid hands on him. That is the biblical pattern for church leadership: multiple elders, not rule by one man. Leadership by multiple elders reflects the biblical fact that all Christians are considered "priests" in the eyes of God (**1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6**). It also reflects the biblical wisdom that *"in abundance of counselors there is victory [or, wisdom]"* (**Prov 11:14; 26:4**) and as *"iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another"* (**Prov 27:17**).
        Having multiple elders is important. Everyone has different gifts and abilities—but also different weaknesses and inabilities. Therefore, no one person is sufficient to lead a local church by himself. Multiple elders hold each other accountable morally, spiritually, and financially. Further, if church leadership rests just with one person, if something happens to that person the church may collapse. We must remember that the church is not about us, it is about Christ. The church is his body, not ours. We need to make sure that the church is properly led by men and women who are well-qualified (**1 Tim 3:1-13**). That way, if something happens to the pastor or any of the leaders, the church will be able to carry on well, because it has been built on a strong organizational foundation.
        The word "pastor" appears only once in the NT. It is a translation of the Greek *poimēn* in **Eph 4:11** which says, *"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers."* Grudem notes that "the verse is probably better translated as 'pastor-teachers' (one group) rather than 'pastors and teachers' (suggesting two groups) because of the Greek construction" (Ibid.: 913). Specifically, each group mentioned in the verse is preceded by "some as," but there is no "some as" preceding "teachers"; instead, pastors and teachers are grouped as one. Further, "pastors and teachers" has "one definite article in front of two nouns joined by *kai* ('and'), a construction that always in Greek indicates that the

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[6] While the majority of scholars believe that the NT was completed around AD 95-96 (i.e., within 65 or so years after Jesus' death), John A. T. Robinson has made a strong case that the entire NT was completed before the destruction of the temple in AD 70, which would have meant that the NT was completed only 40 years or less after Jesus' death (see Robinson 1976).

two nouns are viewed by the writer as united in some way" (Ibid.: 913n.13). Grudem concludes, "The connection with teaching suggests that these pastors were some (or perhaps all) of the elders who carried on the work of teaching, for one qualification for an elder is that he be 'able to teach' (1 Tim. 3:2)" (Ibid.: 913). Additionally, the noun *poimēn* normally is translated as "shepherd," and the verbal form of *poimēn* (*poimainō*) is applied to elders in **Acts 20:28** (*"shepherd the church of God"*) and **1 Pet 5:2** (*"shepherd the flock of God"*). All of this suggests that, in the NT, a "pastor" is equivalent to an "elder."

The second level of church leadership mentioned in the NT is the deacons. The office of deacons originated in **Acts 6:1-7.** The role of deacons primarily is one of helps, service, and taking care of the physical needs of the congregation. The term "deacon" comes from the Greek *diakonos* which essentially means those who serve others; assistants, aides (see Danker 2000: 230-31).

Over time, the form of church government has changed or evolved. By AD 55-65 "different forms of internal organization (congregational, presbyterian, and episcopal) were being tried" (Holmes 1989: 5). During the period of approximately AD 60-80 there was a trend "toward centralization and standardization of church structures. The surviving sources are not clear as to the precise rate and scope of the change, but the initial steps in that direction are evident during this period, particularly in the letters of Ignatius [Bishop of Antioch, died c. AD 110]. Whereas most Pauline churches were supervised by a twofold structure consisting of elders/overseers ('bishops') and deacons, we find in the Ignatian churches a threefold structure consisting of one bishop under whom served elders and deacons." (Ibid.: 9) The three main forms of church government that have developed and continue to characterize church governments are: (1) the episcopal government; (2) the presbyterian government; and (3) the congregational government:

    1. The episcopal government. The name comes from the Greek *episkopos* ("overseer" or "bishop"). This is the most hierarchical form of church government. This form of government typically has three levels of leadership: bishops, elders (including pastors or priests), and deacons. A hierarchical structure like this promotes apostolic doctrine and unity and tends to restrain the fragmentation that congregationalism can lead to. This form of church government arose relatively early in church history; for example, Ignatius became the bishop over all of Antioch in the latter half of the first century. Some basis for this is found at the Council of Jerusalem in **Acts 15**; James presided over the Council and, after hearing the testimony, answered and rendered "my judgment" (**Acts 15:19**). That suggests a position higher than local church elders. The Roman Catholic Church has taken this to the extreme, with the Pope being the ultimate authority over the entire Roman Catholic Church, followed by Cardinals, Bishops, and Priests.[7]

    2. The presbyterian government. The name comes from the Greek *presbuteros* ("elder"). This form of government typically has two levels of leadership: elders and deacons. Elders are denominated as either "ruling elders" or "teaching elders" (pastors) (see **1 Tim 5:17**). Typically, there will be a regional presbytery, i.e., representatives of different local churches, which exercises certain authority over local churches in a particular region. This form of government is based on the consistent NT pattern (discussed above) of multiple elders leading a church assisted by a number of deacons. The basis for regional presbyteries having authority over local churches is based on the Jerusalem Council (**Acts 15**) in which the church in Antioch sent representatives (Paul, Barnabas, and others) to Jerusalem (**Acts 14:26-15:3**), and the Council issued a binding ruling, not just a voluntary decree. Presbyterians view James as "first among equals" in the Council, i.e., he presided at the meeting and announced the decision, but the decision was a joint decision by the members of the Council (see **Acts 15:22, 25, 27, 28; 16:4**).

    3. The congregational government. Members of a local church select their own leaders, typically a single elder (pastor) and multiple deacons, or a pastor (similar to a "teaching elder" in the presbyterian government), multiple elders (similar to "ruling elders" in the presbyterian government), and multiple deacons. In this form of church government, the local church, not a regional bishop or regional presbytery, is the highest authority. This ultimate authority resides with the members of the congregation, although in some congregationally governed churches, the ultimate authority is delegated to the pastor or elders. This form of government is based primarily on the fact that the NT does not appeal to any authority than the local church for even the most severe form of church discipline (**Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Cor 2:6**). Further, in **Acts 6** the church elected its own leaders (the deacons); there was apostolic approval, but the choice was made by the church. Also, congregational government

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[7] This form of government was a later development. The early letter known as *1 Clement*, which was written approximately AD 95 or 96 from the leaders of the church at Rome to the church at Corinth, indicates that "leadership seems to have been entrusted to a group of presbyters or bishops (the two appear to be synonymous in *1 Clement*; see 44.1-6)" (Holmes 1989: 24).

seems to best accord with the principle of the "priesthood of all believers" (see **1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6**).
4. <u>One can see certain differences between the early church in Jerusalem (which consisted mainly of former Jews) and the early Gentile churches:</u>

    a. *The Jerusalem church.*

        (1) <u>The apostles (the Twelve).</u> The apostles dedicated themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (**Acts 1:14; 6:4**); chose replacement apostles (**Acts 1:21-26**); taught and preached (**Acts 2:42; 4:31, 33; 5:19-21; 6:4; 8:25; 10:42**); performed signs, wonders, and healed (**Acts 2:43; 3:7; 5:15-16**); called and held a congregational meeting (**Acts 6:2**); commissioned deacons (**Acts 6:6**); sent apostles and church planters to the mission field (**Acts 8:14; 11:22**); prayed for and laid hands on converts, who received the Holy Spirit (**Acts 8:15-17**); related visions to the church from a position of authority (**Acts 11:1-18**).

        (2) <u>The elders.</u> The elders investigated theological disputes with the apostles (**Acts 15:6**); received (with James) Paul's report of his ministry among the Gentiles (**Acts 21:18-19**); wrote out theological decisions with the apostles (**Acts 15:20; 21:25**).

        (3) <u>The deacons.</u> The deacons were put in charge of feeding all equally (**Acts 6:1, 3**); they preached the gospel (**Acts 8:5, 40**); they performed signs, cast out demons, and healed (**Acts 8:6-7**).

        (4) <u>Finances.</u> The people sold their possessions and shared with anyone in need (**Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 5:1-4**); proceeds from sales went to a common fund supervised by the apostles (**Acts 4:34-35**).

        (5) <u>Life in the church.</u> Everyone was experiencing a sense of awe (**Acts 2:43**); they were unified (**Acts 2:46; 4:32**); they were glad and sincere in heart (**Acts 2:46**); they gathered at the temple daily (**Acts 2:44**) and also gathered in houses to pray (**Acts 12:12**).

    b. *The Gentile churches.*

        (1) <u>The apostles (the Twelve).</u> The apostles wrote letters to the churches (**Matthew, John, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Revelation**); sent church planters to the mission field (**Acts 11:22**); were the final authority for all theological disputes (**Acts 15:1-29; 16:4**).

        (2) <u>The missionaries (including Paul).</u>[8] Missionaries spread the gospel (**Acts 11:26; 13:4-5, 14, 21, 42-44; 16:13; 17:17, 19; 18:4**); healed the sick (**Acts 14:9-10**); taught, encouraged and strengthened the churches (**Acts 14:22; 18:11, 23-28; 20:2**); appointed elders in the churches they planted (**Acts 14:23**); delivered letters from the apostles to the churches (**Acts 15:30; 16:4**); supported themselves financially (**Acts 18:3**); called elders to assemble when visiting (**Acts 20:17**); wrote letters to the churches (**Romans-Philemon**).

        (3) <u>The elders.</u> The elders chose and commissioned missionaries (**Acts 13:1-3**); they were responsible for taking care of their church (**1 Tim 3:5**); they commissioned preachers (**1 Tim 4:14**).

        (4) <u>The deacons.</u> The deacons served in the church and were put to the test (**1 Tim 3:10**).

        (5) <u>Finances.</u> The people all kept their own wealth (**Acts 11:29; 20:33-35; 2 Cor 8:1-15; Eph 4:28**); they contributed to the church weekly and as needs arose (**Acts 11:29; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15**); occasionally they would house self-supporting missionaries (**Acts 20:33-35**).

        (6) <u>Life in the church.</u> The people lived in their own homes but gathered together every Sunday (**Acts 20:7**); people received the word with joy and the churches grew (**Acts 11:21-26; 13:48-49; 14:21; 16:5; 17:10-12**); they were not always unified, some acted immorally, and others had become lukewarm (**Acts 15:36-40; 1 Cor 1:11-13; 3:3-4; 5:1-5; 11:17-21; Gal 2:12-13; Rev 2:14, 20; 3:15-16**).

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[8] Although Paul was an apostle (**Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1**), the NT (and Paul himself) recognizes a distinction between the apostleship of Paul and "the Twelve" (see **Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5, 8**). This may have to do with the fact that Paul's ministry primarily was to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:15; 13:46; 18:6; Rom 11:13; Gal 1:16; 2:7**), whereas Peter, the evident leader and spokesman of the Twelve, primarily was an apostle to Jews (see **Gal 2:7-8**).

B. *Church leadership*

The church is a corporate body, not merely a collection of individuals. Any organization is only as good, strong, and successful as its leadership. At the very beginning of his discussion of the qualifications to be a church leader, Paul says, *"If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work [or 'noble task', ESV] he desires to do"* (**1 Tim 3:1**). Thus, "Paul defines being an overseer in terms of function ('a noble task'), not of status or office. He is not encouraging people to seek status but responsibility." (Liefeld 1999: 116) In **1 Tim 3:2-7**, Paul then lists 15 requirements to be in the top level of church leadership, whether called pastors, bishops, overseers, or elders. The same requirements apply to those in positions of leadership over several churches. The requirements are: being above reproach; the husband of one wife (i.e., "a one-woman man"); temperate; prudent; respectable; hospitable; able to teach; not addicted to wine; not pugnacious; gentle; peaceable; free from the love of money; one who manages his household well; not a new convert; and having a good reputation with those outside the church. The requirements to be an elder or a deacon are virtually identical (compare **1 Tim 3:2-7** regarding elders [see also **Titus 1:5-9**] and **1 Tim 3:8-13** regarding deacons [see also **Acts 6:1-3**]), with the exception of being able to teach (although many early deacons did have the ability to teach (see **Acts 7:1-53** [Stephen]; **Acts 8:4-13, 26-38** [Philip]).

Two things need to be noted. First, when Paul says in **1 Tim 3:2** that an overseer *"must be . . ."* he is not saying that to be in leadership a person must meet one, or five, or even a majority of the requirements he then lists. Rather, to be a leader in the church, a person is to meet all of the requirements. Second, what is remarkable about the requirements is that (with the possible exceptions of the ability to teach and not being a new convert) they are all requirements that *every Christian* should have—that is why discipleship for all believers is so important. There are no special requirements concerning one's tribe, level of education, material wealth, or other such "external" matters. Instead, all the requirements relate to the person's *character.* All of the 15 requirements for leadership implicate our character, directly or indirectly. Interestingly, in **1 Tim 1:9-10** Paul listed 15 examples of the unrighteous people for whom the law was made. Here Paul is saying that our character as leaders is to be the *complete opposite* of the type of people who must be subject to the law, because we *are no longer subject* to the old law. Instead, we are to have the character of Christ, because we are subject to the "law of Christ." Our behavior flows out of our character. Just as our character is to be the complete opposite of the unrighteous, so should our behavior be the complete opposite of the types of acts listed in **1 Tim 1:9-10**. People who are in positions of leadership in the church are the most visible representatives of Christ to the congregation and to nonbelievers in the community. Therefore, it is imperative that they have the character of Christ and truly model him by how they live.

Because leadership in the church is based on character and is related to function, not status, **1 Tim 5:22** says, *"Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others."* This passage "prohibits hasty ordination [which] fits in well with the main discussion of this chapter. And the laying on of hands in these epistles seems to be regularly associated with ordination (cf. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:7)." (Earle 1978: 381) The *"sharing responsibility for the sins of others"* appears to be related to the fact that, by ordaining someone, you vouch for his character and qualifications and thereby share responsibility for any sins he might commit.[9] If the churches seriously applied these requirements when choosing their leaders instead of looking to worldly standards, the churches would probably look and act different from how they look and act today. They would also be far more effective than they are today in bringing people to Christ and in transforming believers into Christ-likeness, because they would be the kind of churches that God wants to see.

C. *Church discipline*

As noted above, some of the Reformers added a third mark of the true church to the Word being truly taught and the sacraments being rightly administered, namely, church discipline being properly exercised. The ultimate purpose of any form of church discipline is the repentance and reformation of the offending party and reconciliation of the offending party with the rest of the believers and with God. When these purposes are not kept in mind, church discipline can lead to abuse.

The following are biblical examples of church discipline:

1. Biblical examples of matters that call for church discipline. The NT gives a number of examples of actions that called for some form of church discipline: causing dissension and factions (**Rom 16:17; Titus 3:10**); incest (**1 Cor 5:1-5**); those living an unruly and undisciplined life and who refuse to work

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[9] ECLEA's book *1 Timothy: Outline, Commentary, Inductive Training Manual* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#timothy) discusses in detail the qualifications to be a leader in the church. It is a good resource for the church to use in equipping its members in this area.

(**2 Thess 3:6-12**); disobeying what Paul wrote (**2 Thess 3:14-15**); blasphemy (**1 Tim 1:19-20**); and teaching heretical doctrine (**2 John 10-11**). Wayne Grudem observes the principle behind these examples of sins that required church discipline: "A definite principle appears to be at work: all sins that were explicitly disciplined in the New Testament were publicly known or outwardly evident sins, and many of them had continued over a period of time. The fact that the sins were publicly known means that reproach was being brought on the church, Christ was being dishonored, and there was a real possibility that others would be encouraged to follow the wrongful patterns of life that were being publicly tolerated." (Grudem 1994: 896-97)

2. <u>The standard of church discipline: *proportionality*.</u> In **Matt 18:15-17**, Jesus articulated a principle of proportionality for church discipline: *15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."* This principle, that a punishment inflicted should correspond in degree and kind to the offense of the wrongdoer, also is known as "progressive discipline." It goes back to **Exod 21:24-25** (*"eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise"*). Proportionality is the hallmark of justice in civil courts and certainly should be followed in the church.

Factors that church leaders should consider regarding the degree of discipline to impose include: how serious the offense was and how long it was repeated; whether the transgression is publicly known or not; the repentance of the offender; whether restitution has been made (which is one indicator of genuine repentance); the effect of the transgression on the rest of the church and on outsiders; and other factors (see, e.g., **1 Cor 5:6** [*"a little leaven leavens the whole lump"*]; **Gal 2:11-14** [Paul rebuked Peter so that others would not follow his bad example]; **1 Tim 5:20** [*"Those that continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning"*]). Church leaders also must bear in mind that there are issues of conduct on which Christians legitimately disagree. Paul therefore encourages a wide degree of tolerance (see **Rom 14:1-23**).

3. <u>Application of proportional discipline.</u> In **Matt 18:15-17**, which involved some sin between two believers who were members of the church, Jesus talked about first trying to resolve the matter privately between the two parties (**Matt 18:15**); if that failed, the aggrieved party should try again, this time taking two or three witnesses with him (**Matt 18:16**); if that failed, ultimately the matter should be brought to the church, which probably signifies the church leadership (**Matt 18:17**). In some cases admonition or warning may be sufficient to deal with the particular problem (see **2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15; 3:10; Jas 5:19-20**).

The most serious form of church discipline is excommunication, i.e., denying fellowship to an unrepentant transgressor and putting him or her out of the church. It must be remembered that excommunication is the *ultimate* form of discipline which may be invoked only if all lesser forms of discipline have failed, the sin is serious, public, and probably a repetitive one which is causing or has the potential to lead others astray or cause division in the church if it is not dealt with, and the offender is unrepentant. The fact that excommunication is the end of the process of church discipline and is reserved only for the most serious cases is seen in the fact that excommunication is the NT's application of an OT principle of law: "Leviticus 20:11 required that Israel put to death a man who had sexual relations with his father's wife. The apostle Paul, addressing the same situation in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, instructs the church to exercise ecclesiastical excommunication, not physical execution." (Johnson 2007: 281) In **1 Tim 1:20** Paul calls this form of discipline "handing the offender over to Satan." The only other passage that talks about someone being *"handed over [or 'delivered'] to Satan"* is **1 Cor 5:5**, where a man was sleeping with his father's wife (i.e., like the situation in **Lev 20:11**). Both **1 Tim 1:20** and **1 Cor 5:5** involved very serious problems within the church: false doctrine of a significant nature, i.e., "blasphemy" (see **1 Tim 1:3-4, 20; 4:1-7a; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-18**); and a public, sexual scandal (**1 Cor 5:1**).

4. <u>The ultimate purpose of any form of church discipline.</u> In administering church discipline, the leaders of the church need to prevent sin from spreading to others. Thus, "the procedures of church discipline specified by Jesus (Matt. 18:15-20) and his apostles (1 Kor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 5:20-25; etc.) are the means by which God now calls his new covenant people to protect its purity" (Johnson 2007: 282). Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of any form of church discipline, even excommunication, is the repentance and restoration of the offending party. In **1 Tim 1:20**, Paul says that the purpose of "handing

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over to Satan" is so that the offenders *"will be taught not to blaspheme."* In **1 Cor 5:5**, delivery to Satan was *"for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."* Where the offender *does truly repent and change,* Paul says that the church should *"forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him"* (**2 Cor 2:7-8**). Paul affirms this ultimate purpose of church discipline in **Gal 6:1** where he says, *"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."* It is up to the church to determine whether repentance is real or not (see **2 Cor 7:10**). Consequently, even where someone in the church has been "handed over to Satan," the leaders of the church should maintain contact with that person, counsel him, and try to win him back to the Lord (see **Gal 6:1**).

5. Discipline of church leaders. **1 Tim 5:19-21** deals with the issue of disciplining church elders. What Paul says would apply to anyone in a formal church leadership position, whether it is a bishop, elder, pastor, deacon, or other person in authority. The fact that Paul discusses the discipline of church leaders is probably one reason behind the biblical pattern of plural elders leading the churches rather than the churches each being led by one man: plurality of leadership should result in a system of accountability instead of the tyranny of the individual.

The issue of disciplining church leaders has often led to two opposite abuses: bias in favor of certain people or prejudice against others. "The abuse of discipline has often led to a harsh and intolerant spirit, but neglect of it has produced a danger almost as great. When faced with sinning elders a spineless attitude is deplorable." (Guthrie 1990: 118-19) Large donors to the church, members of the same tribe as the pastor, the pastor's family members, and close personal friends are often ordained as elders, even though they do not meet the requirements of **1 Tim 3:1-7**. Further, the sins of those elders are overlooked because they are large donors, family members, or friends, even though such sins would not be tolerated by church members who are not large donors, family members, or friends. Thus, "two classes of Christians" are created—those who are favored and those who are not—with effects that are damaging to the church. Paul is reminding us that, as the leaders of the church, our integrity and character are on the line with every decision we make. We will be held accountable to Christ for what we do in his name as leaders of his church. Therefore, we had better *"maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality"* (**1 Tim 5:21**) so that we will have a *"good conscience"* (**1 Tim 1:5**) and a *"clear conscience"* (**1 Tim 3:9**) when we stand before him (as we will do at the judgment, and as we in fact do all the time now).

6. The requirement of evidence. In his discussion of the discipline of church leaders in **1 Tim 5:19-21**, Paul states, *"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses"* (**1 Tim 5:19**). That is a principle that applies in all cases of church discipline. It is the principle that evidence of wrongdoing and corroboration of accusations needs to be presented before discipline may be invoked. The principle Paul cites goes back to **Deut 19:15** (see also **Deut 17:6**). The principle that a charge had to be corroborated by another witness was designed to prevent unjust convictions. However, if the statement regarding *"two or three witnesses"* is applied in a literalistic fashion, and we consider only the *form* of that statement and not the *substance* or principle it articulates, then a contrary injustice may occur. In the historical and cultural context of **Deut 19:15**, Israel was a pre-modern, agricultural society. The same was true in Paul's day. Such things as photography, mobile phones, tape recording, and other such technology did not exist. Now all such things exist in all cultures. Further, many sins (such as sexual sins) are committed precisely because there are no human witnesses. Thus, if a person is accused of adultery, it would be nonsensical, and could result in great injustice, for the other church leaders to refuse to receive the accusation because there were not two or three human witnesses to the act of adultery. Such accusations can be corroborated by credible evidence such as text messages left on mobile phones, photographs, witnesses who saw the elder and the one with whom he committed adultery together in places or at times where they shouldn't have been together, etc. All such circumstantial evidence is competent in a civil court and should be considered if a credible charge is made against a church elder. Even Paul cited the principle of **Deut 19:15** in a "looser" way in **2 Cor 13:1.** There he was concerned about sin and problems in the Corinthian church. He quoted the OT principle in conjunction with the fact that *"this is the third time I am coming to you."* He was implying that his own prior visits and writings to that church constituted the *"two or three witnesses"* that were sufficient to deal with wrongdoers in the church. Jesus did the same in **John 8:17-18** when he said, *"Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am he who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me."* This principle of evidence and corroboration is

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the corollary to *"maintain[ing] these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality"* (**1 Tim 5:21**). If the church is to remain pure and holy, then not only the people must be pure and holy in their conduct, but the leaders must be pure and holy in the way they *administer* church discipline: free from bias and prejudice; approaching their task with an attitude of "gentleness and humility, and with a genuine appreciation for our own weakness and with fear that we might fall into similar sins" (Grudem 1994: 899-900; see **Matt 7:3-5; Luke 6:42**); basing their decisions only on the evidence; with the goals maintaining the good name of the church, preventing the spread of sin, and bringing about the repentance and restoration of the wrongdoer.

D. *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*
- "Christ instituted two rites for His followers to observe: baptism, a once-for-all rite of initiation (Matt. 28:19; Gal. 3:27), and the Lord's Supper, a regular rite of remembrance (1 Cor. 11:23-26). These are called 'sacraments' in the Western church, 'mysteries' in the Eastern Orthodox church, or 'ordinances.' Scripture has no technical term for the two rites or the corresponding Old Testament observances, that is, circumcision of males as a rite of initiation (Gen. 17:9-14, 23-27) and the annual Passover as a rite of remembrance (Ex. 12:1-27). Biblical teaching, however, warrants classifying them all together as signs and seals of a covenant relationship with God.

  'Sacrament' is from a Latin word meaning sacred. Study of the Christian rites themselves leads to a definition of sacrament as a ritual action instituted by Christ in which signs perceived by the senses present to us the grace of God in Christ and the blessings of His covenant. They communicate and confirm these blessings to believers, who in receiving the sacraments respond to God's grace and declare their faith and allegiance to Him. . . . It was a mistake of the medieval church to classify as sacraments five more rites (confirmation, penance, marriage, ordination, and extreme unction). These five are not seals of a covenant relationship with God. They were not instituted by Christ, and they do not have 'any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God' (*Thirty-Nine Articles,* XXV).

  The sacraments are means of grace, for God uses them to strengthen faith's confidence in His promises and to call forth acts of faith for receiving the good gifts signified. The efficacy of the sacraments is not from the faith or virtue of the minister, but from the faithfulness of God, who, having given the signs, is now pleased to use them. . . . As the preaching of the Word makes the gospel audible, so the sacraments make it visible." ("Sacraments" 2005: 1411)
- "A sacrament is not just something in nature created in order to be a sign of grace (the rainbow, for example). A sacrament is a sign of *participation* in *saving* grace. It marks not simply the presence and work of God, but his application of salvation to sinners. . . . These outward signs mark out a visible fellowship; they structure Christ's church as a community with membership. Baptism requires a decision about admission to the community. The Supper, a sign of continuing fellowship, implies the exclusion of those who have turned from the Lord." (Clowney 1995: 271, 272)
  1. <u>Baptism.</u> Baptism is the initiation rite of the church. It is symbolic on many levels:
     - Baptism expresses an individual's identification and union with Christ (**Rom 6:3-5; Gal 3:27**);
     - Baptism is a naming ceremony whereby the person baptized is baptized into the name of the triune God (**Matt 28:19**), i.e., "the name they bear as those called children of God (Is. 43:6b-7)" (Clowney 1995: 278);
     - Baptism symbolizes repentance and forgiveness of sins, the use of water signifying cleanliness and regeneration (**Ezek 36:25; Acts 22:16; Col 2:11-13; 1 Pet 3:21**);[10]

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[10] **Rom 10:9** says, *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* **1 Pet 3:21** says, *"Baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience."* John Piper describes salvation's relationship to the confession of faith and to baptism in these verses this way: "The movement of the lips in the air [**Rom 10:9**] and the movement of the body in water [**1 Pet 3:21**] save only in the sense that they give expression to the single justifying act, namely, faith (Rom. 3:28). Baptism is the outward appeal of faith to God in the heart." (Piper 2013: 158)

It should be noted that the traditional Roman Catholic view of baptism is that baptism itself is a *means* of *imparting* saving grace ("baptismal regeneration"). The Bible is clear, however, that we are saved by God's grace through faith alone, not by performing a physical act such as baptism (e.g., **Rom 3:28; 4:1-5; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7**). This is corroborated by Jesus' statement to the thief on the cross, *"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise"* [**Luke 23:43**]; the thief was saved despite not being baptized). Andreas Kostenberger summarizes, "Theologically, *water baptism presupposes spiritual regeneration* as a prevenient and primary work of God in and through the person of the Holy Spirit. This follows plainly from the Baptist's announcement that the Messiah would baptize people in the Spirit. Thus

- Baptism symbolizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit, his filling and regenerating work (**Matt 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 2:3, 38; 10:47; 11:16-18; 1 Cor 12:13; Titus 3:5**);
- Baptism expresses and individual's identification with the church, initiates the person into the church, and symbolizes the union believers have with one another (**Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor 12:13**);
- Baptism also expresses something about the nature of the church: "Baptism from this angle is seen as a 'rite of entry' that expresses the character of the church—that it is a community where racial, economic, and sexual divisions are dissolved (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:27-29)" (Leithart 2012: n.p.).

Although most Christians and churches agree with the above descriptions of what baptism signifies, historically and today there have been disputes concerning whether infants (paedobaptism) or only professing believers (believer's baptism or credobaptism) should be baptized and concerning the mode of baptism (sprinkling, pouring, or immersion).

a. *Paedobaptism versus believer's baptism.*

- Paedobaptism. Those who believe in baptizing infants primarily argue from the comparison and continuity of Old Covenant circumcision and New Covenant baptism (**Col 2:11-12**) and the "household baptisms" which, they infer, included infants (**Acts 10:46-48; 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16**) (see Clowney 1995: 280-84; Strawbridge 1998; Strawbridge, ed. 2003; "Paedobaptism" 2013 [multiple pro-paedobaptism resources]).
- Believer's baptism. Those who believe in only baptizing professing believers emphasize that everywhere in the NT only believers are baptized (even the "household baptisms" do not say that infants were baptized), the consistent pattern of baptisms in the NT (including the "household baptism" passages) connect baptism with repentance and belief, not just the potential for repentance and belief when an infant gets older (e.g., **Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47; 16:14-15; 16:31-33; Col 2:12**). They point out the significant discontinuity between the Old Covenant people of God (which was by *physical birth* and restricted to the people of Israel) and the New Covenant people of God (which is by *faith* and includes people from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people (**Rom 4:16; 9:7-8; Gal 3:7, 9, 25-29; Rev 5:9; 7:9**) (see Piper 2013: 154-62; Welty 1996; Schreiner and Wright 2006; "Baptism" n.d. [multiple pro-believer's baptism articles]).

b. *The mode of baptism.* Different church traditions have used different modes of baptism, either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Each tradition appeals to different passages of Scripture in support of its position.

- Immersion. Those who favor immersion first look to linguistic analysis of the Greek NT word for "baptize" (*baptizō*): "The *mode* of John's and Jesus' baptism was most likely that of *immersion*. This is suggested by the root meaning of the word *baptō*, 'to dip' (e.g., Josh 3:15 LXX; Ruth 2:14 LXX baptizō, 'to baptize,' is an intensive or frequentative form. It is also indicated by the LXX usage of *baptizō* with reference to immersion (see 2 Kgs 5:14)." (Kostenberger 2006-2015: n.p.) Second, immersion (the body immersed in water and then rising out of it) best accords with the identification of baptism with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (**Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12**). Third, various NT passages suggest immersion (**Matt 3:16** [*"After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water"*]; **John 3:23** [*"John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there"*]; **Acts 8:36-39** [In order to be baptized, the Ethiopian eunuch *"went down into the water"* and after being baptized *"came up out of the water"*]). The early church documents the *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. 70-131) and the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 95-154) similarly describe baptism as "we descend into the water" and "we rise up" (*Epistle of Barnabas* 1989: 11.11) and "we descended into the water" (*Shepherd of Hermas* 1989: 31).
- Sprinkling or pouring. Those who favor sprinkling or pouring argue that "although *baptizō* and its cognates often refer to immersing or dipping, these terms are also used to

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repentance from sin and faith in Christ, accompanied by regeneration, are logically and chronologically prior to water baptism. This, in turn, puts water baptism in proper perspective. There is no warrant in the Gospels for the notion of baptismal regeneration." (Kostenberger 2006-2015: n.p.; see also Hunt 1995; White 2005-2006, and Johnson 2016 for further discussions of baptismal regeneration) Baptism is important because it is the outward and visible sign of what God has already done in regenerating and saving us; it is not a physical or mechanical act we do to in order to become regenerated and saved or that requires or compels God to regenerate and save us.

describe washing and cleansing. Thus, no conclusion about the mode of baptism may properly be drawn from the mere fact that these words are used." (Pipa 2003: 115) They go on to argue that one of the primary ways of referring to regeneration is to speak of it as cleansing or washing with water (see **Ezek 36:25; John 3:5; Titus 3:5-6**): "Hebrews 9:13, 19 teaches that washing was by sprinkling [see also **1 Pet 1:2** (*"sprinkled with His blood"*)]. . . . Earlier in verse 10, the writer refers to these ceremonial cleansings by a term translated 'washings.' The term he uses is the noun *baptismos.* The relation between the 'baptisms' of verse 10 and the ceremonial sprinkling in verses 13 and 19 seems quite clear." (Ibid.: 124) Further, **Titus 3:5-6** speaks of our regeneration being effected through the Holy Spirit who has been *"poured out."* Since baptism signifies the sealing of our union with Christ, effected through the work of the Holy Spirit, "the mode [of baptism] should reflect that of ceremonial cleansing (sprinkling) or the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (pouring)" (Ibid.: 126). Some evidence for this, at least where immersion is not possible, is found in the early church instruction manual the *Didache* (c. 70-110), which says that baptism should be performed "in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times." (*Didache* 1989: 7.1-3)

c. *Final thoughts on the importance of baptism.* Many churches tend to baptize someone and then forget about it. However, in **Romans 6** Paul appeals to the Romans to put off their sin and live righteous lives *on the basis of their baptism.* As discussed above, baptism is highly symbolic of our Christian life. It has been commanded by Christ as one of the two rites he instituted (**Matt 28:19**). Therefore, from time to time church leaders should call their people to remember their baptism and what it means, that they have publicly identified themselves with Christ and his church and the significance this should have in their lives. Some churches have a yearly service in which the members reaffirm their baptismal vows, or, when a person is being baptized, the other church members could reaffirm their baptismal vows and promise to pray for the baptismal candidate. Such practices help unite the church and help the members to reflect on their life in Christ.

2. The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper (also referred to as the Eucharist in some churches[11]) is the continuing, repeated rite of the church. As with baptism, the Lord's Supper expresses an individual's identification with Christ and also says something about the nature of the church: "When we all partake of one loaf, the church is publicly and ritually expressing that she is one body in Christ, her many members working together for the edification of the whole. The ritual becomes a standard against which we measure the quality of our life together." (Leithart 2012: n.p.)

a. *The Lord's Supper and Jesus' death.* Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during his "Last Supper" (Passover meal) (**Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26**). In the Supper, Jesus compared the bread to his body which was to be broken, the cup (the wine) to his blood which was to be poured out, and said that we are to do this *"in remembrance of Me"* (**Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25**). In **1 Cor 11:26** Paul says, *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."* Jesus' words instituting the Lord's Supper and its link with Passover (which commemorated the angel of death "passing over" the Israelites and involved a sacrificial lamb; see **1 Cor 5:7**, *"Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed"*) indicate the following regarding Jesus' death:

- The centrality of his death. John Stott says, "The bread did not stand for his living body, as he reclined with them at table, but his body as it was shortly to be 'given' for them in death. Similarly, the wine did not stand for his blood as it flowed in his veins while he spoke to them, but his blood which was shortly to be 'poured out' for them in death. . . . It was his death that he wished above all else to be remembered. There is then, it is safe to say, no Christianity without the cross. If the cross is not central to our religion, ours is not the religion of Jesus." (Stott 1986: 68)

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[11] The term Eucharist means "the thanksgiving." Holmes states, "The word *eucharistia*, which in the New Testament is used in the general sense of 'thankfulness' or 'thanksgiving' (cf., e.g., Acts 24:3; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess 3:9), soon became a technical term for the primary act of 'giving thanks,' namely the Lord's Supper (cf. Ign. *Smyrn.* 6.2; Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 65)" (Holmes 1989: 153-54n.29).

- <u>The purpose of his death.</u> According to **Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20;** and **1 Cor 11:25** the cup referred only to Christ's blood but to the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the only covenant in which God promised to forgive our sins (**Jer 31:34; Matt 26:28**). Jesus' death was "the divinely appointed sacrifice by which the new covenant with its promise of forgiveness will be ratified. He is going to die in order to bring his people into a new covenant relationship with God." (Stott 1986: 70)
- <u>The need to appropriate his death personally.</u> To eat the bread and drink the cup is to take Jesus Christ into us (see **John 6:53-58**). "Just as it was not enough for the bread to have been broken and the wine to be poured out, but they had to eat and drink, so it was not enough for him to die, but they had to appropriate the benefits of his death personally. The eating and drinking were, and still are, a vivid acted parable of receiving Christ as our crucified Saviour and of feeding on him in our hearts by faith." (Stott 1986: 70)

b. *Different views of the relationship of Christ to the elements of the Lord's Supper.* As with baptism, different church traditions have different understandings of the presence of Christ in connection with the elements (the bread and the cup).[12] There are, essentially, four views:

- <u>Transubstantiation.</u> The Roman Catholic position is that when Jesus said, *"This is my body"* (**Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24**), what he held in his hand "still had all the *appearances* of bread: the 'species' remained unchanged. However . . . the *underlying reality* (the 'substance') of the bread was changed into that of his body. In other words, it *actually was* his body, while all the appearances open to the senses or to scientific investigation were still those of bread, exactly as before." ("Transubstantiation" 2017: Roman Catholic Church) Likewise today, when a duly ordained priest serves communion, the substance of the bread and wine is said to be transformed (transubstantiated) into the actual body and blood of Christ, even though the "species" (outward appearance) remains the same.
- <u>Sacramental union (consubstantiation).</u> "Lutherans believe that the Body and Blood of Christ are 'truly and substantially present in, with and under the forms' of consecrated bread and wine (the elements), so that communicants eat and drink both the elements and the true Body and Blood of Christ himself in the Sacrament of the Eucharist whether they are believers or unbelievers. The Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence is also known as the sacramental union [sometimes called consubstantiation]." ("Eucharist in Lutheranism" 2017: Beliefs)
- <u>Spiritual presence.</u> Reformed churches (Presbyterian and others whose roots stem from John Calvin) teach that "Christ's body and blood are really present in the sacrament, but that this presence is communicated in a spiritual manner rather than by his body being physically eaten. He is held to be present by his Spirit as one eats and drinks in faith. Thus, in the Lord's Supper believers experience, celebrate, and testify that Christ is present and alive; hence, it truly is "communion" with him. The Reformed doctrine of real presence is sometimes called mystical real presence or spiritual real presence." ("Lord's Supper in

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[12] The oldest known Eucharistic prayers are set forth in the *Didache* (c. 70-110) as follows:

"9. Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows: First, concerning the cup: We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever.

And concerning the broken bread: We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever. Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and then was gathered together and became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning this: 'Do not give what is holy to dogs.'

10. And after you have had enough, give thanks as follows: We give you thanks, Holy Father, for your holy name which you have caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through Jesus your servant; to you be the glory forever.

You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake, and gave food and drink to men to enjoy, that they might give you thanks; but to us you have graciously given spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your servant. . . ." (*Didache* 1989: 9.1-10.3) At minimum, this indicates that the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is a later idea.

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Reformed theology" 2017: Introduction) This is essentially the position of Anglicans and Methodists also.

- Memorial view. "Memorialism is the belief held by some Protestant denominations that the elements of bread and wine (or juice) in the Eucharist (more often referred to as The Lord's Supper by memorialists) are purely symbolic representations of the body and blood of Jesus, the feast being established only or primarily as a commemorative ceremony. The term comes from Luke 22:19: 'This do in memory of me' and the attendant interpretation that the Lord's Supper's chief purpose is to help the participant *remember* Jesus and his sacrifice on the Cross." ("Memorialism" 2016: n.p.) Christ's words instituting the rite could not have been saying that his body was physically present in the bread and wine or that the bread and wine were transformed into his body, since he was in his body before the disciples, and before his ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost Christ was not ubiquitous (i.e., present everywhere at the same time); instead, his words were acknowledging his absence and were calling his disciples to recall his death (memory) and await his coming again (hope). This is the position of most Baptists, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals.

c. *Final thoughts concerning the Lord's Supper.* Our participating in the Lord's Supper means: (1) We *remember* the death of Christ (**Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25**); (2) We *proclaim* the death of Christ (**1 Cor 11:26**); (3) We *celebrate* Christ, our participation with him, and his presence with us; (4) We *anticipate* Christ's return and the ultimate feast in his presence (**Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16, 18; 1 Cor 11:26;** see **Rev 19:7-9**); and (5) We *celebrate and express* our fellowship and oneness with other believers (**Luke 22:17; 1 Cor 10:16-17**).

Different churches celebrate the Lord's Supper with different frequencies (some every week, some every month, some at other intervals). Regardless of the frequency with which the Lord's Supper is celebrated, because of its symbolic importance, Paul tells us that we need to "examine ourselves" so that we take the Supper in a "worthy manner" and not "eat and drink judgment" to ourselves (**1 Cor 11:27-29**). Such self-examination should include asking ourselves: (1) Am I a believer? (2) Is there unrepented sin in my life? (3) Am I in right relationship with the rest of the body and with other people in general? If we take the Lord's Supper seriously, it can act as a means of God's grace to draw us closer to him.[13]

III. The Church: Its Mission and Purpose—Introduction

A. *The church exists by the grace of God for the glory of God*
1. God through Christ has saved us and initiated the church solely by his grace (**Matt 16:18; John 1:14-17; Rom 3:21-24; 5:14-21; 8:29-30; 11:5-6, 36; 1 Cor 15:10; Eph 1:5-6, 18-23; 2:8-10; 3:1-7; Col 1:13-23; 2 Thess 2:16-17; 1 Tim 1:12-15; 2 Tim 1:8-11; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7; Heb 2:9**).
2. The chief end of the church is to glorify God (**Isa 43:7; 44:23; 46:13; Matt 5:16; John 5:44; 12:27-28; 14:13; 17:22-24; Rom 11:36; 15:7-9; 16:27; 1 Cor 6:19-20; 10:31; Eph 1:3-14; 3:21; Phil 1:9-11; 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; 1 Pet 2:12; 4:11; 2 Pet 3:18; Jude 25; Rev 1:6**).

B. *The Christian life—and hence the life of the church—is holistic*
Jesus said, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"* (**John 10:10**). Jesus is telling us that "there is only one means of receiving eternal life . . . only one source of knowledge of God, only one fount of spiritual nourishment, only one basis for spiritual security—Jesus alone" (Carson 1991: 385). The eternal life which Jesus gives "is not to be construed as more time to fill (merely 'everlasting' life), but life at its scarcely imagined best, life to be lived" (Ibid.). In other words, eternal life begins now. Eternal life is not merely life that goes on forever but is a different *kind* of life. It is a life like Jesus' own life. Jesus' life was not limited only to what some people think of as "spiritual" matters (prayer, reading the Bible, etc.). Rather, Jesus demonstrated that true life, the abundant life he gives, is holistic and applies in all areas of life. As one writer puts it, "Jesus went about practicing the abundant life in full view of everyone. His kind of living substituted service for self-aggrandizement and trumped self-absorption by paying attention to others' needs. Jesus proved that this approach to life paves the way to abundance." (McNeal 2009:

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[13] A summary of historical views of the nature of the church and the sacraments is attached as **APPENDIX 1—DOCTRINAL HISTORY: ECCESIOLOGY**.

31) After he washed his disciples' feet, Jesus said, *"I gave you an example that you should do as I did to you"* (**John 10:15**). Jesus' example of the abundant life applies to all individuals who follow him.

Since the church as a whole is the "body of Christ" (**Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 3:6; 5:23; Col 1:18, 24**), Jesus' example of the abundant life also applies to the church corporately. Jonathan Dodson points out, "When we are converted to *Jesus*, we are converted *into his church*. . . . When we think of the gospel, we think primarily of individual conversion. On the contrary, the Bible typically presents conversion as a communal phenomenon. . . . When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Head (Col. 2:6), we are immediately knit into his body (Col. 1:18; 2:2). . . . A Jesus-centered community is an attractive community—a community that encourages, forgives, serves, loves, and invites non-Christians into its community. The gospel reconciles people to God and to one another, creating a single new community comprised of an array of cultures and languages to make one new humanity (Col. 2:15). . . . When we act as the church toward one another, we display the gracious, redemptive reign of Jesus to the world. As Jesus's redemptive reign breaks into this world, the church grows into the full stature of Christ." (Dodson 2012: 109-110, emph. in orig.)

C. *God is glorified by our faith which is expressed in our acts of love to God and other people*

　　　　1. Faith is the attitude that most glorifies God because, by definition, faith looks away from self and toward God. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him"* (**Heb 11:6**). *"Whatever is not from faith is sin"* (**Rom 14:23**). Faith is complete belief and trust in God in all aspects of our lives (**Hebrews 11**). Faith and trust in God is finding our meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in him, not in the things of this world (see **Phil 4:10-13; Heb 13:5-14**). As John Piper says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him" (Piper 2003: 288).

　　　　2. Genuine faith always expresses itself in obedience to God (**Matt 7:13-27; John 14:21-24; 15:1-11; Jas 1:22-2:26**), and genuine faith and true obedience to God will express itself in love to God and other people. The reason why this is true is because love is from God because God is love (**1 John 4:7-8, 16**) and we are to be like Him (**Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18**). In fact, *"We love, because He first loved us"* (**1 John 4:19**; see also **Eph 5:2**). "If anyone ever asks, 'How does the fact that God loves you result in your loving others?' the answer is: The new birth creates that connection. The new birth is the act of the Holy Spirit connecting our dead, selfish hearts with God's living, loving heart so that his life becomes our life and his love becomes our love." (Piper 2009: 157) Thus, love is the primary test or sign for whether or not someone truly has been born again. How central love is to Christian relationships, to the church, and to Christianity itself is seen in the following ways:

● Jesus said that the two commandments, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,"* and *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"* are the foundations for the entire Bible (**Matt 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28**).

● The apostle John said that *"the one who does not love does not know God"* (**1 John 4:8**), and *"If someone says, 'I love God,"* and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen"* (**1 John 4:20**). Thus, how we do the "second commandment" (i.e., how we love people) is the proof and test of whether we are really doing the "first commandment" (i.e., loving God).

● Love is linked with the forgiveness of our sins (**Luke 7:36-50; 1 Pet 4:8**).

● The "goal" of Christian teaching is *"love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"* (**1 Tim 1:5**).

● The entire law is fulfilled in the statement, *"you shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (**Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14**).

● On the night before He died, the "new commandment" Jesus gave His disciples was *"love one another, even as I have loved you"* (**John 13:34; 15:17**).

● *"Love for one another"* is the one sign that Jesus gave by which *"all men will know that you are My disciples"* (**John 13:35**).

● Love is the *"more excellent way"* (**1 Cor 12:31**). It is greater than faith and hope (**1 Cor 13:13**). If one does not have love, he is "nothing" even if he speaks with the tongue of men and angels, has the gift of prophecy, has all knowledge, and has the faith that can move mountains (**1 Cor 13:1-2**). If one does not have love, he gains "nothing" even if he gives away everything he owns to help the poor and even gives up his own body to be burned (**1 Cor 13:3**).

● *"Fervent love for one another"* is to be shown *"above all"* else (**1 Pet 4:8**).

● Love is the first of the "fruit of the Spirit" listed in **Gal 5:22-23** and summarizes all of the "fruit of the Spirit" (significantly, the "fruit of the Spirit" is singular, not plural).

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- Love is *"the perfect bond of unity"* which is to be demonstrated beyond all other things (**Col 3:14**).
- Scripture calls love *"the royal law"* (**Jas 2:8**).
- The height of love is self-sacrifice: *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends"* (**John 15:13**).
- The law of love is very practical: *"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets"* (**Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31**).
- The Apostles continually appeal to believers on the basis of love and exhort believers to demonstrate love to one another more and more (**1 Cor 8:1; 16:14; 2 Cor 2:8; 8:24; Gal 5:6, 13; Eph 3:17-19; 4:2, 15; 5:2, 25, 28; Phil 2:1-2; Col 2:2; 3:14; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; Phlm 9; Heb 10:24; 1 Pet 2:17; 4:8; 2 Pet 1:7; 1 John 4:7-11; 2 John 5**).

Thinking of the mission and purpose of the church in terms of love requires us to: (1) think of the church in *relational* terms; and (2) consider not only *what* the church must do but *how* the church must do it.

D. *The four basic missions and purposes of the church*

The following basic missions and purposes of the church are designed to be interrelated and all are for the purpose of demonstrating our faith and magnifying the glory of God:

1. Worship of God. Worship *reflects* the grace and love of God back to him. Worship is not primarily an activity but is an attitude that pervades all of life and all activities.

2. Discipleship of believers. Discipleship of believers *applies* the grace and love of God to the body of Christ. Discipleship includes the development and nurture of all aspects of believers' lives, "spiritual" and otherwise.

3. Mission to unbelievers. Mission (service, outreach) *extends* the grace and love of God to those who are not yet believers.

4. Unity (wholeness). Unity and wholeness *identify* the church as a healthy recipient of and vehicle for God's grace and love. Demonstrating unity and wholeness is an important sign that the church is properly worshiping God, discipling its members, and is truly engaged in God's mission to the world.

IV. <u>WORSHIP</u>

The mission and purpose of the church is found in worshipping God. **Ps 29:2** calls us to worship: *"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness"* (see also **Ps 96:7-9**).

A. *Worship primarily is an inward and spiritual attitude that pervades all of our lives rather than an outward and bodily activity*

"The essential, vital, indispensable, defining heart of worship is the experience of *being satisfied with God in Christ*. This experience magnifies his worth, and such magnifying is what worship is. . . . Worship is not first an outward act; it is an inner spiritual treasuring of the character and the ways of God in Christ. It is a cherishing of Christ, a being satisfied with all that God is for us in Christ. When these things are missing, there is no worship, no matter what forms or expressions are present." (Piper 2010: 250-51, emph. in orig.)

1. Worship is God and Christ-centered. Worship is our *response* to who God is, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. The essence of worship is being satisfied with God in Christ (see **Ps 32:11; 37:4; 42:1; 100:2; Phil 1:20-21; 4:4, 10-13; Col 3:4**).

    a. *The worship of God in heaven focuses on:* who God is (his glory; his awesome nature), and what God through Christ has done, is doing, and will do (creation; salvation; his rule; his coming judgment)—see **Isa 6:1-8; Rev 4-5; 7:9-17; 11:15-19; 15; 19:1-6**.

    b. *These same things*—God's nature and his acts—are the focus of worship in the great psalms of worship (see **Psalms 8; 19; 24; 29; 33; 46-48; 63; 65-68; 76; 84; 87; 92; 93; 96-100; 103; 104; 111; 113; 115; 117; 135; 145-150**).

    c. Worship will last forever because God lasts forever.

2. Worship glorifies God and helps transform us into Christ's image.

    a. *God personifies the highest and best of all virtues*—holiness, goodness, love, truth, wisdom, justice, compassion, grace, faithfulness, etc.

    b. *People value what they praise.* "If we praise God for his justice, we prize justice. If we praise him for his loving-kindness, we cherish loving-kindness. By praising God for such qualities, we treasure them and are drawn to them ourselves." (Doriani 2001: 92)

B. *There is a broad aspect of worship (i.e., living for God and service to him in all of our lives) and a narrow aspect of worship (i.e., coming together as a corporate body to worship the Lord)*

The two are related—*we worship the Lord in vain if our narrow worship is not accompanied by the broad* (see **1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 51:14-17; Isa 1:11-17; 29:13-16; Jer 6:16-20; 7:21-26; Ezek 16:48-50; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; Matt 12:1-8; 15:5-9; 23:23; Mark 12:28-33; Luke 6:6-10; Rom 12:1; Col 3:23-24; Jas 1:27**).

    1. Worship involves all parts of our lives and being.

      a. *True worship takes place during all of our lives, not just on Sundays.* The attitude of worship should affect how we view people and all other aspects of our lives (see **John 4:21-24; Rom 1:9-10; 12:1; Phil 3:3**). Rick Warren states, "We are often challenged to do *'great things'* For God. Actually, God is more pleased when we do small things for him out of loving obedience. They may be unnoticed by others, but God notices them and considers them acts of worship. Great opportunities may come once in a lifetime, but small opportunities surround us every day. Even through such simple acts as telling the truth, being kind, and encouraging others, we bring a smile to God's face. God treasures simple acts of obedience more than our prayers, praise, or offerings. The Bible tells us, *'What pleases the Lord more: burnt offerings and sacrifices or obedience to his voice? It is better to obey than to sacrifice'* [**1 Sam 15:22**]." (Warren 2002: 96, emph. in orig.) This attitude is encapsulated in **1 Cor 10:31** which says, *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (see also **Eph 5:18-20; 6:7; Col 3:17, 23**). John Piper summarizes, "The New Testament uses those greatest of all worship sentences [**1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17**] without any reference to worship services. They describe life. . . . In fact, the key words are 'always' and 'for everything''—'giving thanks *always* and *for everything*' [**Eph 5:20**]. This may in fact be what we should do in a worship service, but it is not Paul's burden to tell us that. His burden is to call for a radical, inward authenticity of worship and an all-encompassing pervasiveness of worship in all of life." (Piper 2010: 245)

b. *True worship involves all aspects of our being (head and heart; mind, emotions, and will).* True worship of God is worship *"in spirit and truth"* (**John 4:21-24**).

      (1) "Spirit" indicates that worship should engage our hearts, emotions, and spirit as we are enabled and drawn to worship by the Holy Spirit (see **Matt 15:8-9; 1 Cor 14:25**).

      (2) "Truth" indicates that worship should be gospel-centered and Word (Bible)-centered, because God exalts his Word and has revealed himself to us in the Word made flesh (Jesus) and in his written Word (the Bible), which are the truth (**Ps 119; 138:2; John 1:1-14; 14:6; 17:17; Eph 1:13; 1 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17; Heb 1:1-2; Jas 1:18**).

    2. Worship expresses to God our devotion to him in all of the ways he has ordained. Thus, we worship God through:

      a. *Singing* (**Ps 47:67; 95:1-7; 96:1-10; 98:1-6; Mark 14:26; 1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:18-19; Col 3:16; Rev 5:8-10**).

      b. *Praising Him* (**Ps 111:1-10; 112:1; 135:1-4; 144:1-150:6; Luke 24:52-53; Acts 2: 46-47; Rom 15:7-13; Heb 2:11-12; 13:15; 1 Pet 4:11; Rev 4:8-11; 5:11-14; 7:9-14; 19:4-6**).

      c. *Confession and repentance of sin.* Exalting God should lead to a corresponding sense of our own sinfulness. That should lead to true repentance and then the assurance of forgiveness (see **Ps 34:18; 51:16-17; Isa 6:3-7; Luke 5:8; 2 Cor 7:9-11; Jas 5:16; 1 John 1:5-9; Rev 5:2-5**).

      d. *The Lord's Supper* (**1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-26**).

      e. *The reading, preaching, and teaching of his Word* (**Acts 2:42; 5:42; 1 Cor 14:19; 2 Cor 4:5; 1 Tim 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 6:2b; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:16-17; 4:1-4; Titus 2:1**).

      f. *Prayer* (**Acts 1:14; 2:42; 1 Timothy 2**).

      g. *Giving* (**1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9**).

      h. *Responding with lives of living sacrifice* (**John 10:27; 15:8; Rom 12:1; Eph 2:8-10; 4:11-5:21; Col 1:9-10; 2:6-7; 3:23-24**).

V. DISCIPLESHIP

- The Greek word for "disciple" is *mathētēs.* "*Mathētēs* means more in the NT than a mere pupil or learner. It is an adherent who accepts the instruction given to him and makes it his rule of conduct." (Zodhiates 1993: *mathētēs,* 936)

- "Jesus's definition of a disciple includes the three aspects of rational, relational, and missional. These aspects are expressed through the communication of gospel truth (rational) within everyday relationships of

love (relational) with a grace agenda to baptize people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (missional). *A disciple of Jesus, then, is someone who learns the gospel, relates the gospel, and communicates the gospel.* In short, disciples are gospel centered." (Dodson 2012: 37-38, emph. in orig.)

• "A disciple is one who is: Following Christ (head). A disciple has surrendered to Jesus as Savior and Lord of his or her life. . . . Being changed by Jesus (heart). Jesus said we would know a tree by its fruit (see Matthew 7:17-20). He did not mean perfect fruit; He meant growing fruit. As we spend time following Jesus, He changes us internally—He changes who we are. Committed to Jesus' mission to save people from their sin (hands). Jesus saved us for a purpose. . . . God's mission is now our mission, and we recognize that we are responsible for our own slice of history. Our hands are for His service. . . . It's the job and privilege of every Christian to be a disciple of Jesus, and it's the responsibility of every church to make disciples." (Putnam 2010: 32-33, 35)

• "Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well." (Ogden 2007: 4n.5)

• "If you make disciples, you always get the church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples. . . . We need to understand the church as the *effect* of discipleship and not the cause. If you set out to build the church, there is no guarantee you will make disciples. It is far more likely that you will create consumers who depend on the spiritual services that religious professionals provide." (Breen 2011: 11)

• "Your church is only as good as her disciples. A hot band, dynamic preaching, state-of-the-art facilities and wonderful programs do not make a great church if the disciples are simply consumers and unengaged in the grand work of making disciples. But if the disciples in your church are empowered and engaged in mission, then your church is strong and healthy. . . . We have done things backwards for too long. We must reverse the order. We think that the solution to having good disciples is to make better churches, when in fact the way to have good churches is to make better disciples." (Cole 2011: n.p.)

• "In a healthy church body, worship leads to evangelism, which leads to discipleship. . . . Evangelism should always be designed to bring the convert into the local church, where the work of discipleship can be done. . . . Unless evangelism brings converts into the visible body of Christ, it is like assisting at a baby's birth and then leaving the infant out in the cold alone. . . . Important words: *The true object of evangelism, in the context of the Great Commission, is discipleship.*" (Colson 1992: 343-45, emph. in orig.)

A. *Scriptural bases*

The mission and purpose of the church is found in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry—in other words, producing disciples. The basic passage that describes this fundamental priority of the church is **Eph 4:11-16:** [11]*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,* [12]*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;* [13]*until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.* [14]*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;* [15]*but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,* [16]*from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love* (see also **Rom 8:29; Col 1:28-29; 1 Thess 3:11-13; 2 Tim 2:2; 1 John 2:3-6**).

In multiple passages, Jesus called on people to follow him as his disciples and discussed the nature of being a disciple (see **Matt 4:18-22; 5:3-16; 10:24-25; 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 6:40; 8:19-21; 9:23-24, 57-62; 14:25-33; John 8:31-32; 13:34-35; 15:1-8, 18-20**).

B. *The basis of discipleship: the gospel*

God is holy, just, righteous, and good (**Gen 18:25; Exod 34:6-7; Lev 11:44; Job 34:10-12; Ps 5:4; 136:1; 145:17; Hab 1:13; Rom 1:18; Jas 1:13**). Although the first human beings (Adam and Eve) were created without sin, they chose to follow Satan and disobey God and therefore became sinful (**Gen 3:1-19**). As a result, every human being since Adam and Eve has been born in a state of moral corruption known as indwelling sin; this indwelling sin is a "law" or power that is actively working inside every person (**Rom 7:5, 8-11, 14-24; Gal 5:17; Heb 3:12-13**). It leads to universal actualized sins as people go through lives (**Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; 143:1-2; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:20-23; Rom 3:9-18, 23; 5:12-14; 7:14-24**). The Bible correctly tells us the result of this: *"the wages of sin is death"* (**Rom 6:23;** see also **Gen 2:17; Ezek 18:4, 20; Rom 5:12**). Because God is holy, he cannot tolerate sin (**Hab 1:13; Rom 1:18**). God also is just: "Due to his holy and perfect nature God cannot turn

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a blind eye to perverse human behaviour as if it does not matter. . . . If God is to be true to his own righteous nature, all wrongdoing must be punished." (Alexander 2008: 130, 131)

If human beings are to be in right standing with God and enjoy eternal life, their sin has to be dealt with. This creates a tremendous problem. Because God himself is morally holy and perfect, that is the standard to which he holds us (**Matt 5:48**). The problem for human beings is that we can never achieve God's standard of holiness and perfection on our own. First, "once a person sins, it is impossible to ever be perfect" (Sproul 2002: 94). Second, even our good deeds are tainted with sin. Indeed, if we are doing good deeds in order to escape God's punishment and hell, that alone makes our good deeds *not* "good" because if our motive is to escape hell by doing "good deeds," then those deeds are, by definition, selfish and self-centered, which itself is sin. Third, no amount of good deeds changes the sinful nature and sinful propensities of the heart. Thus, good deeds do not transform corrupt, sinful people into righteous, sinless people; at their core, they remain sinful people. However, God is loving and does not desire that anyone would perish (**Ezek 18:23; 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9; 1 John 4:8**).

So what is the gospel? The word "gospel" is a Greek word (*euaggelion*) which means "good news" (Danker 2000: *euaggelion,* 402; Green and McKnight 1992: 282). "The Greek term 'gospel' (ev-angelion) distinguished the Christian message from that of other religions. An 'ev-angel' was news of a great historical event, such as a victory in war or the ascension of a new king, that changed the listeners' condition and required a response from the listener. So the gospel is news of what God has done to reach us. It is not advice about what we must do to reach God." (Keller n.d.: 1) The gospel is the good news that God has done for us what we never could do for ourselves. God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus lived the life we should have lived *as a man*; he perfectly obeyed God the Father in everything; he was *"tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin"* (**Heb 4:15**). That qualified him to be our representative, to take upon himself our sin and pay the penalty that otherwise we would have to pay but never could (**Rom 8:1-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Col 2:13-14; 1 Tim 2:5-6; 1 Pet 2:24**). At the same time, Jesus Christ was God. "God did not, then, inflict pain on someone else, but rather on the Cross absorbed the pain, violence, and evil of the world into himself. . . . This is a God who becomes human and offers his own lifeblood in order to honor moral justice and merciful love so that he can destroy all evil without destroying us. . . . Why did Jesus *have* to die in order to forgive us? There was a debt to be paid—God himself paid it. There was a penalty to be borne—God himself bore it. . . . On the cross neither justice nor mercy loses out—both are fulfilled at once. Jesus's death was necessary if God was going to take justice seriously and still love us." (Keller 2008: 192-93, 197)

Jesus' rising from the dead and ascending back to the Father validated who Jesus is and demonstrated that the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross for us. Consequently, who Jesus is and what he has done is the heart of the gospel. It is repeatedly proclaimed throughout the NT, e.g., **1 Cor 15:1-5**: *"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve"* (see also **John 20:30-31; Acts 10:36-43; 16:30-31; Rom 1:1-4, 16-17; 3:23-28; 10:8-13; 1 Cor 2:2; 1 Pet 3:18**). Salvation is *given* by God to people as a *gift* of his *grace;* it is *received* by people solely by *faith* in Christ. As **Eph 2:8-9** says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."* To be saved means to repent of our sins, accept by faith what Christ has done for us, and turn to Christ as the Lord of our life (**Matt 11:28; Mark 1:14-15; John 1:12; 3:16; 17:3; Acts 26:20; 1 John 1:8-9**). In Christ, we are as free from the guilt and penalty of sin as if we had paid the full price for our sin ourselves (**Rom 6:3-7; Gal 2:20**). In fact, when we turn to Christ in faith, he not only takes our sin onto himself and pays the price for our sin that we should have paid, but he also imputes to us his righteousness so that we can stand before God (**Isa 53:5-6, 10-11; Rom 10:4; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:17-18; 1 Pet 2:4; 3:18**).

When we believe the gospel and turn to Christ as our Lord, all aspects of our lives are affected: (1) All those who are united to Christ by faith have assurance of their salvation. If salvation depended even in part on our own efforts, we could never have the assurance that we had "done enough" to merit salvation. However, because God-in-Christ did for us what we could not do, Christians can and do have assurance that they are and forever will remain saved (**John 3:36; 6:37, 47; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12**). (2) Being saved and united with Christ changes the legal status of Christians. "The cross liberates from the power of sin, propitiates God's wrath, washes away the guilt and stain of sin, reconciles believers to God, and achieves cosmic victory over deadly spiritual foes" (Demarest 1997: 196). (3) Being saved and united with Christ changes Christians on the inside. When one comes to Christ, he or she receives a new heart (**Ezek 36:26; 2 Cor 3:3**), the mind of Christ (**1 Cor 2:16**), and the Spirit from Christ (**Ezek 36:26; John 14:17**). (4) Being saved and united with Christ gives

Christians an intimate, personal relationship with God through Christ. Christians can *"draw near with confidence to the throne of grace"* (**Heb 4:16**; see also **Heb 7:19**) because Christ is "in" believers (**John 14:20; 17:23; Rom 8:10; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17; Col 1:27; 1 John 3:24; Rev 3:20**) and believers are "in Christ" (**Rom 8:1; 12:5; 16: 6, 7, 9-10; 1 Cor 1:2, 30; 4:10, 15; 15:18, 22; 2 Cor 1:21; 5:17; 12:2; Gal 1:22; 3:28; 6:15; Eph 1:3; 2:6, 10; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 2:14; 4:16; 1 Tim 3:13; 2 Tim 3:12; Phlm 23; 1 Pet 5:14**). (5) Being saved and united with Christ gives Christians a new motive and means of living. Because Christ is in us and we have a new heart, new mind, and new Spirit, his values and priorities become our values and priorities. He is working in us and through us to make us just like himself (**Rom 8:29; Phil 2:12-13**). (6) Being saved and united with Christ creates a new humanity (**John 3:3; Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15**); believers are adopted into God's family as his children (**John 1:12; Rom 8:14-17, 23; 9:4; Gal 3:26; 4:5-7; Eph 1:5; 2:19; 1 John 3:1**) and become deeply related to each other as brothers and sisters (e.g., **Matt 12:50; Acts 1:16; 6:3; 11:29; 12:17; 16:40; 18:18; 21:7, 17; Rom 14:10; 1 Tim 5:1-2**). (7) One day, Christ will return and renew the entire world and all of creation (**Rom 8:18-23; 2 Pet 3:3-13; Rev 21:1-11**). That, in essence, is the gospel.

Deep understanding and appreciation of the gospel and its implications is central to discipleship: "The gospel is for disciples, not just for 'sinners;' it saves and transforms people in relationship, not merely individuals who go it alone. . . . Discipleship is about trusting Jesus, believing his gospel. While this may sound simple enough, the problem is that we all struggle to understand what trusting Jesus or believing the gospel really looks like. . . . [The Great Commission] focuses on proclaiming the gospel to not-yet disciples and teaching the gospel to already disciples. Jesus puts the gospel first, which leads to making and maturing disciples. He does not call people to evangelize first, making discipleship an optional second. Both evangelism and discipleship are gospel motivated. . . . Jesus proclaimed the same gospel to the crowds that he taught to the disciples. He did not have the twelve on a special, gospel-plus track to study advanced subject matter. The gospel is for undergraduates and graduates because nobody ever graduates from the gospel. Jesus taught the same gospel of the kingdom to sinners and saints. Why? Because his agenda of grace is the only solution to our common predicament of sin, Christian or non-Christian. Both desperately need the forgiving, reconciling, and restoring power of the gospel to know and enjoy God, not just once but for a lifetime." (Dodson 2012: 17, 19, 36, 38)

Many church leaders have too low a view of the gospel: They think it is only the "ABCs" of Christianity, that it is only for evangelism and sinners, and that it only pertains to the minimum number of beliefs a person must have in order to "become saved." Such church leaders then typically rely on man-made rules and regulations, exhortations from the pulpit, and threats of excommunication to regulate their members' external behavior. This approach demonstrates that neither the church leaders nor the church members understand the gospel at all. In fact, "The gospel [is] of kingdom proportions, animating and laying claim to all of life. The gospel makes all-encompassing demands, and what the gospel demands, it supplies." (Ibid.: 37)[14]

The gospel changes us internally so that we live by faith in Jesus as the Lord of our lives. Darrow Miller speaks of an intellectual war within the church "between those who would give priority to either evangelism or social action. Both sides are right, and both are wrong. Transformation means nothing less than radical change, in all spheres of life, as when a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. It is not merely a change in religious sentiments but a radical reorientation of a person's life. . . . This transformation begins on the inside, at the level of beliefs and values, and moves outward to embrace behavior and its consequences. The gospel is so much more than evangelism. Many Christians have accepted a diluted, pietistic version of Christ's command to disciple all nations; but the gospel is God's total response to man's total need." (Miller 1998: 73) The transformation effected by the gospel is profound:

- <u>Being saved and united with Christ gives Christians an intimate, personal relationship with God through</u>

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[14] In *The Cost of Discipleship* Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously contrasted what he called "cheap grace" versus "costly grace": "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. . . . Costly grace is the gospel which must be *sought* again and again, the gift which must be *asked* for, the door at which a man must *knock*. Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to *follow*, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly* because it cost God the life of his Son . . . and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. . . . Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'" (Bonhoeffer 1963: 47-48)

Christ. When one comes to Christ, he or she becomes *"a new creature"* (**2 Cor 5:17**). The source of guidance and power to live righteously are not primarily through external means (conformity to rules and rituals) but through internal means; the primary source of guidance and power is Jesus himself, who now lives in and through his people. As **Gal 2:20** puts it, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* Jesus gives us a new heart (**Ezek 36:26; 2 Cor 3:3**), mind (**1 Cor 2:16**), and Spirit (**Ezek 36:26; John 14:17**). He thereby applies his Word in and through us (**John 6:63; 68; 8:31-32; 14:26; 16:13-15; 2 John 9**). By the means given to believers by Christ, Christ's people are inevitably and progressively being sanctified and changed on the inside so that they are *"predestined to become conformed to the image of [Jesus Christ]"* (**Rom 8:29**).

• The gospel changes our behavior. The cross liberates us from the power of sin; no longer are we its slaves (**John 8:34; Rom 6:16**) but are now bound to Christ (**Eph 6:6**). This gives Christians a new motive and means of living. "Religion operates on the principle 'I obey—therefore I am accepted by God.' But the operating principle of the gospel is 'I am accepted by God through what Christ has done—therefore I obey.'" (Keller 2008: 179-80) As noted above, when one receives Christ and enters into a saving relationship with him, *objectively* one receives the resources (the new heart, new mind, and new Spirit) that enable the believer to live a new, moral, God-honoring life. *Subjectively,* "Christ's example of suffering on our behalf releases a new moral power that transforms our attitudes, motives, and conduct" (Demarest 1997: 196). The situation is similar to falling in love with someone: "Your love makes you eager for acceptance from the beloved. . . . [When you marry your beloved] Do you say, 'Great! I'm in! Now I can act any way I want'? Of course not. Now you don't even wait for the object of your affection to directly ask you to do something for them. You anticipate whatever pleases and delights them. There's no coercion or sense of obligation, yet your behavior has been radically changed by the mind and heart of the person you love." (Keller 2008: 183) That is why **Rom 6:1-2** says, *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"* Consequently, "we all need to be continually awakened to the beauty and glory of Christ and the sufficiency of his grace, which will in turn compel Christ-beholding obedience" (Dodson 2012: 74).

Ultimately, discipleship is the process of getting the disciple to truly *believe* the gospel so that it permeates the disciple's heart, mind, will, and all areas of life. In fact, as Timothy Keller states, "All problems, personal or social, come from a failure to apply the gospel in a radical way, a failure to get 'in line with the truth of the gospel' (Gal. 2:14). All pathologies in the church and all its ineffectiveness come from a failure to let the gospel be expressed in a radical way. If the gospel is expounded and applied in its fullness in any church, that church will begin to look very unique. People will find in it both moral conviction yet compassion and flexibility." (Keller 2000: 9) The Bible frequently describes this process of believing and acting in conformity with the gospel as a "fight" or "labor" or "striving" (**Col 1:29; 4:12; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7**). "We fight to behold the image of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. This faith fights not for perfection, but for belief. We fight to believe that Jesus is more precious, satisfying, and thrilling than anything else this world has to offer. This is faith in the gospel—the grand announcement that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us. When we believe the gospel, we get to enjoy the promises of God's grace, peace, and joy. When we don't believe the gospel, we move away from these things. Most of all, we move away from Jesus, who is worth our every effort, every gaze, and every belief." (Dodson 2012: 60). This is why the gospel is the basis for discipleship.[15]

C. *The substance of discipleship*

Believing the gospel and understanding its implications affect all aspects of a disciple's life. That is why, when Peter (and Barnabas) stopped eating with Gentiles, Paul *"opposed him to his face"* (**Gal 2:11**) on the basis that *"they were not straightforward <u>about the truth of the gospel</u>"* (**Gal 2:14**). "Since a biblical world-view involves all of life, the church must equip its members for all of life" (Colson 1992: 287). This means that

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[15] One sign of belief in the gospel is baptism. Andreas Köstenberger calls baptism "an essential part of Christian discipleship" (Köstenberger 2006: 33). He points out that in the "Great Commission" (**Matt 28:18-20**), disciple-making is said to consist of "baptizing converts and of teaching them to obey the commands of Jesus (see also John 4:1). An obedient church will take to heart the risen Christ's command to engage in mission and evangelistic preaching, seeking to engender conversions that ensue in baptism, instruction, and Christian growth. On an individual level, those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and have repented of their sin must be baptized as part of their Christian discipleship. While there may be a period of instruction preceding baptism, no undue obstacle should be placed in the path of a person who is genuinely converted and desirous of baptism." (Ibid.)

discipleship and the discipling process must keep the gospel—and the implications of the gospel for the major areas of life—as the central focus (see Carter, Suh, and David 2014; Vanderstelt n.d.). The following are important areas of belief and life which flow from the gospel. These are areas in which the church should disciple its members:

1. <u>The church should equip its members to know what they believe, why they believe it, and to defend their faith with others.</u> The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, i.e., God who came to earth as a man. Christianity alone recognizes and takes seriously the "fallenness" of human beings, the gravity of sin, the holiness and perfection of God, the incompatibility of God and sin coexisting together, the fact that all humans have earned and deserve judgment for their sins, and the inability of people by their own efforts to save themselves. That is why the fact that Jesus was fully man but also was fully God not only is important but is absolutely necessary to salvation. Gleason Archer states, "God as God could not forgive us for our sins unless our sins were fully paid for; otherwise He could have been a condoner and protector of the violation of His own holy law. It was only as a man that God in Christ could furnish a satisfaction sufficient to atone for the sins of mankind; for only a man, a true human being, could properly represent the human race. But our Redeemer also had to be God, for only God could furnish a sacrifice of infinite value, to compensate for the penalty of eternal hell that our sin demands, according to the righteous claims of divine justice." (Archer 1982: 323; see also Jadeed 1996-2015: 4). What Jesus was doing on the cross was receiving the judgment, paying the cost, and taking onto himself the punishment due to sinful humanity. Christ came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves—live the life we should have lived and pay the price for our sin that otherwise we would have to pay but never could; and when we believe that and receive him into our lives as our savior and Lord, he comes inside of us in the person of the Holy Spirit to be living his life through us, changing us from the inside-out so that we become more and more like him. That is *the gospel*.[16]

The fact that Jesus is who he said he is (God come to earth) and that his sacrifice on the cross was accepted by the Father were proven when Jesus did what no mere mortal could do, namely, rise from the dead and then ascend back to heaven. ECLEA's book *Christianity and Islam: Theological Essentials* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#islam) discusses and provides the biblical and historical evidence of Christ's deity, his crucifixion and resurrection, what Christ accomplished on the cross, why Christ's death on the cross was necessary, the nature of God, the Trinity, and the reliability of the Bible. ECLEA's book *Biblical Theology* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#theology) sets forth the basic biblical storyline, shows how the NT fits together with the OT, and deals with the issue of God's sovereignty, humanity's responsibility, and the existence of sin and evil. ECLEA's book *1 Timothy: Outline; Commentary; Inductive Training Manual* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#timothy) deals with the most important aspects of our faith: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; the importance of prayer; the qualifications to be a leader in the church; and the centrality of Jesus. The book also deals with important practical issues: true versus false teaching; spiritually disciplining one's life; rebuking and counseling people; the church's responsibility to the poor and needy; issues involving church elders; and the gospel and money. The "Inductive Training Manual" (the last section of ECLEA's book, *1 Timothy*) is a series of questions on each section of 1 Timothy, designed for small group discussion, to help Christians in general and church leaders in particular evaluate their own spiritual lives and the condition of their churches. These books are good resources for the church to use in equipping its members in these areas. Ultimately, good disciples need to be taught how to defend their faith (*apologetics*), not simply know Christian doctrines.

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[16] This raises an important intersection between discipleship, evangelism, and conversion. Setzer and Putman report, "A number of years ago, we began to observe an interesting trend in many of our new churches that attracted a large number of unreached/unchurched people. It seemed that the longer individuals took to finally go public with their faith, the less likely they were to fall through the cracks or go out the back door. On the other hand, when someone came in and rather quickly expressed a commitment to Christ, they seemed to disappear just as quickly. Recently, in an interview a missionary returning from Malaysia was asked about his personal evangelism approach. He noted this in the culture from which he had just returned, when someone experienced conversion, they were already firmly grounded in Scripture, often engaged in community, and usually involved in some kind of service within the church. Discipleship in this context began long before conversion, and conversion was simply part of the discipleship process." (Setzer and Putman 2006: 104) This insight is confirmed by a successful team of Muslim-background believers in the Middle East who "concentrate on discipleship, not conversion. . . . We endeavor to do the discipleship up front. We trust that a person will come to genuine faith after being taught truth." (Daniel 2010: 40) Churches should seriously consider including all participants in discipleship groups, not only those who first have made a profession of faith.

2. <u>The church should equip its members to apply their faith and lead exemplary lives in the world.</u> The Bible repeatedly tells believers to live as Jesus lived, i.e., to *"work out your salvation"* (**Phil 2:12**). This applies in all areas of life. Paul says, *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (**1 Cor 10:31**). James goes so far as to say that *"faith without works is dead"* (**Jas 2:26**). Our conduct is to be exemplary and God-honoring *"so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world"* (**Phil 2:15**); *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age"* (**Titus 2:11-12**). Jesus emphasized the importance of living out our faith in public: *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (**Matt 5:16**). Paul likewise admonished that our faith should absorb our lives so that *"your progress will be evident to all"* (**1 Tim 4:15**). Changing deeply-engrained habits of thought and behavior so that believers *"become conformed to the image of [Christ]"* (**Rom 8:29**) is a life-long process. That is why mature believers need to teach and model the Christian life for immature believers.

Walter Henrichsen suggests, "In addition to using the Wheel illustration to help you train your disciple [see below, section **V. D. *The nature and characteristics of mature disciples***], you might want to develop areas of character, such as purity of life, faith, love, and integrity. However, we must constantly remind ourselves that the implementation of our training objectives must be done in synchronization with the individual's needs. On the basis of these needs, develop a plan. Always ask yourself three questions: (1) What does he need? (2) How can he get it? (3) How will I know when he has it?" (Henrichsen 1988: 103)

3. <u>The church should equip its members to effectively deal with the issue of sin in their lives.</u> The discipler and the disciples need to deal honestly with the issue of *sin* in their lives. The issue of sin is at the heart of the gospel (our sin is why Christ came to earth and died in our place, e.g., **Matt 1:21; 9:13; 26:28; Luke 5:32; John 1:29; 8:24; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Rom 6:23; 8:3; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4; Col 1:14; Heb 1:3; 2:17; 10:12; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 3:5; 4:10; Rev 1:5**). Being able to deal with sin also is an extremely important aspect of our lives (e.g., **Matt 6:12; 18:15-35; Luke 11:4; 15:7; 17:3; John 5:14; 8:11, 34; Rom 2:12; 3:9, 23; 6:1-2, 11-22; 7:14-24; Eph 4:26; 1 Tim 5:20; 10:26; 12:4; Jas 2:9; 4:8, 17; 5:16; 1 John 1:8-10; 3:6-9**). That is one reason why all members of discipleship groups have to agree on the foundational principles of transparent trust of each other, the truth of God's Word in community, and mutual life-change accountability discussed below. This can be very difficult in cultures such as East Africa where church leaders, and particularly men, are not prone to transparency or to admitting their faults and sins to each other. Additionally, the issue of dealing with sin in our lives is one reason why it may be a good idea for men to meet with men and women with women in order to effectively address gender-specific issues and sins head-on.

Despite cultural barriers, fear, and mistrust, to be disciples we are to follow the Bible which tells us to *"confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed"* (**Jas 5:16**). Dietrich Bonhoeffer discusses why this is so important: "In confession a man breaks through to certainty. Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a brother? . . . We must ask ourselves whether we have not often been deceiving ourselves with our confession of sin to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution. And is not the reason perhaps for our countless relapses and the feebleness of our Christian obedience to be found precisely in the fact that we are living on self-forgiveness and not a real forgiveness? . . . Who can give us the certainty that, in the confession and the forgiveness of our sins, we are not dealing with ourselves but with the living God? God gives us this certainty through our brother. Our brother breaks the circle of self-deception. A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person. . . . As the open confession of my sins to a brother insures me against self-deception, so, too, the assurance of forgiveness becomes fully certain to me only when it is spoken by a brother in the name of God. Mutual, brotherly confession is given to us by God in order that we may be sure of divine forgiveness." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 115-17)

Overcoming sin in our lives first requires that we know what sins currently are present in our lives. "Knowing our sin requires familiarity with our particular temptations, areas where we are prone to sin. These temptations and sins may be visible or invisible, as obvious as anger or as subtle as self-pity." (Dodson 2012: 122) Obviously, we must meditate and pray about this, along with reflecting on *when*

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and in what circumstances we are most tempted to sin. We also need to reflect on *why* we commit the particular sins we do. "No one ever sins out of duty. We all sin because we want to, because our hearts long for something. If we don't address the motivational issues behind our sin, we will only treat it superficially, adjusting our behavior, not our hearts. God doesn't want mere behavioral adjustment; he wants affectionate obedience!" (Ibid.: 124) Because God has given us the body of Christ to help, exhort, admonish, and encourage us, overcoming our sins can most effectively occur in relationships of trust and accountability. That is what small discipleship groups are designed to be. Therefore, we can ask other members of the discipleship group to "point out sins they see in your life. Very often, we fail to see our own weaknesses. A loving community can help us by holding up the mirror of God's Word so that we can see ourselves more clearly." (Ibid.: 123)

Our fight against sin is aided by understanding the gospel. Specifically, although we are in a battle in which *"the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh"* (**Gal 5:17**; see also **Rom 7:14-23**), our warfare takes place against the backdrop of the fact that, on the cross, Christ has already defeated the penalty, power, and presence of sin. "We will never bear the penalty of sin because Jesus bore our penalty for us in his wrath-absorbing death. The power of sin has been broken because Jesus has given us new life. The presence of sin will be eternally banished once we die or are united with Jesus in his return." (Ibid.: 126) By understanding the gospel, we will understand that Jesus has freed us from the power of sin; therefore, we will not fall back into our old patterns of sin. We will also understand that God accepts us, not as we are in ourselves but as we are in Christ; therefore, we have every reason to fight from our new identity, knowing that in Christ we have a new, holy nature and holy people do not sin (**1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18**), whereas persistent, unrepentant sin can disqualify us from the kingdom because it exposes our "faith" as mere lip-service (**Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Heb 3:7-13; 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 1 John 3:6, 10**). We fight against our sin because we love Jesus supremely, because of who we are in Christ, because of what he already has done in us and for us, what he is doing in us and for us, and what he will do in us and for us. He is *"making all things new"* (**Rev 21:5**; see also **2 Cor 5:17**), even us. When we truly believe this—and help, exhort, admonish, and encourage the other members of our discipleship group to believe this—we will see great victories over the sin in our lives. We will see victories because we do not fight alone but can trust our Lord to work in us (**John 14:16-17, 26; Rom 8:13-14; Phil 2:12-13**). It is a lifelong process, but God has guaranteed the victory.

An important aspect of sin is our reaction when others sin against us and cause us harm. That happens frequently and is why forgiveness and reconciliation are so important. Failure to forgive others can lead to hardness of heart and multiple other problems. This is an issue all people face. ECLEA's book on *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#forgive) deals with the important Scriptural bases of forgiveness and reconciliation. It discusses what forgiveness and reconciliation are and what they are not. Practical models for how to forgive and how to reconcile are included. It is a good resource for the church to use in equipping its members in these areas.

4. <u>The church should equip its members to build strong marriages and families.</u> The family is the basic unit of society. When marriages and the relationships between parents and children are not sound, society breaks down. ECLEA's book *Biblical Marriage and Parenting* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#marpar) is a Christ-centered biblical exposition and application of God's revelation concerning marriage and parenting, covering its institution, purposes, our roles and responsibilities with particular attention to relationships, communication, sex, parenting, family planning, and divorce. It is a good resource for the church to use in equipping its members in this area.

5. <u>The church should equip its members to fulfill their vocations in an excellent and God-honoring way.</u> "In the Reformation era, helping believers find their vocation was considered a first step in discipleship. Since our work is to bring glory to God, the church needs to teach a high view of work and the Christian character traits of diligence, thrift, creativity, and excellence. If the church doesn't teach a healthy work ethic, who will? The church is also the natural place to provide vocational counseling." (Colson 1992: 292-93) Paul recognized the importance of a good work ethic *as a witness for Jesus* when he wrote, *"All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor <u>so that the name of our God and our doctrine will not be spoken against</u>. Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles."* (**1 Tim 6:1-2**)

6. <u>The church should equip its members to be good stewards of their bodies, environment, time, and minds.</u> Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 6:19-20;** see also **John 14:16-17; 1 Cor**

3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16). God owns the world (i.e., our environment) and everything in it (**Job 12:7-10; Ps 24:1; 50:10-12; 104:1-30; Isa 66:1-2a; Matt 5:34-35; Acts 7:49-50**). "Time is life. It is irreversible and irreplaceable. To waste your time is to waste your life, but to master your time is to master your life and make the most of it." (Lakein 1989: 1) How we relate to all of these areas begins by how we think; therefore, the Bible tells us to *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (**Rom 12:2**). ECLEA's book *Biblical Stewardship* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#stewardship) contains lengthy and practical discussions of stewardship of one's body, the environment, time, and the mind. It is a good resource for the church to use in equipping its members in these areas.

7. <u>The church should equip its members to be good stewards of their finances.</u> Money is spiritual. Our attitude and priorities toward our material possessions are significant indicators of what our true attitude and priorities are toward God (see **Jas 2:14-18; 1 John 3:17**). If we do not control our money, we do not control our lives. ECLEA's book *Biblical Stewardship* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#stewardship) contains a lengthy section on stewardship of money and possessions, including practical suggestions for how to budget and manage one's finances. It is a good resource for the church to use in equipping its members in this area.

8. <u>The church should equip its members to be effective bearers of the Good News and to reach out to those with particular physical and spiritual needs.</u> "All believers are called to be witnesses, both in word and in deed. Thus, the church needs to train laypeople to identify their own evangelistic gifts and use them effectively in the marketplace." (Colson 1992: 294) Our deeds and our words must go together. Jesus emphasized the relational nature of our faith when he said that how we treat *"the least of these"* is, in fact, how we are treating Jesus himself (**Matt 25:31-46**). Every village and community has people who are shunned by others: members of other tribes, people with HIV/AIDS, orphans, prostitutes, prisoners, drunkards and drug addicts, the homeless, homosexuals, the poor, the sick, the dying. Our acts of love toward the unlovable give us the opportunity to tell such people about Jesus (*"We love, because He first loved us,"* **1 John 4:19**) and also give credibility to our words.

Additionally, every Sunday school class, small group, discipleship group, and other component of the church (including the music and worship team) should have some external community service component. "Service to others is the first step, not some later expression of spirituality. We all know that we grow the most when we are helping and serving others. Service is the threshold where many of us learn the most about ourselves and come to see God at work in the world. . . . Waiting on people to be 'ready to serve' usually means preventing them from serving, since most of us learn by doing and debriefing rather than through training divorced from deployment. Jesus deployed his disciples long before they were 'ready.' He knew that the fastest way to develop them was to engage them in real ministry encounters. He then debriefed their experiences so that they could learn from those experiences." (McNeal 2009: 105-06) When people perform community service or other missions projects, they should be regularly debriefed. "Questions could include 'What did you learn? About people? About God? About yourself? Did you find prejudices or biases you have that were challenged? What part of this experience or insights from this experience can you transfer into the rest of your life? How will your life be different from this experience?' The practice of life debriefing will also have the spiritual benefit of helping people see that God is active in their lives every day in every sphere. This is fundamental to helping people live more intentional and more missional lives." (Ibid.: 103) The church's role in equipping its members in these areas is vital. The importance of relationships and demonstrating love is discussed at length in the section "Stewardship of Relationships" in ECLEA's book *Biblical Stewardship* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#stewardship).

D. *The nature and characteristics of mature disciples*

All disciples are to be *"faithful men [Gr. = anthrōpois (i.e., people of either sex; human beings)] who will be able to teach others also"* (**2 Tim 2:2**). "The pathway to true discipleship begins when a person is born again" (MacDonald 1975: 4). However, Jesus "is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to Him—or their weekends—or their years of retirement. Rather he seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives." (Ibid.: 5) The Bible gives several characteristics of a true disciple:

1. <u>Supreme love for Jesus Christ even over those closest to us.</u> *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple"* (**Luke 14:26**; see also **Matt 19:29; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 18:29-30**). Jesus' statement about "hating" one's family in **Luke 14:26** does not mean that a disciple must

emotionally despise his family or consider them as if they were his or her enemies.[17] Rather, his statement is a Hebrew idiom of comparison meaning that "compared to your love for me, your feelings for everyone else, including those closest to you, should be as if you hated them—I am to be that important and central to you." Supreme love for Jesus comes from seeing ourselves as we really are, namely, people who are warped and have sin at the core of our being, who cannot change that no matter how hard we try, and who have found that Jesus is the only cure. Henrichsen observes, "Christianity is a religion of rescue. It is designed for the desperate. It is for people who have a craving for something more than they can eke out of life by themselves. . . . One of the fundamental requisites for true discipleship is a spirit of desperation that burns deep within the soul." (Henrichsen 1988: 36-37)

2. <u>Denial of self to follow Christ.</u> *"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it."* (**Luke 9:23-24**; see also **Matt 10:38-39; 16:24-25**) Jesus' statement about "taking up one's cross" is making clear that even the disciple's own life is secondary to Jesus and to obedience to Jesus. Jonathan Dodson observes, "In the Roman Empire it was ordinary for sentenced men to carry crosses to their executions. Bearing the cross publicly displayed a criminal's *submission* to the state, his humbling before the governing authorities. . . . For a disciple to take up his cross, then, is not merely an act of *self-denial* but, more importantly, *submission* to Jesus as your governing authority, as your Lord. It is saying no to being your own authority, following yourself, and yes to Jesus's authority—no to your own will and yes to his will." (Dodson 2012: 160n.17) George Ladd adds, "When Jesus taught that a man to be his disciple must deny himself and take up his cross (Matt. 10:38; 16:24), he was not speaking of self-denial or the bearing of heavy burdens; he was speaking of the willingness to suffer martyrdom. The cross is nothing less than an instrument of death. Every disciple of Jesus is in essence a martyr." (Ladd 1972: 104) Although most Christians will not suffer physical martyrdom for their faith, they must expect and be prepared for persecution (e.g., **Matt 5:10-12; 10:22; Mark 10:30; Luke 6:22; John 15:18-19; 2 Cor 4:8-12; Phil 1:28-30; 2 Tim 2:3; 3:12; 1 Pet 4:12-16; 1 John 3:13**).

Throughout his life on earth Christ only did what the Father had him do (**John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10**). Similarly, Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (**John 14:15**; see also **Matt 12:50; 28:19-20; Mark 3:35; Luke 17:10; John 14:21, 23-24; 15:10, 14; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6**). To "follow" Christ means we are to be led by the Holy Spirit to think as Christ thought, feel as he felt, and act as he acted. Such a life will be characterized by the *"fruit of the Spirit"* (*"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control"*) (**Gal 5:22-23**). Christ's values and priorities are to be our values and priorities. The true disciple's objective in life should be the same as God sets forth in the Bible, namely, "seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (**Matt 6:33**). Living this kind of life is the true test that shows we are in tune with the voice of the Spirit of God. As this becomes true in our lives, i.e., as we "abide in him" (**John 15:4-7**), we will become *"conformed to the image of [Jesus Christ]"* (**Rom 8:29**) and will *"bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples"* (**John 15:8**).

3. <u>Forsaking all our possessions to follow Christ.</u> *"So then, none of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions"* (**Luke 14:33**; see also **Matt 19:16-26, 29; Mark 10:17-25, 29-30; Luke 18:18-27, 29-30; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34-35; 2 Tim 2:4**). Since we are to love Christ over those closest to us and even over our own lives, it follows that we are to love Christ over any and all material possessions we may have. Even though loving Christ more than our loved ones and more than our own lives would appear to be far greater than loving Christ over our material possessions, Jesus knows the human heart (**John 2:24-25**) and therefore stated, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (**Matt 6:21; Luke 12:34**). In light of this, over 150 years ago J. B. Wakeley observed that "being converted all but the purse is not conversion at all" (Wakeley 1858: 152). Consequently, **Luke 14:33** "is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ's terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. . . . What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one's material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the gospel. The man who forsakes all does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for the current necessities of his family and himself. But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ,

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[17] Remember that we are to "love our neighbor as ourselves" (**Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31**) and even "love our enemies" (**Matt 5:44-47**). Those statements demonstrate how great is to be our love for Christ: we are to love everyone else, yet love Christ so supremely that, compared to our love for him, our love for everyone else is as if it were hatred.

he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord and leaves the future with God." (MacDonald 1975: 9) That is why Jesus emphasized the importance of carefully counting the cost of being a disciple before committing oneself (see **Luke 14:28**). The spiritual significance of our attitude toward money and possessions cannot be overstated. Paul put it like this, *"For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things"* (**Phil 3:18-19**; see also **Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:15**). In other words, those who *"set their minds on earthly things"* are the *"enemies of the cross of Christ,"* and their *"end is destruction."*

4. Fervent love for all who belong to Christ. *"A new commandment I give you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (**John 13:34-35**; see also **John 15:12, 17; 1 John 2:9-10; 3:14**) Charles Colson points out, "When we become followers of Christ, we become members of His church—and our commitment to the church is indistinguishable from our commitment to Him [see **Matt 16:15-18; 22:36-40; 25:31-46; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Gal 6:10; 1 John 3:14; 4:19-20**]" (Colson 1992: 64-65). The reason for this is that all believers have been adopted into God's family (**Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5; 2:19**). Therefore, the church *is* a family (**Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2; Heb 3:6; 1 Pet 4:17**). Dhati Lewis puts it like this, "The church is not *like* family; it *is* family. . . . This can be seen by the fact that the word *disciple*, so prevalent in the early part of the New Testament, disappears after the book of Acts. It is replaced by the term *brother* in the rest of the Bible." (Lewis 2015: n.p.)

Families love and take care of each other. However, many churches do not *act* like families. Tribalism, divisions between rich and poor, and disputes and factions based on many other things commonly characterize many local churches. The problem is not limited to division within local churches. If anything, the problem of divisions is worse among the different denominations. This is seriously impeding the church's witness to the world. Our unity or lack of unity directly affects whether the world believes that Jesus is God's Messiah (see **John 17:21, 23**). If the churches do not start treating their own members, and other churches, like beloved members of a common family, then the world will (rightly) continue to mock the church and ask: "Why should we become Christians, since you Christians don't even like each other?"

5. A servant heart. *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many."* (**Matt 20:25-28;** see also **Mark 10:42-45**) *"Do not be called leaders, for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant."* (**Matt 23:10-11;** see also **Mark 9:35-37**) *"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet, for I gave you an example that you should do as I did to you."* (**John 13:13-15**)

Jesus said that two commandments—love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself (**Matt 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28**)—are the foundations for the entire Bible. God is not fooled by our words. Therefore, He has given us a test by which we, everyone else, and God Himself can clearly see whether we do, in fact, love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. The test is this: how we do the "second commandment" (i.e., how we love people) is the proof of whether we are really doing the "first commandment" (i.e., loving God). Even when Jesus confronted Peter and asked him three times *"Do you love Me?"* Jesus did not simply accept Peter's answer, *"Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."* Instead, Jesus then told Peter, *"Tend My sheep"* (**John 21:15-17**). What Jesus was saying to Peter was this: "If you truly love Me, then you will prove your love by taking care of My sheep."

The very purpose for which God ordained various spiritual gifts and leaders is *"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ"* (**Eph 4:12**). Those with a servant heart "focus on others, not themselves. This is true humility: not thinking less of ourselves but thinking of ourselves *less*. . . . This is what it means to 'lose your life'—forgetting yourself in service to others. When we stop focusing on our own needs, we become aware of the needs around us." (Warren 2002: 265) In light of this, several of Jesus' parables concerning the kingdom of heaven indicated that the final judgment will be based on what we do, especially how we serve and treat others in this life (**Matt 18:23-35; 21:28-32; 21:33-44; 24:45-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-30; Mark 12:1-12;**

Luke 12:42-48; 16:1-9; 19:12-27; 20:9-18). The reason for this is that what we do, how we live, how we serve and treat other people reveals what we truly think about Jesus. Jesus said, *"To the extent that you did it* [i.e., showed concern and compassion] *to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me"* (**Matt 25:40**), and *"to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me"* (**Matt 25:45**). "Nothing could express more sharply than that how the deeds which God approves flow naturally out of a right relationship with God. It is what a person does when he is not seeking approval that shows his true character." (Travis 1982: 191)

This servant-hearted attitude and lifestyle of a mature disciple, who serves others without seeking approval, develops as a person more and more loves Jesus and finds his or her identity in Jesus. The disciple knows that because every human being has been made in the "image of God" (**Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; Jas 3:9**), how we treat God's image shows what we really think of Him. As Jesus becomes our focus, we start thinking as Jesus thought and acting as Jesus acted. Therefore, *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve"* (**Matt 20:28**), so will we—and God will remember and honor his disciples who serve others from a willing and loving heart (**Ps 100:2; John 12:26; Heb 6:10**). Henrichsen concludes, *"The disciple is one who is in constant touch with people in need.* As Jesus' disciple, are you constantly meeting other people's needs?" (Henrichsen 1988: 32, emph. in orig.)

A very simple, yet counter-cultural, example of this is that husbands especially should help their wives with physical labor, because **Eph 5:28** says that "*husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies."* In many cultures, wives are expected to do much of the physical labor for the family (e.g., gathering firewood, getting water, cleaning, cooking, as well as bearing and caring for multiple children). This is very tiring and hard on a woman's body. If husbands truly *"love their own wives as their own bodies,"* they should not make their wives do all the hard, physical labor. Instead, they should do some of the work themselves. It will help preserve the woman's body, will get the work done sooner, and will create the opportunity for husbands and wives to spend some non-working time together and grow closer in their relationship.

6. <u>Continuing in God's Word.</u> *"If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine"* (**John 8:31**; see also **John 14:26; 2 John 9**). God's Word is truth (**John 17:17**). God's words *"are life to those who find them"* (**Prov 4:22**). They are *"a joy and the delight of my heart"* (**Jer 15:16**). His Word is a lamp and light of guidance (**Ps 119:105**). God has exalted above all things his name and his word (**Ps 138:2**). *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (**2 Tim 3:16-17**). Since Christ "is our life" (**Col 3:4**), we are to "abide in him" and his words are to "abide in us" (**John 15:7**). Abiding implies perseverance. This is demonstrated by Jesus himself who knew the Scriptures "backwards and forwards." Jesus quoted from nearly 60 different verses of Scripture (i.e., the OT) and made at least twice that number of allusions and more general references (Moyise 2010: 3-4). Even as he was dying, Jesus quoted from Scripture (**Matt 27:46; Mark 15:36**, quoting **Ps 22:1; Luke 23:46**, quoting **Ps 31:5**). Since that was true of Jesus, how much more true should it be for us. We should therefore be asking ourselves: Are we hearing the Bible expounded well in church? Do we have a regular Bible reading program? Are we systematically studying the Scripture? Are we memorizing Scripture? Are we meditating on what we read? Is our craving for the Bible so great that it cannot be satisfied? The Navigators summarize our attitude toward and interaction with the Bible by comparing it to the five fingers of a hand. We need to: *hear* the Word preached (**Acts 10:17**, the little finger); *read* the Word (**Rev 1:3**, the ring finger); *study* the Word (**Acts 17:11**, the middle finger); *memorize* the Word (**Ps 119:9, 11**, the forefinger); and *meditate* on the Word (**Ps 1:2-3**, the thumb) (Navigators 2004: "The Word Hand").

"Abiding" in God's Word implies more than perseverance in hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on Scripture; abiding means living the Word out in our lives. In other words, the Bible should shape us—our hearts, minds, and actions—and be the standard by which we determine what is right and wrong and what we should and should not do. Henrichsen says, *"The disciple is one who in every area of his life determines from the Bible what is right and lives it consistently* rather than allowing circumstances to shape his conduct" (Henrichsen 1988: 32, emph. in orig.). Jesus said, *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built*

his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (**Matt 7:24-27**; see also **Luke 6:47-49**) James puts it like this, *"But prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. . . . One who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not becoming a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."* (**Jas 1:22, 25**; see also **Rom 2:13**)

The Navigators summarize the well-ordered, vibrant life of a disciple of Christ as a wheel, like this:

The hub is Christ—the center of everything, i.e., total surrender to his lordship and authority. The rim is our obedience to Christ in all areas of our lives (thought, word, and deed). The vertical spokes (the Word and Prayer) are how we relate to God. The horizontal spokes (Witnessing and Fellowship) are how we relate to others (Navigators 2006: "The Wheel").

VI. Specific Aspects of Good Discipleship Training

"No one accidentally creates disciples. Discipleship is an intentional pursuit. . . . The Greek word for 'disciple' [is] *mathetes.* When directly translated, it means *learner.* Scripture really seems to be getting at something here, something about orienting our lives around becoming *lifelong learners of Jesus. . . .* There seem to be three different ways that we learn, but unequivocally, we learn best when there is a dynamic interplay between all three at one time:

    (1) Classroom/Lecture passing on of information
    (2) Apprenticeship
    (3) Immersion

Classroom learning is when information, processes and facts are taught from teacher to student in the classic lecture setting. Apprenticeship is when someone learns a certain set of skills by apprenticing himself or herself to someone who has already learned the skills. Immersion is when someone is put into an environment, setting or culture and learns by intuitively picking up what he or she sees and experiences." (Breen 2011: 20-21, emph. in orig.)

Learning the facts, doctrine, information about Christ and Christianity is absolutely *necessary*, but that is not *sufficient* to make good disciples. "When we listen to a gifted Bible teacher and speaker, we can come away inspired and encouraged. We can even learn some in this environment. . . . But remember, discipleship requires more than a head-level change. Jesus said in Matthew 4:19 that he would make us into something altogether different—that we would experience change at the heart and hands level too. . . . Most people are not auditory learners and struggle to keep focused for any period of time, especially now in the era of the short attention span. Effective disciple-makers do not exclude formal instruction, but they understand its limitations." (Putnam 2010: 48)

For Jesus, *relationship* was the key to discipling his followers. "Jesus modeled the importance of relationship in the way He taught His disciples. . . . He talked about the truth when they ate and when they went to bed. Jesus was *with* his disciples because His relationship with them was the conduit by which He could deliver all that they needed. . . . He invested His life in the Twelve. He chose to be in relationship with His disciples because He understood that more is 'caught' than taught." (Ibid.: 48-49) As a result of the time he spent with them, his teaching in formal and informal ways, and his modeling, Jesus' disciples ultimately became like him and *"turned the world upside down"* (**Acts 17:6**, NKJV). Like the Twelve, good disciples are created when they put into practice what they have learned and live out the implications of their beliefs. Breen puts it like this: "Would you trust a doctor to perform open heart surgery on you who has had only classroom experience and no residency? *Yet that is how we have structured our discipleship processes!"* (Ibid.: 26, emph. in orig.)

For disciple-making to succeed, the leadership of the church must see the importance of making disciples and must fully support and be involved in the discipleship process. As the discipleship organization

Churches Alive put it, "The success of your discipling ministry ultimately relates to your governing body and their ownership of the ministry. If discipleship is viewed as just another church program, it will fail. If it is seen as the reason the church exists it will, with proper nurturing, grow, prosper, and transform the church. Becoming a disciplemaking church involves a shift from an emphasis on maintaining the church to an emphasis on becoming a disciplemaking center. This is a dramatic shift. It is not unlike the transformation from the temple of the Old Testament with its emphasis on the past and the power of a few, to the 1st century church in which change was the norm and the power of the Holy Spirit was available to all believers." (Churches Alive 1996: 1.8) This means that the formal leadership of the church needs to actively encourage, support (materially, through prayer, and by other means), stay in close contact with those who are leading the discipleship ministry,[18] and keep the importance of discipleship regularly before the members of the church.

A. *Discipleship groups*

Discipleship can take place in any context: one-on-one; small groups of 2-4 people; larger groups of 6-12 people[19]; or even in large lecture/classroom settings. However, "Jesus' model of discipleship was life on life but not everyone got equal access to him. He chose a team of twelve men, but even within that team he offered a deeper level of intimacy to Peter, James and John. Beyond the twelve were the seventy-two, then the one hundred and twenty, and then there were the crowds. . . . Put simply, we invite only a few people into a discipling relationship with us. If Jesus invited twelve people, we're going to assume [that] we can't do as many as he did." (Breen 2011: 38) This indicates that a local church should have groups of different sizes for different functions. For example, one church found that spiritual growth and maturity of the church members increased phenomenally after "Core Discipleship Groups" of 3-4 people were launched. "Like Jesus' 'inner core' of three (Peter, James and John), a Core Discipleship Group is made up of 3 and no more than 4 believers of the same gender who purpose to grow in relationship with God and one another. Core is a Biblical process that can develop a life-transforming, spiritual discipleship network and community in your church where no one stands alone, struggles alone, develops alone or grows up alone. We call this the 3-Strand Core Discipleship Process (C3 = Crowd + Cell + Core). This 3-Strand Discipleship process is not something new. Christ's ministry was to the multitudes, the 12, and the three (Crowd + Cell + Core)." (Core Discipleship n.d.: "Core 3 Strand") One large church has groups of different sizes for different functions, like this (Mosaic 2016: 7-12):

Context	Size	Focus	Learning from Jesus	Church Expression	Outcomes
Public	100s	Preaching, Truth, Worship	Jesus and the Crowds	Gatherings, Events	Inspiration, Celebration, Movement
Social	20-70	Shepherding, Equipping, Mobilizing	Jesus and the 70	MiC Collectives, Ministry Teams, Equipping Classes	Multiplication, Mission, Impact
Personal	12-18	Support, Challenge, Practice	Jesus and the 12	Missional Communities, Men/Women's Groups, Support Groups	Devotion, Mission, Community
Transparent	2-5	Vulnerability, Accountability, Growth	Jesus and the 3	Deepest friendships, Marriage, Intentional Discipleship	Intimacy, Transformation, Maturity
Divine	Alone with God	Being with your Creator and Redeemer	Jesus and the Father	Personal Walk	Intimacy, Identity, Devotion

More than one study has shown that the *best context* for life-transforming discipleship is a discipler and

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[18] The formal leadership of the church should engage in the same type of activities with the discipleship leaders as the discipleship leaders do with each other when they meet together (see n.23, below).

[19] If your church opts for groups larger than 3-4 total people, particularly if both men and women are members of the group, you should consider having male and female co-leaders: "Experience tells us that using a married couple as Growth Group co-leaders is generally most effective. It has all the advantages of modeling the Genesis story of completeness as well as the New Testament example of sending disciples out in pairs. A man and a woman who are not a married couple may of course lead. Your goal is to select the best available leaders. Having two leaders gives you two pairs of eyes and ears to deal with group situations. When one person is talking, the other can be observing. When one is deeply involved in leading a discussion, the other can keep the discussion on track and on schedule. The two can counsel one another and each is a source of a second opinion. They can also support one another with affirmation and prayer." (Churches Alive 1996: 4.3)

2-3 disciples (learners).[20]

    1. <u>The Bible repeatedly stresses the importance of "two or three."</u> The Bible indicates that the following are all strongest in groups of 2-3: community (**Eccl 4:9-12**); accountability (**1 Tim 5:19**); financial administration (**2 Cor 8:16-24**); confidentiality (**Matt 18:15-17**); flexibility (**Matt 18:20**); communication (**1 Cor 14:26-33**); direction (**2 Cor 13:1**); leadership (**1 Cor 14:29**); mission (**Luke 10:1; Acts 13:2-4**) (see Cole 2011: n.p.).

    2. <u>The positive benefits of a small group (3-4 total people) include the following:</u>

- "There is a shift from unnatural pressure to the natural participation of the discipler. When a third or fourth person is added, the discipler is no longer the focal point, but they are a part of a group process."
- "There is a shift from hierarchy to peer relationship. The triad/quad naturally creates more of a come-alongside mutual journey. The focus is not so much upon the discipler as it is upon Christ as the one toward whom all are pointing their lives."
- "There is a shift from dialogue to dynamic interchange. In my initial experiment with triads, I often came away from those times saying to myself, 'What made that interchange so alive and dynamic?' The presence of the Holy Spirit seemed palpable. Life and energy marked the exchange. As I have come to understand group dynamics, one-on-one is not a group. It is only as you add a third that you have the first makings of a group (Think trinity)."
- "There is shift from limited input to wisdom in numbers. The book of Proverbs speaks of the wisdom that comes from many counselors (Proverbs 15:22). It is often those who may be perceived as younger or less mature in the faith from which great wisdom comes, or a fresh spark of life or just great questions."
- "There is a shift from addition to multiplication. For me there is no greater joy than to see a Christian reproduce. All the above adds up to empowerment. For over two decades, I have observed an approximate 75% reproduction rate through the triad/quad model of disciple-making."
- "In summary, a smaller unit encourages multiplication because it minimizes the hierarchical dimensions and maximizes a peer-mentoring model. By providing a discipleship curriculum specifically designed for this intimate relationship, it creates a simple, reproducible structure, which almost any growing believer can lead. Leadership in these groups can be rotated early on since the size makes for an informal interchange and the curriculum provides a guide to follow." (Ogden 2007: 4-5)

    3. <u>The small group (3-4 total people) is superior to one-on-one discipling for the following reasons:</u>

- In the one-on-one the discipler carries the full weight of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of another.
- The one-on-one relationship sets up a hierarchy that tends to result in dependency.
- The one-on-one limits the interchange or dialogue.
- The one-on-one also creates a one-model approach.
- The one-on-one model does not generally reproduce (Ogden 2007: 3).

    4. <u>The small group (3-4 total people) is also superior to larger groups because the larger the group the more the following three elements that lead to transformation are watered down:</u>

- *Truth*—"Learning occurs in direct proportion to the ability to interact with the truth, which becomes more difficult with an increased number of voices contributing to it. It also becomes increasingly difficult to tailor the rate of learning to the individual, the larger the size of the group."
- *Transparent relationships*—"Self-disclosure is integral to transformation, and openness becomes increasingly difficult in direct proportion to the size of the group. If we are not free to divulge our struggles, the Spirit will not be able to use the group members to effectively minister at the point of need."
- *Mutual accountability*—"The larger the group, the easier it is to hide. Accountability requires the ability to check to see if assignments were completed, or commitments to obedience were maintained. Greater numbers decrease access to a person's life." (Ogden 1998: 11)

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[20] As we will see in sections **B. *Characteristics of good discipleship groups*** and **D. *The discipleship process should be self-replicating***, the relationship between the discipler and the disciples is not a strict hierarchy. Instead, it is a relationship of shared responsibility and accountability in which the disciples assume increasing authority for leading the group.

B. *Characteristics of good discipleship groups*

Several factors characterize good discipleship groups:

1. Discipling relationships are marked by intimacy, whereas programs tend to be focused on information. "Programs operate with the assumption that if someone has more information that it will automatically lead to transformation. In other words, right doctrine will produce right living. Filling people's heads with Scripture verses and biblical principles will lead to change in character, values and a heart for God." (Ogden 2007: 6) Understanding the Bible and biblical principles is necessary and important; however, that alone is not sufficient to create good disciples. Discipleship requires relationship. Jesus did not simply explain the Bible to his disciples but was in intimate relationship with them and modeled the biblical truths he taught them. Robert Coleman puts it like this: "Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. Nor can occasional prayer meetings and training classes for Christian workers do the job. Building men is not that easy. It requires constant personal attention, much like a father gives to His children. . . . The example of Jesus would teach us that it can only be done by persons staying right with those they seek to lead." (Coleman 1964: 47)

An important corollary of this is that you (the discipler) need to give the people in your discipleship group "much higher *access* to your life than other people get or than you are probably accustomed to giving the people you currently lead. . . . It's usually just inviting them to join what you're already doing. Invite them and their family to have dinner over at your house with your family. We often forget that while we may not consider it 'discipleship time' it doesn't mean we aren't teaching people what it means to follow Jesus. If we have people over at our house, they are going to be intuitively observing how we parent, how we love our spouses, how we order our lives. We are immersing them in our lives. For immersion to happen, we must give people access to our everyday lives. *That's why it is crucial that we have a life worth imitating!*" (Breen 2011: 40, emph. in orig.) In short, "Making disciples requires not only 'sharing our faith,' but also sharing our lives—failures and successes, disobedience and obedience" (Dodson 2012: 15).

2. Discipling relationships are customized to the unique growth process of the individuals, whereas programs emphasize synchronization and regimentation. "Discipling relationships must necessarily vary in length of time, because no two people grow at the same speed. It is not just a matter of a forced march through the curriculum, but an individualized approach that takes into account the unique growth issues of those involved." (Ogden 2007: 7) Good disciple-makers need to be able to evaluate where the members of their discipleship groups are on their spiritual journeys. Jim Putnam suggests that, although all Christians are equally *valuable*, not all Christians are equally *useful* to the purposes of the Lord. The difference is their level of *maturity*. (Putnam 2010: 42) Putnam sees five stages of a disciple's growth (Ibid.: 41-42; see also Followers 2010: "Real-Life" for a chart that summarizes the general characteristics, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, spiritual needs, and statements that typify each of the five stages of spiritual development):

- Stage 1: *Spiritual deadness*. The person has not been born again. Such people are in a state of plain unbelief, or they may know Christian language and even go to church, but their unbelief will be betrayed by statements they make, beliefs they hold, and things they do.
- Stage 2: *Spiritual infancy*. All new Christians start out as spiritual infants. They may be very enthusiastic in their faith but tend to be ignorant in many areas. A new Christian is a spiritual infant even if he or she has been going to church for a long time before becoming born again. Such people may know many Christian doctrines, but such doctrines have never been appropriated into their lives in real, practical, life-changing ways.
- Stage 3: *Spiritual childhood*. As spiritual infants grow, they become spiritual children who are characterized by understanding the basic language of faith. They often can be self-centered in that they may do the right thing either to get something they want or to avoid an outcome they do not like.
- Stage 4: *Spiritual young adulthood*. Spiritual children mature into spiritual young adults. They have grown much and can serve intentionally but are not yet able to reproduce disciples who can make other disciples.
- Stage 5: *Spiritual parenthood*. This is the final stage of spiritual development. Unlike spiritual adults who are *able* to reproduce but are not doing so, spiritual parents have prioritized their lives

around the mission of Jesus and are intentionally reproducing new disciples.[21]

Because the discipling process is designed to help the disciple achieve spiritual maturity, one role of the discipling leader is to observe and measure spiritual growth of the group members. This should not be a difficult concept: teachers review and measure the progress of students; supervisors review the performance of employees; parents review and give feedback to their children. Discipleship leaders should develop a "spiritual growth inventory" to be able to chart the progress of the members of the discipleship group. Such an inventory could be based on the measures and outcomes discussed above in sections **V.C. *The substance of discipleship*** and **D. *The nature and characteristics of mature disciples*** as well as other measures such as the communication skills and personal qualities (teachability, compassion, interactive abilities with others, etc., that are revealed during the discipleship process). Such an inventory will identify areas of strength and progress so that the disciple may be encouraged; it also will identify areas where improvement is needed.

3. Discipling relationships involve full, mutual responsibility of the participants, whereas programs have one or a few who do on behalf of the many. "Most programs are built around an individual or a few core people who do the hard work of preparation and the rest come as passive recipients of their work. . . . In a discipling relationship the partners share equal responsibility for preparation, self-disclosure, and an agenda of life-change. This is not about one person being the insightful teacher, whereas the others are the learners who are taking in the insights of one whose wisdom far exceeds the others. Certainly maturity levels in Christ will vary, but the basic assumption is that in the give and take of relationships, the one who is the teacher and the one who is taught can vary from moment to moment." (Ogden 2007: 6)

"Spiritual infants don't understand the rules of the new game they are playing. They don't know that a spiritual war is on and that they have a new Enemy who wants to kill and destroy them (see John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8)." (Putnam 2010: 53) Consequently, the disciples, particularly new believers, need a shepherd, a mentor, a discipler who will protect, lead, teach, be with, guide, and follow-up with them. At the same time, the *disciples are being prepared to lead their own groups and disciple others*. Therefore, early in the process they should be given responsibility for preparing and leading the discussion of the course material being used by the group.[22] Putnam describes the process: "Great disciple-makers will always take their followers through a process. It starts with 'You watch; I do' and moves to 'Let's do it together' and then to 'You do; I watch.' Finally, the disciple starts this same process with someone else—someone who watches while the disciple does." (Ibid.: 59)

4. Discipling relationships focus accountability around life-change, whereas programs focus accountability around content. "Growth into Christ-likeness is the ultimate goal. The gauge of accountability in programs tend to be easily measurable, observable behaviors such as Scripture memory, completing the required weekly reading, and practicing spiritual disciplines. In a discipling relationship the accountability focuses on learning to 'observe or obey all that [Jesus] has commanded' (Matt. 28:19). For example, there is a huge difference between knowing that Jesus taught that we are to love our enemies, and actually loving our enemies. Discipling relationships are centered on incorporating the life of Jesus in all we are in the context of all that we do." (Ogden 2007: 7)

5. Regardless of size, all discipleship groups are based on certain core principles. Although discipleship is facilitated in a small group, "groups don't make disciples; disciples make disciples" (Cole 2011: n.p.). Further, "disciples are made in relationships, not programs" (Ogden 2007: 5). In order to succeed, all members of a discipleship group must agree on three foundational principles:

- Transparent trust of each other. "Intimate, accountable relationships with other believers is the foundation for growing in discipleship. . . . *The extent to which we are willing to reveal to others those areas of our lives that need God's transforming touch is the extent to which we are inviting*

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[21] Hammond and Cronshaw describe the same growth process like this (beginning at the point of conversion/spiritual infancy): (1) *Unconscious incompetence.* People in this stage are not even aware of the issue at hand; they are incompetent and don't even know it. The leader therefore needs to raise the issues and begin the learning process. (2) *Conscious incompetence.* The learners become aware of the issue but also become aware of their own relative incompetence in adequately deal with it. Practicing and "unlearning" the old ways is necessary to move on. (3) *Conscious competence.* People now understand the basic dynamics of the new paradigm but need to concentrate to operate well; it is not "second nature" to them yet. (4) *Unconscious competence.* At this stage the people have learned and internalized the new paradigm which has become second nature to them. They are now fully able on their own to teach and model for others. (Hammond and Cronshaw 2014: 7-8)

[22] This is discussed in more detail below in section **VI.D. *The discipleship process should be self-replicating***.

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the Holy Spirit to make us new. Our willingness to enter into horizontal or relational intimacy is a statement of our true desire before God of our willingness to invite the Lord to do His makeover in our lives." (Ogden 2007: 8, emph. in orig.) Trust does not happen instantly but is earned and develops over time. The small group setting facilitates the development of trust because there is no place to hide. **Jas 5:16** says, *"Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed."* "Bringing the shame of our guilt into the light before trusted members of the body of Christ can in itself have a liberating effect. Once something is admitted before others, it begins to lose its power to control. Sin loves the darkness, but its power weakens in the light." (Ibid.)

- The truth of God's Word in community. "It is particularly important in our day that a disciple has the opportunity to cover the essential teachings of the Christian life in a systematic and sequential fashion. We are living at a time when the average person has minimal foundation for their Christian faith." (Ogden 2007: 9) One participant in a small discipleship group said, "I discovered as we covered the faith in a systematic and sequential order, that my understanding was much like a mosaic. I had clusters of tiles with a lot of empty spaces in between. This approach has allowed me to fill in all those places where tiles belong. I now see in a comprehensive fashion how the Christian faith makes sense of it all." (Ibid.: 9-10)

- Mutual life-change accountability. "The relationship between those on the discipleship journey together is covenantal. What is a covenant? A covenant is a written, mutual agreement between 2 or more parties that clearly states the expectations and commitments in the relationship. Implied in this definition is that the covenantal partners are giving each other authority to hold them to the covenant to which they have all agreed." (Odgen 2007: 10) Mutual accountability "brings us back to the very core of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus" because "a disciple is one under authority" (Ibid.).

"Accountability is not an option for the discipline process. No one has to be in a Growth Group, but those who join do so because they know they need someone to help them be more disciplined in their spiritual journey. When they ask to come under your authority, and you agree to lead, they have a right to expect Godly leadership. . . . If a member regularly misses meetings or fails to complete Bible study lessons, you will need to meet with that person to help solve any problems. . . . The sooner a problem is addressed, the easier it will be to correct it. The other members of your group will be just as aware of another member's lack of attendance and/or participation as you are; if it is allowed to continue it will affect the entire group. Lack of commitment will destroy the unity of the group and the discipling process. . . . Corrective action is an essential tool for discipling leaders. . . . Corrective action is something we do for people, not to people. In its simplest sense, corrective action is action taken by you to help your Christian sister or brother do what they have previously committed to do." (Churches Alive 1996: 4.6-7) Accountability can be facilitated by attendance charts and by progress or report forms that the group leaders fill out for use when they meet as leaders and with the church's governing body.[23]

C. *The discipleship process*

Discipleship groups typically should meet every week or every other week to maintain continuity. Discipleship groups meet to encourage and deepen the members in the gospel. Consequently, the meetings of the discipleship groups do not merely consist of the members sharing their stories, problems, and victories since the last meeting. That certainly should happen. However, to encourage and deepen the members in the gospel, the meetings should involve a curriculum which all the members study and discuss. The curriculum can consist of studying different books of the Bible or studying other relevant discipleship material. Here are some suggestions:

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[23] Churches Alive says, "Because of the tendency to set goals without thinking of all the work required to achieve the goals, reports are needed . . . to assure progress toward the agreed on objectives. The reporting system does not have to be complex. Simply knowing that a report is required is often the stimulus needed to prompt the action required to achieve agreed on results." (Churches Alive 1996: 5.3)

The discipleship group *leaders* should meet together periodically to discuss the material they will be leading, to report on and assess the progress of their groups, to hold each other accountable, to discuss plans, to ask questions, to share insights, to deal with problems they are encountering, to pray for and encourage each other, to come up with suggestions for improvement, to coordinate activities, and to train and equip each other so that discipling in the church can be as effective as possible.

1. <u>Using the Bible.</u> "Every disciple needs to replace the world's perspective (which he or she starts out with) with God's perspective. We need a biblical worldview. The Bible is God's scrub brush, designed to sanctify (cleanse) us (see John 17:17). His Word is also the spiritual food that sustains our spiritual life (see Matthew 4:4). It lights our path (see Psalm 119:105), and we are to hide God's Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (see Psalm 119:11). It is also our sword of the Spirit, which we use to fight the Enemy (see Ephesians 6:17)." (Putnam 2010: 52)

If the members of the discipleship group (especially the leader or discipler) has not previously read a book or taken a class on biblical interpretation (sometimes called hermeneutics), it would be very helpful to do so in order to be able to understand the Bible in context and have a Christ-centered understanding of the Bible. ECLEA's books on *Biblical Interpretation* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#interpretation) and *Expository Preaching* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#preaching) both deal with the issues of reading and understanding the Bible in context and applying what the Bible says. ECLEA's book *Biblical Theology* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#theology) sets forth the basic biblical storyline and shows how the NT fits together with the OT. These books are good resources for discipleship groups to use.

When using the Bible as the curriculum, "each person should commit to reading the same chapter from a book of the Bible each week. As you read, make a point of asking the Holy Spirit to draw your attention to what he wants to accomplish in you. The Spirit may be prompting you to repent of a sin, rejoice in a promise, meditate on an insight, or praise God for an attribute. Each week, when you get together, make the text your initial focus by sharing how the Spirit has moved through the Word to change you." (Dodson 2012: 137) The group should also move through the text, trying to understand the central message of the chapter. The group members should be asking, "Where is the gospel reflected in this text?" As the group moves through the text, they should identify their own struggles and successes into the conversation. "Ask one another questions. Graciously press one another to discern ungodly motivations and get to gospel motivations. . . . Share your lives, not just your insights. . . . Finally, be sure to share the names of people you are trying to bless with the gospel. Pray as a group, asking God to help you trust his promises as well as to give unbelievers in your lives the very same gift of faith!" (Ibid.: 138)

David Garrison describes how a Church Planting Movement in Bangalore, India structures its weekly participative Bible study around "Paul's four disciple-making questions [from **2 Tim 3:16-17**]:

    1) What is God teaching us (what is the doctrine or value God is elevating in this passage)?
    2) What is God rebuking (what is the immorality or heresy that God is opposing in this passage)?
    3) What is God correcting (what is there in my life that needs to be corrected as a result of what I have read or heard in this passage)?
    4) What is my training in righteousness (what would God have me apply to my life this week, as a result of what I have read in Scripture)?

Sometimes we would refer to these simply as 'The Right Questions:'

    1) What's right? − *teaching*
    2) What's not right? − *rebuking*
    3) How do I get right? − *correcting*
    4) How do I stay right? − *training in righteousness*

Asking these right questions of Holy Scripture with an intimate community of brothers and sisters in Christ is a sure path to growth in Christlikeness. The best of discipleship programs, it is guaranteed to leave 'the man (and woman) of God thoroughly equipped for every good work.'" (Garrison 2010: n.p.)

2. <u>Biblical storying.</u> Jim Putnam's many small discipleship groups at Real Life Ministries use the Bible as their discipleship curriculum, but they do it in an interesting way called "Bible storying." For each Bible passage, the small group leaders either learn the passage (story) or assign it to one of the group members to learn and *tell it like a story without reading it*—not word for word but so that the story remains true to the original. "While the storyteller is telling the story, the small group reads along to see if the storyteller has missed anything. When the story is finished, the storyteller or leader of the group will rebuild the story pointing out anything that was missed. The leader often asks someone to tell the story back to everyone without reading it. No one knows who will be asked, so everyone pays attention just in case he or she is chosen." (Putnam 2010: 158) After this has been done, the leader asks questions to draw out important truths of the story, such as:

- What new thing did you discover in the story that you did not know before?
- What did you learn about God?

- What did you learn about people?
- Which person is most like you in the story?
- What will you take away from this discussion?
- What will you do with what you have learned?

Putnam concludes that Bible storying is an excellent method for conveying Bible truths because: (1) It helps people know the Bible (it is non-threatening and stories stick in the mind); (2) It helps recruit leaders (many people may not think they are qualified to teach the Bible because of lack of formal theological education, but everyone knows how to tell stories and ask questions); (3) It is better for real learning (because the listeners participate, they remember the story); (4) It arms people for service (stories can be applied in many circumstances of life); (5) It helps people disciple their own children (when parents tell the stories to their own children, it has a profound effect on families); (6) It helps leaders assess where their people are spiritually (the storying method draws people out which makes assessing where they are in their spiritual journey easier); (7) It keeps small groups from being boring (time tends to move faster when stories are told as opposed to lectures); (8) People get to know each other (the interaction of the stories and questions promotes getting to know each other). (Ibid.: 159-62) This method of biblical storying is best geared to the narrative portions of the Bible, i.e., much of the OT, the Gospels, and the book of Acts.

3. Discipleship resources and courses. There are many discipleship books and other resources available online, either for purchase or free of charge. There are also free *discipleship courses* online, which contain lessons, readings, and discussion questions, that may be used as part of the small group discipleship process. At the end of this book, **APPENDIX 2—DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES AND COURSES** lists many of these online discipleship resources and courses which the church may use to foster its discipleship program.

It is helpful to use such materials, particularly when focusing on certain issues discussed above (e.g., how the gospel relates to money management, parenting, forgiveness and reconciliation). ECLEA has books on all of these issues and more, which may be downloaded for free from the ECLEA website (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html). When using such materials, it is probably wise to alternate working through books of the Bible with the other discipleship books and materials so that the Bible and the gospel remain central in the disciples' lives.

D. *The discipleship process should be self-replicating*

There are three areas in which discipleship replication occurs: (1) within a local church; (2) between local churches; and (3) church planting.

1. Discipleship replication within a local church. "The [discipleship] training process does not merely consist of sharing information. Rather, it involves helping people with the 'how to' of discipleship so that they can implement a vision. With this in mind, at the earliest possible opportunity encourage your disciple to begin discipling another." (Henrichsen 1988: 104) For example, Mike Breen suggests that after an agreed period of time [often six-twelve months] the disciples begin forming their own discipleship groups and discipling others (Breen 2011: 39). Similarly, Jonathan Dodson (who recommends discipleship groups of two-three members) states, "If the group grows beyond three, it is important that the newest member participates only a couple of times to get the idea and then starts a new group. This retains the intimacy and trust built into the initial group, while also fostering reproduction." (Dodson 2012: 136) In short, "Being a disciple means *making* disciples" (Ibid.: 15).

Making self-replication an integral part of the discipleship process has at least three effects on the disciple:

- It will solidify the disciple's own convictions. "When the disciple begins relating to another the truths of Christianity, he is asked penetrating questions. His formation of answers tends to seal the truths to his own heart as well as help the other person." (Henrichsen 1988: 105)
- It provides a laboratory for his own growth. "As he builds into the life of another disciple, he has the opportunity to see whether what he himself does is applicable to others" (Henrichsen 1988: 105).
- It makes the disciple teachable and eager to learn. When a disciple knows that soon he or she will be discipling others, and when he or she is in fact discipling others while still being disciple, the discipleship curriculum and process becomes less academic or abstract; it becomes "real." The disciple knows that he or she needs to understand what is being taught and truly "own" it, because the disciple knows that he or she soon will have to convey that same information to others.

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2. <u>Inter-church cooperation.</u> One aspect of discipleship replication that many churches probably overlook is assisting *other churches and other denominations* to become discipleship centers. "Churches who are 'other centered' experience a dynamic that can seldom be reached any other way. Scripture draws no denominational or geographic distinctions when it tells us 'to make disciples of all nations.' Churches in your area of influence including churches of other denominations may be among those God wants your church to reach. In terms of return on resources invested, it can be very attractive to help another church become a disciplemaking church rather than to try to attract, assimilate, and disciple the same number of people in your church." (Churches Alive 1996: 1.13)

3. <u>Church planting.</u> To create more disciples, we need more Christians and healthier churches. Timothy Keller states, "The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for (1) the numerical growth of the body of Christ in a city and (2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else—not crusades, outreach programs, parachurch ministries, growing megachurches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes—will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow-raising statement, but to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial." (Keller 2002: 1) The rest of his article analyzes the reasons behind that statement.

God is, in fact, rapidly growing Church Planting Movements (CPMs) around the world. A CPM is "a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment" (Garrison 1999: 7). David Garrison has described and analyzed these CPMs in his 1999 booklet (Garrison 1999; see also Garrison n.d. [2-page summary]) and fleshed out his research in his 2004 book (Garrison 2004). In CPMs, "discipleship tends to be much more life on life rather than classroom oriented" (Garrison 2010: n.p.). The core discipleship process applicable in virtually any church planting context "utilizes Participative Bible study and worship groups, affirms Obedience to the Bible as the sole measure of success, uses Unpaid and non-hierarchical leadership and meets in Cell groups or House churches" (Garrison 1999: 36).

There are many different models for planting churches besides CPMs (see, e.g., Stetzer 2015; Discipleship Ministries 2017). It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss church planting in detail. However, there are many church planting resources available online, including: Church Planting Movements 2015; Rapidly Advancing Disciples 2011; Rapidly Advancing Disciples 2016; e3 partners Ministry 2011; Cheney, Putnam, and Sanders 2003; Shank 2014; Exponential.org 2017; T4Tonline.org 2017.

E. *Discipleship: conclusion*

"Making disciples takes time. It cannot be done through a series of lectures and a training seminar in the church, nor can it be done through reading a book. It cannot be rushed. . . . Disciples are made, but not mass-produced. Each one is molded and fashioned individually by the Spirit of God. How long it takes is a matter of conjecture and varies from person to person, depending to a large degree on where they are when they begin the training process. But one thing is certain; it does take time. The Lord Jesus began with 12 monotheistic, God-fearing men, who came from reasonably good homes. He devoted Himself full-time to their training and development. He was a Master at the art of training, and yet it took Him three full years. We can hardly hope to do it in less." (Henrichsen 1988: 107; see also Coleman 1964: 48) In fact, growing in discipleship is a life-long process. Because discipleship groups are based on mutual trust, friendship, and accountability, they can last indefinitely.

VII. <u>Ministry Within The Church</u>

The church is not about us; it is about Christ. The church is his body, not ours. We need to make sure that the church is properly led by men and women who are well-qualified (**1 Tim 3:1-13**). That way, if something happens to the pastor or any of the leaders, the church will be able to carry on well, because it has been built on a strong organizational foundation. The proper functioning of the church, ministry within the church, and the raising up of new leaders, is directly related to discipleship: "If making biblical disciples is the business of the church, and business is good, every need of the church will be met. When we disciple our people, leaders naturally develop and emerge." (Putnam 2010: 23)

A. *The function of the church, and specifically of the church leaders, is to equip and enable the people in the church to perform their ministries*

The mark of a good *leader* is seen primarily in the *followers*: Are they learning? Are they serving? Are

they reaching their full potential? Do they change and manage conflict with grace? Are they exhibiting the characteristics of mature disciples of Christ? Do they demonstrate the "fruit of the Spirit" (**Gal 5:22-23**)? Are they discipling others and raising up new leaders?

The fact that church leadership is to be *active* and is concerned with the leader's *responsibility*, not his position, is seen in **Eph 4:11**, which says, *"He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers."* Each of those gifts denotes an *active function* that is to be used. There is some overlap between these functions and the formal leadership positions of elder, overseer, bishop, pastor, and deacon, but they are not identical.[24] Thus, while all pastors, by definition, are also teachers,[25] and all elders and overseers are to have the ability to teach (**1 Tim 3:2**), not all those with the gift and ability to teach also have the gift and ability to be pastors; in other words, all pastors are also teachers, but not all teachers are also pastors. Further, it is not necessarily true that those in formal positions of church leadership (i.e., elders, overseers, bishops, pastors, and deacons) will have the gifts of being apostles, prophets, or evangelists. Brief descriptions of the functions listed in **Eph 4:11** are in order:

- Apostle. "Apostle" refers to someone who has been commissioned and sent out with authority for a specific purpose. It is the noun form of the Greek word *apostellō* ("to send"). The essential meaning of "apostle" is conveyed by such terms as "ambassador," "delegate," or "messenger." The NT recognizes two basic types of apostles: (A) *foundational* apostles; and (B) *church-commissioned* apostles. "Foundational" apostles were those apostles who were companions of Jesus, witnesses to the resurrection, and were specifically called to be apostles and witnesses by Jesus (see **Matt 10:1-5; Mark 6:7, 30; Luke 6:13; John 15:27; Acts 1:21-22**). They were able to attest to their special status by performing signs (see **Matt 10:1-8; Mark 6:7; Acts 2:43; 2 Cor 12:12**). Foundational apostles were the leaders of the early church and the "foundation" of the church itself (**Eph 2:19-20**). As such, those with the authority of foundational apostles have not existed since the original apostles died (only one foundation can be laid for a building). "Church-commissioned" apostles are those men and women who have been delegated by a church to go out and preach the gospel, plant new churches, and build up the church (see **Acts 13:1-3; 14:14; Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 9:5-6; 12:28; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:6**). Both types of apostles are united in a man like Paul (see **Acts 9:1-16; 13:1-3; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:6-10; Gal 1:11-17; 1 Tim 2:7**). Church-commissioned apostles can have no greater authority than being commissioned by the church. The church is the body of Christ on the earth (**1 Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col 1:18**). The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 3:16-17**). Christ has ordained the church and given it His authority (**Matt 16:18-19**). Consequently, Christ can be expected to act through His church, not independently of it. By commissioning apostles, the church also provides them with credibility and accountability, both with respect to the church itself and in the eyes of the world.

The church needs to test people who call themselves apostles to determine whether they are true or false apostles (**1 John 4:1-6;** see also **2 Cor 11:3-4, 13; Rev 2:2**). Many people today like to appoint themselves as "apostles." That is contrary to the NT pattern (NT apostles were not self-appointed). Many of these self-appointed "apostles" claim to work miracles. However, even the working of miracles is *not* necessarily a sign that a person is called by God (**Matt 7:15-23; 2 Tim 3:1-9** [see **Exod 7:10-12, 20-22; 8:6-7, 16-19**]). In Africa, "the emergence of African prophets and apostles allowed for the proclamation of the equality of blacks and whites in faith and ministry (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). It also established the principle of separation of the Christian faith from all colonial political connections." (Ouedraogo 2006: 1434) Unfortunately, however, "many African prophets and apostles do not take the Bible as the basis for their faith and conduct. . . . They regard [what they claim to be direct revelations from God] as additions to the Bible. However, the Bible warns against making the slightest addition to the word (Rev 22:18-19). . . . Many African prophets and apostles also indulge in a personality cult. . . . Some even claim to be Christ's successors or even another Christ. Such claims make them objects of worship. Sadly, many of them gain almost total control of the minds of their followers. The NT warns us against such people (Matt 24:11; Jude 4-16)." (Ibid.) Modern "apostles" need to be judged by their teaching (see **Acts 17:11; 1 Tim 6:3-5**) and their lifestyle (see **Matt 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:12-17; Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 9:11-18; 2 Cor 11:7; 12:13**).

- Prophet. There is a similarity between prophets and apostles, i.e., there were *foundational* prophets (**Eph 2:20**), and there are what Grudem calls *congregational* prophets (Grudem 1994: 1055; see **Acts 21:9;**

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[24] The issue of church government has been discussed above in section **II.B. *Church organization and government***, and the qualifications of leaders have been discussed in section **II.C. *Church leadership***.

[25] Recall Grudem's discussion of this above in section **II.B. *Church organization and government***, where he said that "the verse is probably better translated as 'pastor-teachers' (one group) rather than 'pastors and teachers' (suggesting two groups) because of the Greek construction" (Grudem 1994: 913).

Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 11:5; 12:28-29; 14:29-33, 37-38; 1 Thess 5:19-21; 1 Tim 4:14). Although there has been dispute concerning the nature of contemporary prophets and prophecy (see Grudem 1994: 1049; Hodge 1993: 388-89; Kell 2006: 11-13), "prophecy throughout the Scriptures normally is specific and purposeful" (Kell 2006: 46). The purposefulness of prophecy is stated in **1 Cor 14:3** which says that *"one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation"* (see also **Acts 15:32** which says that Judas and Silas, who were prophets, *"encouraged [or exhorted] and strengthened the brethren"*; and **1 Cor 14:31** [*"For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted"*]). Perhaps the best definition of a contemporary prophet and contemporary prophecy is given by Charles Hodge: "The gift of which Paul here speaks, is not, therefore, the faculty of predicting future events, but that of immediate occasional inspiration, leading the recipient to deliver, as the mouth of God, the particular communication which he had received, whether designed for instruction, exhortation, or comfort." (Hodge 1993: 389-90; see also Kell 2006: 53 [prophets are "messengers who receive inspired truths from God for the benefit of those who hear"]; Grudem 1994: 1057-58 ["prophecy occurs when a revelation from God is reported in the prophet's own (merely human) words. . . . Unless a person receives a spontaneous 'revelation' from God, there is no prophecy"]).

Perhaps to discourage people from proclaiming themselves as "prophets" in order to assert undue control over people (or take their money), the NT repeatedly warns against "false prophets" (**Matt 7:15; 24:11; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 2:18; 4:1; Rev 2:20**). The Bible indicates that "the inspiration of the prophets was occasional and transient" (Hodge 1993: 389) and says that the prophet and his or her prophetic message is to be *judged* by the congregation (**1 Cor 14:29-33; 1 Thess 5:20-21; 1 John 4:1**).

1. *The need for judgment:* "When a prophet stands between God and His people, there must be an accountability for what is said. To suggest that someone who speaks 'words from God' should not be held to a standard of judgment is certainly in contradiction to the strong emphasis of accountability displayed in the Scriptures. . . . The reality of false prophets and fallible messages grounds the need for judging those who claim to have 'words from God.' (1 Thess 5:20-21 and 1 Cor 14:29). If God has not truly spoken to a person, then we must be able to discern this and take steps to defend the truth and correct the error." (Kell 2006: 9, 23) "The judgment was to focus more on the prophecies, though their evaluation would reflect heavily on the prophet and his future opportunities to speak revelation in the community. The judgment was to be a community wide project, but most likely led by the elders, other prophets, or apostles if they were present." (Ibid.: 31-32)

2. *The standard for judgment:* Ultimately, the standard for judging a supposed "prophet" is the Bible, because a true prophet can never contradict what God has already revealed in His Word. That is why it is vital for the leaders of the church to know the Bible well and for the people in the church to be well discipled. Given this standard, "A revelation that leads one to a non-biblical conception of God would automatically be rejected. . . . If a person or group who claims to be speaking as a prophet makes statements that in any way degrades the person of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit; they are speaking as a false prophet. . . . If a supposed revelation contradicts a clearly stated portion of Scripture, the prophet's message must be rejected as false [**Acts 17:10-11; 1 Cor 14:37-38; 1 John 4:6**]. . . . If the revelation is not useful for 'edification and exhortation and consolation' (Acts 15:32, 1 Cor 14:3), it should be rejected. . . . If a person prophetically claims something is going [to happen] and it does not, the statement must be labeled as false." (Kell 2006: 41, 43, 45, 46) While the Bible is the ultimate standard for judging an alleged "revelation" or "prophecy," we must understand that "the Bible does not come close to exhaustively dealing with the myriad of situations about which people claim to be receiving revelation" (Ibid.: 47). In such cases, "the tests of time, prayerfulness, and wise counsel are all critical in the evaluation of claims to revelation. Before one submits to a so-called prophecy, he should take time to pray about the situation and then bring it before others, possibly even the leadership of the church, who would be able to offer sound biblical wisdom. If a prophecy is made with regards to a future event, the church simply has to wait to see whether or not it comes to pass." (Ibid.: 48)

The Bible also reveals what the character, values, priorities, motives, and lifestyle of true Christians (and, hence, true prophets) are to be. The *Didache* (c. 70-110) stresses the importance of evaluating a person's motives and lifestyle in order to discern whether or not he is a false prophet or apostle. It says: "Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But

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if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle leaves, he is to take nothing except bread until he finds his next night's lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

Also, do not test or evaluate any prophet who speaks in the spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord's ways. By his conduct, therefore, will the false prophet and the prophet be recognized. Furthermore, any prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it; if he does, he is a false prophet. If any prophet teaches the truth, yet does not practice what he teaches, he is a false prophet. But any prophet proven to be genuine who does something with a view to portraying in a worldly manner the symbolic meaning of the church (provided that he does not teach you to do all that he himself does) is not to be judged by you, for his judgment is with God. Besides, the ancient prophets also acted in a similar manner. But if anyone should say in the spirit, 'Give me money,' or anything else, do not listen to him. But if he tells you to give on behalf of others who are in need, let no one judge him." (*Didache* 1989: 11.3-.12)

The early Christian document *The Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 95-154) similarly emphasizes a person's character and conduct in evaluating whether or not he is a false prophet: "Determine the man who has the divine Spirit by his life. In the first place the one who has the divine Spirit from above is gentle and quiet and humble, and considers himself to be poorer than others, and gives no answer to anyone when consulted. Nor does he speak on his own (nor does the Holy Spirit speak when a man wants to speak), but he speaks when God wants him to speak. . . . Now hear, he said, about the earthly and worthless spirit, which has no power but is foolish. In the first place, that man who thinks he has a spirit exalts himself and wants to have a seat of honor, and immediately is arrogant and shameless and talkative and well acquainted with many luxuries and with many other pleasures, and receives money for his prophesying, and if he does not receive money he does not prophesy. Now, can a divine spirit receive money and still prophesy? It is impossible for a prophet of God to do this, but the spirit of such prophets who do so is earthly." (*Shepherd of Hermas* 43.7-.8, .11-.12)

3. *Dealing with false prophets:* For someone to claim to speak when God has not spoken is a serious matter (**Jer 14:14-16; Ezek 22:28; 1 John 4:1-3**). To allow inaccurate prophecies to go unjudged and unchallenged, and to allow people to call themselves "prophets" when they misrepresent God and his Word, can lead to confusion and can lead people astray (**Acts 20:29-30; 1 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 1:4; 4:1-2; 6:20-21**). If the so-called "prophecy" is inaccurate, the so-called "prophet" needs to be confronted as a matter of church discipline; the ultimate goal is reformation and restoration to the truth of the Scripture and the community (**Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1; Jas 5:19-20**). If the person is repentant, understanding, and learns, then, like Apollos—who taught accurately but incompletely but received correction and instruction from Priscilla and Aquila—God may work through the person in the future (see **Acts 18:24-28**). However, if the person is unrepentant and continues to propagate error in the name of God, he "must be brought before the congregation and dismissed from fellowship as a false prophet (Matt. 18:17; 2 Cor. 11:4, 2 Jn. 9-11). The purpose of such drastic measures is not to create an environment where people fear serving God, but rather a safe community where people fear misrepresenting God (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13; 1 Tim 5:20)." (Kell 2006: 51; see also **Gal 1:8** [*"Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"*])

- Evangelist. An evangelist is one who makes known the gospel, particularly where it had not been previously known. Evangelism—making known the gospel—implies more than simply proclaiming who Jesus is, that he died for sins and rose from the dead, and that people need to repent and turn to him as Savior and Lord. The gospel is designed to affect all areas of life. Consequently, the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization described "evangelism" this way: "To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world." ("Lausanne" 1974: n.p.) Many people who call themselves evangelists have little "presence in the world," do not "dialogue" or "listen sensitively in order to understand," conceal "the cost of discipleship," and do not call people "to deny themselves, take up their

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cross, and identify themselves with his new community." Such "evangelism" is contrary to Christ himself who emphasized "counting the cost" and single-minded devotion to himself (see **Matt 10:37-39; 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24; 14:26-33**).

- • Pastor-teacher. The pastor-teacher has been discussed above in section **II.B. *Church organization and government***. A pastor has many roles. He must preach, teach, be involved in administration of the church and of the sacraments, discipline, counsel, visit the sick, comfort the bereaved, perform marriage ceremonies and burials, and a host of other functions. This multi-faceted calling is indicated by the Greek word for "pastor" (*poimēn*) used in **Eph 4:11**. *Poimēn* normally is translated as "shepherd." Jesus is the ultimate shepherd. He said, *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (**John 10:11, 27**) Like Jesus, a pastor has to "know" his congregation—he has to spend time with them; he is their servant, laying down his life for them, not lording it over them (see **Matt 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:5-15**).

The fact that church leadership is to be active and is concerned with the leader's responsibility, not his position, also is seen in **Eph 4:12**, which says that the *purpose* for which Christ gave some people certain gifts and position as leaders is *"for equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."* In other words, those who are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers are to be involved with the members of the church, and are to train up and equip the church members so that they also can be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. This means that, while the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts *"to each one individually just as He wills"* (**1 Cor 12:11**), and not all are apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. (**1 Cor 12:29**), the gifts and abilities of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers can be taught and learned and should be desired (see **1 Cor 12:31; 14:1**). The *"equipping of the saints"* involves several aspects:

1. Identifying the gifts, talents, and abilities of the members of the body, and facilitating the use of those gifts, talents, and abilities (see **Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7-31; 14:12; 1 Pet 4:10-11**).

2. Teaching, instructing, exhorting, comforting, and warning the body from the Word of God concerning the essentials of Christian doctrine and life—in short, turning church members into *mature disciples* (see sections **V. DISCIPLESHIP** and **VI. Specific Aspects of Good Discipleship Training**, above; see also **Acts 2:42; 5:42; 1 Cor 14:19; 2 Cor 1:34; 4:5; 10:8; 1 Thess 4:1; 5:12-14; 1 Tim 4:1-6, 11, 13, 16; 6:2b; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:16-17; 4:1-4; Titus 2:1**).

    a. In order to teach well, the pastor needs to have biblical resources, such as commentaries, concordances, the opportunity to attend seminars, and other theological and Bible study helps, available to him.

    b. Because all of these things cost money, the church should include provision for such resources in its budget.

    c. Because many churches, particularly in rural areas, may have very little money available to them, the denomination's district or diocese should budget for and create a theological resource library at the district or diocesan headquarters which all of the pastors can use.

3. Identifying and raising up new leaders in the church (see **Exod 18:17-26; Deut 34:9; 2 Kgs 2:1-15; John 17:18; Acts 1:15-25; 6:1-7; 14:23; 2 Cor 8:16-22; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Tit 1:5**). This requires that existing leaders know their people well and spend time with potential new leaders, teaching and modeling Christian leadership.

4. Disciplining those who cause division, teach heresy, or are engaged in scandalous immorality (see **Matt 18:15-17; Rom 16:17-20; 1 Cor 5:1-8, 12-13; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 2:14-18**). The church board, and the church as a body, needs to be involved in church discipline (see **2 Cor 2:6**). Discipline is done for the good of the offender (**1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20**) and for the good of the church itself. If the church is involved in the disciplinary process, the people feel that they have a share in the life of the church, take their responsibilities as Christians more seriously, and are drawn closer to the church.

5. Restoring to fellowship those who have been subject to church discipline, have repented, and changed their ways (see **2 Cor 2:5-11; 7:8-12; Gal 6:1**).

B. *Ministry involves all of the people in the church, not just the pastors*

1. Many churches are run so that the pastor is in charge of everything—he is the ultimate authority and decides what can be done and what cannot be done. The people are passive—they simply come and "worship" on Sundays. Such a model of doing church is unbiblical because:

    a. Although in the OT there was a distinct priesthood, in the NT all believers are considered "priests" (**1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6**).

    b. All believers have been given spiritual gifts which are to be used for the common good of the

body (**Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 7:7; 12:7-11, 28; 14:12; Eph 4:7-8; 1 Pet 4:10-11**).

c. Although there is a great amount of flexibility in the NT concerning church government, and not everyone is called to lead, the pattern of church authority always rests upon multiple elders or leaders in the church, not one man (**Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2-6, 22-23, 28; 16:4; 20:17-18; 21:18; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1**).[26]

2. The basic meaning of "ministry" is "service."

    a. *The main Greek word for "ministry" in the NT is diakonia which means "service"* (see **Acts 1:17, 25; 6:4; 12:25; 20:24; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 12:7; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 4:1; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1; Eph 4:12; Col 4:17; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 4:5, 11**).

    b. *The main Greek words in the NT for "ministers" are diakonos which means "servant"* (see **Matt 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43; John 12:26; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; Eph 3:7; 6:21; Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6**), and *doulos* which means "slave" (see **Matt 24:45, 46, 48, 50; 25:14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30; Mark 10:44; Luke 17:10; John 13:16; 15:20; Acts 2:18; 4:29; Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; Eph 6:6; Phil 1:1 2 Tim 2:24; Titus 1:1; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 2:16; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev 1:1**).

    c. *The importance of these words for leaders in the church is twofold:*

        (1) The NT specifically avoids giving titles to the leaders of the church which imply power, dignity, and the performance of "priestly" functions.

        (2) Christ emphasized that the leaders of the church, including his own apostles, were to serve the body (**Matt 18:1-4; 20:25-28; 23:8-12; Mark 9:33-35; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-27**).

    d. The use of these words also emphasizes that since all believers are the servants or slaves of Christ, all believers are "ministers" and have a "ministry" of service in the kingdom.

C. *Ministry within the church involves ministry in the "physical" realm as well as in the "spiritual" realm*

    "Serving is the opposite of our natural inclination. Most of the time we're more interested in *'serve us'* than *service*. We say, 'I'm looking for a church that meets my needs and blesses me,' not 'I'm looking for a place to serve and *be* a blessing.' We expect others to serve us, not vice versa. But as we mature in Christ, the focus of our lives should increasingly shift to living a life of service. The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, 'Who's going to meet *my* needs?' and starts asking, 'Whose needs can I meet?' Do you *ever* ask that question?" (Warren 2002: 213)

    1. Jesus and the Apostles, both in what they taught and in what they did, emphasized the importance of caring for the physical, as well as the spiritual, well-being of fellow believers.

    a. *Jesus' "new command" to "love one another, even as I have loved you," was given to the disciples (**John 13:34**). Their love demonstrated *toward each other* was the one sign by which *"all men will know that you are My disciples"* (**John 13:35**).

    b. James' statement that *"faith without works is dead"* (**Jas 2:26**) was given in the context of *"a brother or sister [who] is without clothing and in need of daily food"* (**Jas 2:15**).

    c. *Paul called on the church to give money to meet the needs of fellow believers (**2 Corinthians 8-9**). The early church demonstrated concern for the material well-being of fellow believers (**Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37**). Indeed, the early church began the office of deacon precisely in order to fairly and systematically meet the physical needs of the believers (**Acts 6:1-6;** see **1 Tim 3:8-13**).

    d. *Meeting the needs of the believers has tremendous spiritual implications.* **Acts 4:33-35** states, *"³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need."* The apostles were able to preach with *"great power,"* and *"abundant grace was upon them all,"* for (or because) *"there was not a needy person among them."* The reason why there was not a needy person among the believers was for (or because) all those who owned property sold it, and the proceeds were *"distributed to each as any had need."* Thus, the believers took care of the physical needs of each other. This meant that nonbelievers could see that, in the church, Christians had a different way of life—a better way of life. When Christians and the church act

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[26] This was discussed above in section **II.B. *Church organization and leadership***.

as they should, it makes a difference that everyone can see. The actions of the believers in selling their property and helping their needy brothers and sisters confirmed the message the apostles were preaching, which is why the testimony of the apostles was so powerful. The same thing will happen if our churches today will act like the early church did.

2. "Spiritual gifts" include gifts directed to the physical aspects of life. "Spiritual" gifts include such things as: service and serving (**Rom 12:7**); giving (**Rom 12:8**); showing mercy (**Rom 12:8**); healings (**1 Cor 12:9, 28**), helps (**1 Cor 12:28**), and administrations (**1 Cor 12:28**). This indicates that God is concerned about all aspects of our lives. Thus, we should be concerned about all aspects of the lives of our fellow believers. It is important to remember that "since your natural abilities are from God, they are just as important and as 'spiritual' as your spiritual gifts. The only difference is that you were given them at birth." (Warren 2002: 242)

3. Specific aspects of ministry within the church in the "physical" realm. People in the church have needs, but people in the church also are resources. The church is the first place people should think of when they are in need or when they can meet the needs of others. Caring for the poor, the sick, the mentally and physically disabled, and the marginalized is profoundly important: "The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ; in the poor brother Christ is knocking at the door. We must, therefore, be very careful at this point." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 38) This aspect of ministry is repeatedly stressed by Christ and the apostles and was demonstrated by the early church (see **Matt 25:31-46; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 11:27-30; Rom 12:16; 15:26-27; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15; Gal 6:10; Jas 1:27; 2:14-17**). The poor and needy include those who lack sufficient material resources but also include those who have spiritual, relational, and other needs. The following are some suggestions:

- Helping the financially poor and needy become self-sustaining:

     (A) *Most needy people would rather be self-sustaining than simply beg for handouts*. The church can help them become self-sustaining. Some suggestions include: (1) Give micro-loans to needy persons. This will require that the recipients have specific, agreed-upon projects. It will also require follow-up and accountability procedures. One potential problem is loans are not repaid. (2) Offer employment to needy persons. This will require knowing who in your congregation may have a business, needs domestic help, or otherwise can offer employment to people. The church itself may be able to pay people to clean the building and grounds or do other work for the church. The concept of an "order of widows" is another idea. (3) Provide non-cash assistance. The church could be a "storehouse" like the ancient temple was (see **Mal 3:10**) for clothing, non-perishable food, or other needed items. The church should know which members of the congregation could provide food, clothing, or other items to needy people. One PAG church in Uganda had 43 widows. Instead of giving them money, it bought them goats. After two years the 43 goats had multiplied to become 281 goats. The widows were able to sustain themselves. They had milk. They could sell the goats for money. Some of the widows bought cows as a result of trading or selling goats. As a result, the widows were drawn closer to the church and many have been faithful "prayer-warriors" and givers back to the church. Protais Nshogoza of Rwanda gives another example: "My family and I left Kigali in 2008 to Gicumbi District by the call of God. The first people I met were women living with HIV/AIDS. They were hopeless and helpless. I began praying with them and teaching them the word of God; that brought hope in their lives. Then I saw that poverty is a great problem that prevents them from helping themselves. I provided ten piglets to ten of them and then after six months they produced 80 piglets. Each woman could pass on 1/4 of the piglets to her fellow sisters. After eight years, more than 150 women have profited on that blessing and have been able to feed their children well, renovated their houses, paid school fees of their children, and paid yearly health assurance. Now I need to bring to them modern breeds that can produce a lot and extend the piggery. This will be a great step in this work of discipleship to vulnerable women and widows in this area."

     (B) *The church should be aware of other sources of support in its area.* The local church does not have the ability to provide all things to all people. However, it can partner with, or refer needy people to, other organizations that can provide the goods and services that the church itself cannot provide. (1) Other sources of material support include: government agencies; NGOs; Christian and other charitable organizations. (2) Different denominations have benevolence and public-welfare agencies. The Anglican Church has the "Mothers Union." The PAG in Uganda has the "PAG Planning and Development Secretariat." (3) Different churches, and churches of different

denominations, should work together to meet the needs of their areas. Doing that would also demonstrate unity, which is a basic mission and purpose of the church.

• Helping the unemployed find work—both gainful employment outside the church and ministry within the church. "Work is a call of God upon an individual's life. It becomes the sphere through which, not merely in which, a Christian serves Christ and his kingdom. It is the occupation—the principle business of one's life—through which one occupies territory or a sphere of influence (Luke 19:13) for Jesus Christ." (Miller 2002: 9) The Bible admonishes Christians to be gainfully employed (**Eph 4:28; 2 Thess 3:10**). "In a Christian community everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. Only when even the smallest link is securely interlocked is the chain unbreakable. A community which allows unemployed members to exist within it will perish because of them. It will be well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that he may know in hours of doubt that he, too, is not useless and unusable." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 94) If some people in the church need employment, other members of the church may be business owners who need employees. The leaders in the church need to know their people and establish means of connecting those who have needs with those who can meet those needs.

• Praying and interceding for one another. "A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner. . . . Intercessory prayer is the purifying bath into which the individual and the fellowship must enter every day. The struggle we undergo with our brother in intercession may be a hard one, but that struggle has the promise that it will gain its goal." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 86; see **Jas 5:16**) Henry Blackaby and Claude King similarly say, "Most of our churches have not learned how to pray together. The greatest untapped resource that I know of is the united prayer of God's people. Jesus, quoting from Isaiah 56:7, said, 'My house is a house of prayer' (Luke 19:46). Helping your church become a praying church will be a rewarding experience. Every church needs to be a praying church!" (Blackaby and King 1994: 308-09)

• Forgiving one another. **Eph 4:32** and **Col 3:13** both command us to forgive one another. Jesus went so far as to say, *"If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."* (**Matt 6:9-15**; see also **Matt 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26**) Unforgiveness gives Satan an opportunity and advantage to work through us and against us, both individually and as a church (**2 Cor 2:10-11**). Forgiveness goes to the very heart of the Father's and Christ's nature and mission (**Exod 34:6-7; Matt 9:2-8; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:17-26; 7:48-50**). Thus, since we are to be *"conformed to the image of [Christ]"* (**Rom 8:29**), our forgiving others is an important mark of our *sanctification.* It is a sign of the Holy Spirit's working in us to conform us into the image of Christ and perfect us. That is why Christ linked forgiveness with love (**Luke 7:36-50**) and with prayer (**Mark 11:23-26**). ECLEA's book on *Forgiveness & Reconciliation* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#forgive) discusses forgiveness and reconciliation in detail, including practical models for how to forgive and reconcile. It is a good resource for the church to use in equipping its members in these areas.

• Comforting, being with, and otherwise bearing and sharing the burdens of one another. *"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ"* (**Gal 6:2**; see also **Col 3:13**). "The law of Christ is a law of bearing. Bearing means forbearing and sustaining. The brother is a burden to the Christian, precisely because he is a Christian. . . . It is only when he is a burden that another person is really a brother and not merely an object to be manipulated. The burden of men was so heavy for God Himself that He had to endure the cross. God verily bore the burden of men in the body of Jesus Christ. But he bore them as a mother carries her child, as a shepherd enfolds the lost lamb that has been found. . . . It is the law of Christ that was fulfilled in the Cross. And Christians must share in this law. They must suffer their brethren, but, what is more important, now that the law of Christ has been fulfilled, they *can* bear with their brethren. . . . It is the fellowship of the Cross to experience the burden of the other. If one does not experience it, the fellowship he belongs to is not Christian. If any member refuses to bear that burden, he denies the law of Christ." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 100-101)

• Spending time together, fellowshipping with one another, and otherwise acting to transform the church into a true, loving, familial community. **Acts 2:42, 46-47** describes the early church as

follows: *"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people."* Further, the marks of the Spirit-filled life are found in community, not just individually. **Eph 5:19-21** (ESV) describes the marks of being filled with the Spirit as *"addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

The NT repeatedly exhorts believers to love one another (**John 13:34-35; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; 1 Pet 3:8; 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 5**), encourage one another (**1 Thess 4:18; 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25**), teach and admonish one another (**Rom 15:14; Col 3:16**), serve one another (**John 13:14-15; Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10**), be patient, tolerant, and accepting of one another (**Rom 15:7; Eph 4:2**), be kind, compassionate, hospitable, and caring for one another (**1 Cor 12:25; Eph 4:32; 1 Pet 4:9**), live in harmony and peace with one another (**Mark 9:50; Rom 12:16; 1 Pet 3:8**), and honor each other by considering them as better than ourselves (**Rom 12:10; Phil 2:3**). In short, believers are to *"be devoted to one another in brotherly love"* (**Rom 12:10**). The NT describes the church as a family (see **Mark 10:29-30; Rom 8:14-17; 2 Cor 6:18; Eph 1:5; 2:19; Gal 3:26-4:7; 1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2**). All of these things are the marks of a good, well-functioning family. The church needs to demonstrate, within itself and to the world, that it is, indeed, a good, well-functioning family. This is ministry; it is life in the Spirit; it is what life in the body should look like.

VIII. **MISSION**

- "Who could believe in a God who will make everything new 'later' if it is in no way apparent from the activity of those who hope in the One who is to come that he is already beginning to make everything new *now*—if in fact it is not apparent that this eschatological hope is able *now* to change the course of history for the better? . . . It will have to be clear from the concrete practice of Christian life that God [in fact] manifests himself as the one whose power can bring about the new future." (Schillebeeckx 1968: 183-84)
- "The Cross of Christ not only means the salvation of individuals, but it provides a radical critique of unjust social, political and economic institutions of society. Regeneration and repentance of individuals MUST lead to the reformation of culture and the rebuilding of societies." (Miller 2001: 22)
- "Distinctively, the Church proclaims the changed world as the consequence of changed men. Reflective man produces new philosophies; it is only regenerate man who holds the clue to a society that is really new." (Rees 1964: 9)
- "For this cause he [Christ] had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes." (Bonhoeffer 1954: 17) "The church is the church only when it exists for others. . . . The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others." (Bonhoeffer 1971: 382-83)
- "Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; Kingdom people work to see the church change the world." (Snyder 1996: 11)
- "The way forward for churches that want to redefine their position in the community will be through service and sacrifice. . . . The missional church is *the people of God partnering with God in his redemptive mission in the world*. . . . Our job is not to 'do church' well but to be the people of God in an unmistakable way in the world. . . . We are to be different in the hope we offer, in the grace we exhibit, and in the obvious sacrifice of love we display in dealing with others. . . . The very notion that the church can be successful apart from an improved world reflects a disconnect from God's mission and even raises the question of whether or not people who think this way are even recognized by God as his people." (McNeal 2009: 6, 24, 37, emph. in orig.)
- "Worship . . . is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. . . . If the pursuit of God's glory is not ordered above the pursuit of man's good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church, man will not be well served, and God will not be duly honored. . . . When the flame of worship burns with the heat of God's true worth, the light of missions will shine to the darkest peoples on earth. . . . Where passion

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for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak." (Piper 2010: 35-36)

- "The call to salvation is a call to be on mission with God as He reconciles a lost world to Himself through Christ. . . . Once you have an intimate love relationship with God, He will show you what he is doing. Your job as a servant is to follow Jesus' example: Do what the Father is already doing—*watch to see where God is at work and join Him!"* (Blackaby and King 1994: 58, 84, emph. in orig.)

A. *Scriptural bases*

The mission and purpose of the church is found in service and outreach to those outside of the church. The church's "Great Commission" is found in **Matt 28:18-20:** *[18]And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19]Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20]teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*[27]

Similar biblical passages that emphasize the importance of witnessing for Christ include **Matt 9:35-38; Mark 16:15; John 17:18-21; Acts 1:8; 5:27-32; 10:34-43; Rom 10:14-17; 15:18-21; 1 Cor 1:21-25; 2 Cor 4:4-13; 2 Tim 4:1-2; 1 John 1:1-3.** The book of **Acts** gives example after example of believers witnessing to others in all kinds of situations. Just as discipleship involves the physical realm as well as the spiritual realm, so the church's mission involves outreach and service to others in all realms of life (**Matt 5:13-16; 22:36-40; 25:31-46; John 13:4-15, 34-35; 20:21; Gal 6:10; Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 6:17-18; Jas 1:27; 2:14-26; 1 John 4:20-21**).

B. *The church is called to make disciples of people throughout the world*

Mission and discipleship are intimately connected. As people are discipled, their ministry gifts will be revealed and they will become motivated to join existing ministries or begin new ones, both within and outside the church. Consequently, "Your discipling ministry will want to identify and offer some form of spiritual identification help. Every believer has been given one or more spiritual gifts to be used for the building up of the body and ministry to others. These are valuable resources – God's unwrapped Christmas presents – waiting to be opened and enjoyed." (Churches Alive 1996: 6.2)[28] Mike Breen puts it this way: "We don't have a 'missional' problem or a leadership problem in the Western church. We have a discipleship problem. If you know how to disciple people well, you will always get mission. Always. . . . If you know how to actually make disciples, you'll reach people who don't know Jesus. Because that's simply what disciples do. That was Jesus' whole plan. If you disciple people, as these people do mission in their everyday comings and goings, with the work and shaping of the Spirit, the future of the church will emerge. . . . Every disciple disciples. You can't be a disciple if you aren't willing to invest in and disciple others. That's simply the call of the Great Commission." (Breen 2011: 12, 39) The result is transformation: "Acts of service and restoration we get to do [are] both a blessing to others and a picture of the restoration that God is doing. But ultimately families, neighborhoods, business, cities or nations are restored as Jesus saves and restores the people within them. So as Jesus' disciples it is our mission to make more disciples who make more disciples. In so doing, people and things are restored. But here is the real point–the world is increasingly filled with...Jesus!" (Kalinowski and McBee 2013: 17)

    1. <u>Christianity is a "go and tell" religion. All believers are called to be witnesses for Christ.</u>

        a. *The obligation to be a witness is not limited to those who have the office or special gift of evangelism.* That is why, in **Eph 4:11-16,** those whom God has called to be "evangelists," are to use their gift and calling to *"equip the saints"* so that they, too, can be better witnesses.

        b. *The church is commissioned to "send" people to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of others (**Rom 10:14-15**).* Thus, money to facilitate outreach needs to be a part of the church's budget.

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[27] Robert Coleman observes, "The words 'go,' 'baptize,' and 'teach' are all participles which derive their force from the one controlling verb 'make disciples.' This means that the great commission is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15), nor to baptize a lot of converts into the Name of the Triune God, nor to teach them the precepts of Christ, but to 'make disciples'—to build men like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only followed, but led others to follow His way. Only as disciples were made could the other activities of the commission fulfill their purpose. . . . What really counts in the ultimate perpetuation of our work is the faithfulness with which our converts go out and make leaders out of their converts, not simply more followers." (Coleman 1964: 108-10)

[28] Churches Alive adds this caution concerning spiritual gifts: "Gift identification, while it can be very helpful, must always take into consideration the ability of the Holy Spirit to empower disciples with other gifts, and to withdraw gifts no longer exercised" (Churches Alive 1996: 6.2).

2. The church is called to make "disciples," not just "converts" (**Matt 28:18-20**).
      a. *A disciple is a student, an apprentice, someone who has decided to be with a master or teacher (in this case, with Jesus), in order to become like the master or teacher.* A disciple takes on the nature and character of the master or teacher, and does what the master or teacher does (see Willard 1997: 282-310).
      b. *The fact that we are to make disciples, not just converts, of all the nations indicates that the "Great Commission" concerns far more than just evangelism.* Conversion is only the beginning of a lifetime of discipleship. Discipleship is holistic. Discipleship involves people's sanctification, not just their justification. Discipleship involves all of one's life. Thus, the Great Commission involves all of people's lives.
3. Christ's commission to make "disciples" includes "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." There are two important implications of this for the local church:
      a. *Those in church leadership need to be good teachers of, and need to personally model, the gospel.* The members of the church need to have a clear understanding of what Christianity is, what the core doctrines of the faith are, and how Christians are to live. That is why one of the qualifications of being a leader in the church includes being *"able to teach"* (**1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24**). Of the different means of teaching and persuasion, one's "character [*ethos*] is the most potent" (Cooper 1932: 9). Thus, again, discipleship is holistic; it involves all of one's life.
      b. *The local church should put into place some formal means of "discipling" new believers—of grounding them in the faith and deepening their understanding.* Instead of simply being content with having new believers be baptized and come to church on Sundays, there should be "discipleship classes" so that new believers are turned into true "disciples." Getting the people in the church into small groups that meet regularly for prayer, Bible study, and fellowship is another excellent way for Christians to grow in their faith and in their commitment to others and the church.
4. Part of fulfilling the "Great Commission" is establishing new local churches. The church is not just the universal fellowship of believers in Christ but also consists of local fellowships. The pattern recorded in the book of **Acts** is that believers preached the gospel in different places; they discipled the new believers, strengthening them in the faith; and then established local churches (see **Acts 14:21-23**).

C. *The church is called to be a witness of Christ by being an example and serving others through doing good in the world*
      1. What we do speaks more clearly than what we say and demonstrates the truth of what we believe. In **Matt 5:13-16** Jesus told us that by what we do we are to be the example of his love to the world: *"¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*
      Because every human being has been made in the "image of God" (**Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; Jas 3:9**), how we treat God's image shows what we really think of Him. To put it another way: "Doing confirms being." Thus, the Apostle John emphatically denies that "spiritual *being* can be separated from physical *doing*. John, in fact, insists that spiritual being must be validated by physical doing, or else the spiritual being is simply not real. That's what we saw in 1 John 3:7: 'Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever *practices* righteousness *is* righteous, as he is righteous.' The deceivers were saying: You can *be* righteous and yet not *practice* righteousness. John says: The only people who *are* righteous are the ones who *practice* righteousness. Doing confirms being." (Piper 2009: 146-47) This is seen many times and in many ways throughout the Bible:
    • How we *do* what God says is more important than our formal acts of religious worship (**1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 51:14-17; Isa 29:13-16; Jer 6:16-20; 7:21-23; Hos 6:6; Rom 12:1; Col 3:23-24; Titus 1:16; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6; Rev 19:7-8**).
    • Our *doing* what Jesus says is the sign that we truly love Him (**John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:9-10**);
    • The primary sign of our faithfulness and obedience to God is *how* we treat people (**Prov 14:31; 19:17; 21:3; Mic 6:6-8; Matt 25:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; John 13:34-35; Jas 1:27; 2:18-26; 1 Pet 3:7; 1 John 2:10; 14, 18-19, 23; 4:7, 11-12, 21**).
    • Similarly, the primary sign of our lack of faith and disobedience to God is *how* we treat people

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(Prov 14:31; Isa 1:10-17; Ezek 16:48-50; Matt 12:1-8; 15:3-9; 23:23; 25:41-46; Jas 2:14-17; 1 John 2:9; 3:10, 15, 17; 4:8, 20).

2. Jesus' examples of "salt" and "light" in **Matt 5:13-16** indicate that the church is to be engaged with all of life, not just limited to "preaching and praising" on Sundays.

    a. *Salt acts as a preservative.* The church should act as a preservative against spiritual and moral corruption. Salt also gives *taste;* the church should provide the taste of eternal life and the foretaste of heaven in a bland and difficult world. For both of these reasons, "Christians are to be 'rubbed' into culture [just as, in Jesus' day, salt was rubbed into meat to preserve and season it], penetrating every aspect of life and preserving and seasoning the society in which we live. (But two words of caution: Often Christians are so busy building visible institutions—buildings and retreat centers and places for fellowship—that we are in danger of becoming pillars of salt. The object isn't for the world to see how glorious our institutions are; instead the world should feel our presence in its midst. And second, we must be careful not to lose our saltiness. To be a preservative, it is essential for salt to keep its quality and character intact [**Mark 9:50**].)" (Colson 1992: 366)

    b. *Light is to be seen.* The church should live and act in ways that people can see the gospel and the new life of love, mercy, peace, justice, and truth that Christ brings. Light also warms people; it casts out darkness; it brings clarity; it causes growth; it enables people to see their way; it causes people who want to do evil or shameful things to hide; it brings joy. The church should act in such a way that it does all of those things and that people clearly see it. "The key thing about light is that its radiance can best be seen in the darkest places. It's difficult to see a candle flame in a brightly lit room, but strike even a single match in the darkness, and every eye will be drawn to it." (Colson 1992: 352-53)

3. Throughout Scripture there is a very clear link between what we say, how we act, and what we believe. This link is seen clearly in **Eph 2:8-10**: **Eph 2:8-9** specifies that our salvation is not the result of our own works but is purely by God's grace through our faith; however, **Eph 2:10** then goes on to say that, although our salvation is not the result of our works but is the result of *God's* work, the purpose or goal of our salvation is that we are saved *for* good works: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* In other words, God has done all the work, he made us his workmanship, and as part of the saving work he has worked in us, he prepared good works for us to do and has enabled us to do them. Therefore, one cannot divorce faith and works, belief and action. Mission is the outward and visible sign of our inward and spiritual faith.

    a. *Jesus cared about the physical conditions of people as well as their spiritual conditions.* Thus, he fed the hungry and healed the sick. In fact, it was Jesus' ministry in the physical realm that demonstrated his authority in the spiritual realm (see **Matt 8:5-13; 9:1-8; 11:2-6; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26; 7:1-10, 18-23**). Since we are being *"conformed to the image of [Christ]"* (**Rom 8:29**), we will more and more develop the same mindset and do the same actions as he did.

    b. *The church must demonstrate the love of Christ, compassion for the poor, help for the needy and those in trouble, etc., if it is going to fulfill its obligation of outreach and service to others (see Matt 5:38-48; Luke 10:25-37; Rom 12:9-21; 15:1-3; 2 Cor 8:21; Gal 6:9-10; Col 4:5; Titus 2:7-8; Jas 1:27; 1 Pet 2:12).* In fact, if what we claim to believe is *not* accompanied by good works, then our faith is "dead" (**Jas 2:14-26**).

    c. *Blessing people physically and taking care of their needs opens the door to evangelism and taking care of people's spiritual needs.* "The act of blessing people frequently leads them to inquire something along the lines of 'Why are you doing this?' Having your motives questioned is music to the ears of someone prepared for it. 'I am a follower of Jesus, and I am blessing you because that's what he came to do.' This answer opens the door for spiritual conversation." (McNeal 2009: 32-33) This has been proven historically. Historian Rodney Stark points out that in the early centuries of the church "many pagans were attracted to the Christian faith because the church produced tangible (not only 'spiritual') blessings for its adherents. Chief among these tangibles was that, in a world entirely lacking social services, Christians were their brothers' keepers. At the end of the second century, Tertullian wrote that while pagan temples spent their donations 'on feasts and drinking bouts,' Christians spent theirs 'to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old

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persons confined to the house.' Similarly, in a letter to the bishop of Antioch in 251, the bishop of Rome mentioned that 'more than 1,500 widows and distressed persons' were in the care of his congregation. These claims concerning Christian charity were confirmed by pagan observers." (Stark 1998: n.p.)

4. <u>What we do in this life—especially how we treat people—will be the standard by which we are judged at the final judgment.</u> We cannot work our way to heaven but are saved only by God's grace through faith in Christ (**John 3:16-18; 6:28-29; Rom 2:16-17; 10:8-13; Eph 2:8-9; Gal 3:1-14**). Nevertheless, "Works are an index of the spiritual condition of a person's heart. We are not told whether these books [in **Rev 20:11-15**] contain either good and evil works or only the latter. Yet the judgment is not a balancing of good works over bad works. Rather, works are seen as unmistakable evidence of the loyalty of the heart; they express belief or unbelief, faithfulness or unfaithfulness. The judgment will reveal whether or not people's loyalties have been with God and the Lamb or with God's enemies." (Ngundu 2006: 1576) As the Apostle James says, *"But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. . . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."* (**Jas 2:18, 26**) Consequently, just as what we do—especially how we treat people—is the test in this life that proves what we really think of God, that same test is found in the context of the final judgment. This is seen many times and in many ways throughout the Bible.

• Both by precept and example God judges people and nations and repays them "according to their deeds [or "ways" or "works"]" (**Judg 1:6-7; 9:22-24, 56-57; 2 Sam 12:9-12; 1 Kgs 2:32-33; 20:35-42; 21:17-19; 2 Chron 6:23, 30; Job 34:11; Ps 18:24; 31:23; 62:12; Prov 24:12; Eccl 12:13-14; Isa 59:18; Jer 17:10; 25:14; 32:19; Ezek 7:3, 8-9, 20, 23-24, 27; 9:10; 11:21; 16:43, 59; 18:30; 22:31; 24:14; 33:20; 35:6, 11, 15; 39:24; Hos 12:2; Joel 3:5-7; Obad 15; Zech 1:6; Matt 16:27; 25:14-30; Luke 12:47-48; John 5:28-29; Rom 2:1-6; 12:19; 1 Cor 3:8, 11-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 11:15; Gal 6:7-8; Eph 6:8; Col 3:25; 2 Tim 4:14; Heb 10:26-27; 1 Pet 1:17; 2 Pet 2:20-22; Jude 14-15; Rev 2:23; 14:13; 20:11-13; 22:12**).

• The final judgment of our "deeds" includes our words (**Matt 5:21-22; 12:36-37; Luke 12:2-3; Jude 14-16**), as well as the secrets and "hidden things" of our thoughts, mind, heart, intents, and motives (**1 Sam 16:7; 1 Chron 28:10; 29:17; 2 Chron 6:30; Prov 21:2; Isa 29:13-14; Jer 17:10; Matt 5:21-22; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:26; Mark 4:21; Luke 2:34-35; 12:2; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5; Heb 4:12; Rev 2:23**).

• How we treat people in this life will be a primary basis for our final judgment, both for reward and punishment, because that reveals the true state our heart and our real relationship with Jesus (**Matt 6:1-4, 12, 14; 10:42; 24:45-51; 25:31-46; Mark 9:41-42; Luke 6:35; 12:33, 41-48; 14:13-14; 16:1-9; Rom 2:1-6; 1 Tim 6:18-19; 2 Tim 4:14; Heb 6:10; 1 Pet 5:1-4**).

IX. <u>Specific Aspects of Good Mission</u>

A. *To be more missional, the church needs to change its mindset*

1. <u>At the heart of the church's mission is the fundamental spiritual question: What does God want for us?</u> Any church must first "ask a spiritual question: 'What does God desire for our church? What is on His heart?' That should prompt a strategic question: 'What would He have us to do, as individuals and as a Body?' Only then can you ask: 'How should we structure our ministry to best accomplish those strategies?'" (Minatrea 2004: xviii)[29] In other words, the primary focus is spiritual; it is knowing God

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[29] This may be a lengthy and involved process. Edward Setzer was asked to pastor a church of 35 people, the median age of whom was 68 years old. The church was in decline and the community had changed considerably since the church had been founded years before. Nevertheless, the chairman of the governing board said, "We'll do what it takes to reach this community" (Setzer and Putman 2006: 41). Setzer reports, "We continued to pray and seek God and beg for his intervention for six months. During that season of prayer, God began to change us as a church body. We made radical changes in the life of the church, but the church made those decisions." (Ibid.) The church decided that Easter Sunday would be the day for an intentional outreach. The members invited children, grandchildren, neighbors, and friends. Over 200 people showed up, and over the next two years the church grew to an average attendance of just under 200. Setzer concludes that the church's call was always to that community. When the church finally woke up to the fact that their community had changed, "they began to reach out again, and the gospel began to take root. The church was changed, and their lives were transformed because of it." (Ibid.: 42) We can expect God to change our churches, too, when we seriously seek his heart and reach out to our neighbors and communities.

and his will for *this* church with *these* people in *this* area in *these* circumstances with *these* needs and *these* resources.[30] This leads to observing the specific circumstances and needs of the people in this village, community, or area and realizing that *things don't have to be this way.* That, in turn, leads to the question: What can we do together as a group that we could not do individually? Indeed, we should ask: What could we do if our church partnered with other like-minded churches that we could not do on our own?

Because God speaks and acts through his body, the church, one way to discern God's will for your church is for the church leaders to know their own people well—their hopes, dreams, desires, needs, talents, and abilities. One church began its transition to a more missional and "people development" agenda by the leaders having personal conversations with the members. These conversations included five sets of key questions (see McNeal 2009: 124-26):

- What do you enjoy doing? What people enjoy may be the very way God wants to bless others through them.
- Where do you see God at work right now? God is at work all the time and in all areas. This question helps people learn to look for God in their children, neighborhood, workplace, etc.
- What would you like to see God do in your life over the next 6-12 months? How can we help? This goes to the area of personal development and helps people see that *they,* not numbers, physical facilities, and money, are the measure of the church and its success. This question enables the leaders to point people to resources outside of the church and to know what kinds of developmental opportunities they need to plan.
- How would you like to serve other people? How can we help? Most people grow through service. Further, this is a gauge of how the Spirit is calling the church into the community (if you have multiple people wanting to tutor children at school, or work with orphans, or people suffering from HIV/AIDS, that tells you something about the pathway into the community you should pursue). This also shows what kind of training people need in order to become better servants.
- How can we pray for you? This shows that the leaders actually care about their people. Prayer teams could begin from this as well.

Knowing God and his heart, observing our surroundings, and asking questions lead to *vision.* **Prov 29:18** (KJV) says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* Vision leads to specific plans, strategies, programs, and structures which lead to change.

- For example, William Carey, known as "the father of modern missions," spent 41 years in India where he translated the Bible into India's major languages, founded schools, and worked for important social reform ("William Carey" 2007: n.p.). What he did stemmed from knowing God and God's plan for his life, observing his surroundings, and seeing how things *could be*: "Where Carey saw barren wilderness, he did not revert to lamenting, but began to plan forests. He studied trees, planted them, and then taught forestry. Where he saw weeds he imagined gardens, cultivated them, published books, and established forums such as the Agri-Horticultural Society of India to give sustained support to his initiatives." (Mangalwadi 1999: 115)
- Similarly, modern Israel contains a forest in the middle of what had been a desert. "There were two different visions for the land. . . . The Israelis, worshiping Jehovah, believed God when He said that this was a land flowing with milk and honey. The Palestinians believe that Allah has cursed the land. You have two different people with two different visions for the same land." (Miller 1998: 116) Different visions lead to different results.
- On the other hand, "the lands with the least access to the gospel are also among the neediest. This is no coincidence. . . . So why are people poor and hungry? Except for catastrophic events such as war, drought, or flood, physical poverty doesn't 'just happen.' It is the logical result of the way people look at themselves and the world. . . . Physical poverty is rooted in a mindset of poverty, a set of ideas held corporately that produce certain behaviors. . . . Those with a poverty of mind see

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[30] It is important to realize that what works in one community might not work in another. Each community is a *unique* mission field with its own wants, needs, problems, issues, background, history, culture, etc. Although the gospel does not change, how we reach out to people and how we present the gospel (including even our style of worship) may have to vary depending on the particular community we are trying to reach. That is why Setzer and Putman emphasize that missional effectiveness begins with a calling from God. However, to effect that call, we then must "exegete the community," examine ways God is working in similar communities, find God's unique vision for your church, and adjust that vision as the context and circumstances change, as did Setzer's church discussed above in n.29 (see Setzer and Putman 2006: 21-28).

the world through glasses of poverty. They say, or their actions say for them, 'I am poor. I will always be poor, and there is nothing I can do about it' (fatalism). Or, as many say today, 'I am poor because others made me poor. They are going to have to solve my problem. I cannot.' . . . The problem is usually rooted in mindsets that retard and resist development, trapping people in destitution." (Miller 1998: 65-67)

• This "mindset of poverty" is reflected in the fact that in many places in Africa (and elsewhere) huge piles of trash and garbage, plastic bags, and other waste are simply left lying around where people live. This is both very unsightly and demonstrates a total lack of regard for people's dignity and quality of life. Waste dumps are a breeding ground for malaria-carrying mosquitoes, flies, vermin, and other disease-carrying agents. Femi Adeleye describes the unbiblical attitude behind this situation: "I know a Christian guest house in one of our [African] countries, surrounded by so much refuse. I watched as people from within the guesthouse and others from the street threw more refuse on the growing mound of stench. The smell was so bad that it filtered through the windows into the rooms. I ventured to ask whose responsibility it was to clear the refuse. I was told 'the government is to do so but they have not come for a long time'. I looked around me and discovered there were many mounds of refuse in the streets, some very near doorsteps. It appeared most citizens were waiting for government to clear the refuse. . . . This attitude is fuelled by the tendency to draw too sharp a dichotomy between what is sacred and secular or between what we consider spiritual and earthly. We assume the clearing of refuse, maintenance of the environment and good stewardship of government resources are 'secular' commitments, so we don't bother. We confine our lives and commitments to things we consider sacred or spiritual. . . . We need to return to a biblical perspective. In biblical perspective all of life is sacred." (Adeleye 1999: 127)

The churches could perform a valuable mission by educating the people about the environment and by cleaning the villages of the abundant trash and garbage. If they did these things, the churches would be telling people: "Your health, lives, and the quality of your lives are valuable to us. You are too important to live in a dump. We care about you, and the quality of life of this village." The government of Rwanda by law has made a large difference in this respect. It requires the people to clean up their areas on a regular basis. As a result, Rwanda is far cleaner than the other countries of East Africa. Christians should not have to depend on the government to require by law that which we can and should be doing on our own.

• Likewise, "[At a small village in Tanzania] a single tree grew, a mango of modest size but leafy with dense boughs. There was a circle of shade beneath it. Within that circle were thirty people, pressed against one another to keep in the shade, watched by a miserable goat tethered in the sunshine. What looked like a group game was obviously an afternoon routine of survival. As interesting to me as this packed-together mob of villagers around the lone tree trunk was the idea that no one in this hot exposed place had thought to plant more mango trees for the shade they offered. It was simple enough to plant a tree—this mango itself contained a thousand seeds—yet no one had planted one, or if anyone had, the tree had been cut down. The sight of these Africans in this tiny place in central Tanzania struggling to keep within a patch of shade stayed with me as a vivid instance of forward planning, or rather the lack of it." (Theroux 2003: 248)

2. The church's mindset about what the church is needs to change. Learning what is on God's heart for your church will result in a number of changes from the values and priorities most churches appear to have and from the way most churches operate. "Going missional will require that you make three shifts, both in your thinking and in your behavior:

• From internal to external in terms of ministry focus
• From program development to people development in terms of core activity
• From church-based to kingdom-based in terms of leadership agenda

These shifts are the signature characteristics of what missional means." (McNeal 2009: xvi) McNeal fleshes out what he means by these three shifts, as follows:

• Shift 1: From an internal to an external focus. The issue is not simply the church's "engagement in some kind of community service." Rather, the shift from an internal to an external focus "involves changing the very understanding of what the church is, not just what it does, though that changes dramatically as well. Moving to an external focus pushes the church from doing missions as some second-mile project into being on mission as a way of life. . . . It can be likened to the radical adjustment in thinking that occurred when it was discovered that the sun, not the earth, was at the center of the solar system. . . . In a kingdom-centered worldview, the target of God's

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redemptive love is the world, not the church ('For God so loved the *world*,' Jesus said; not 'for God so loved the *church*'). . . . In a missional approach, as the church engages the world, it finds Jesus, whose home is in the streets or wherever he has to go to connect with the people he is pursuing, meaning everybody. . . . The church is wherever followers of Jesus are. People don't go *to* church; they *are* the church. They don't bring people to church; they bring the church to people." (McNeal 2009: 42, 44-45) All of this becomes apparent when the leaders and the members of the church come to the deep understanding that "the church is one of the few organizations in the world that does not exist for the benefit of its members" (Setzer and Putman 2006: 44).

- • Shift 2: From program development to people development. When Reggie McNeal was serving as the founding pastor of a church, God spoke to him, saying, "Are people better off for being a part of this church, or are they just tireder and poorer?" The question bothered him, since he realized "I had no way of gauging people's personal growth; I only had ways to measure their church involvement. I knew how often they came to church activities, but I had no idea how often they served their neighbor. I tracked weekly worship attendance, but I had no real sense of how many marriages were healthy and growing. Bottom line: I could tell how busy people were with church but not how their lives were going." (McNeal 2009: 89) Further, "the lifestyles and values of church members largely reflect those of the culture"; therefore "church activity is no sign of genuine spiritual vitality" (Ibid.: 93).

McNeal's encounter with God changed his church's ministry focus. The church shifted its schedule, programming, and ministry content to become more intentional about developing people. This shift is more difficult than the first shift, and success is not as easily quantifiable. One key is that "developing people requires building relationships, not just delivering a product or service" (Ibid.: 90). This is one area where small, relationally-based discipleship groups intersect with mission.

- • Shift 3: From church-based to kingdom-based leadership. "The shift from the church at the center to the kingdom of God at the center is the theological and philosophical underpinning of the move from an internal to an external focus. . . . [Missional leaders] search for ways to expose people in church to missional engagement. They make sure to celebrate those efforts so that others in the congregation get exposed. . . . Whereas the classic church celebrates textual exegetes, the missional movement yearns for journalists who can tell us what God is up to today. . . . Missional leaders experience what God is doing and then tell others about it. In this way, they act as journalists to help us experience it, too. This means they spend time with God in prayer, asking him to show them what he is doing. . . . And it means they immerse themselves in life. . . . Missional leaders, in touch with God and with the world, speak convincingly of what the people of God must do. You will not be around such leaders long without learning that their heart is being shaped by their encounters." (McNeal 2009: 42, 138, 141, 143)

B. *To be more missional, the church needs to change its standard for what is considered a "successful" church*

Currently, most local churches are viewed as a "place to go" and as a "vendor of religious goods and services." "People who have lost their sentness expect their church to deliver on its promises to meet their needs, to care for them, to make them feel good. . . . People who have lost their sentness gauge the success of their pastors according to metrics relating to sales: more customers, more money and, ideally, a more fancy showroom." (Hammond and Cronshaw 2014: 33) To change that view of the church, of the pastors, and of the members themselves, a new metric is needed. "Since people are generally motivated by doing what gets rewarded, the development of a missional scorecard is critical. This scorecard will, by its existence, educate people to new possibilities, resulting in new behaviors and even greater movement toward missional expressions of Christiantiy." (McNeal 2009: 37-38) McNeal suggests the following for changing the standard or "scorecard" for what constitutes a successful church:

- • "Include and develop community ministry responsibilities as part of every leadership role, particularly for staff members. These assignments should be based on passion and talent of the leader. Until church members see church leaders involved in this redeployment, they will not believe the external focus is critical. . . . Limit the number of church offices and roles leaders can take on so that they have the essential time to be missionaries. . . . Make time that staff and leaders spend in the community (including relationships with community leaders) a part of their performance measurement. Avoid the commonly held view that time spent in the community in ministry is an extracurricular activity. If that view prevails, it will

ensure that community needs will be minimized compared to the other pressing needs of the church organization." (McNeal 2009: 75, 78)

• "Insist that every Sunday school class, small group, music ensemble, and ministry task has some external community service component. These choices should arise out of the passions and interests of the group." (McNeal 2009: 75-76). In this regard, Coleman points out that "it is not enough just to involve persons in some kind of group association, of which the Church is but the larger expression. They must be given some way to express the things which they have learned. Unless opportunity is provided for this outreach, the group can stagnate in self contentment, and eventually fossilize into nothing more than a mutual admiration society." (Coleman 1964: 120)

• "Bring community leaders into the church to educate your leaders on the needs of the community. This can be done during worship services and seminars, as well as through taped interviews and conference calls." (McNeal 2009: 76)

• "Place staff leaders' offices in places other than the church. These can be strategically used to target certain populations or ministry possibilities. . . . Make staff leaders available to other organizations as a part of their responsibility. Your staff is capable of serving as mentors, coaches, advisors for microeconomic development, leadership training specialists, and tutors for all kinds of personal and family skill development." (McNeal 2009: 76)

• "Begin church planning with the community calendar" (e.g., when is the county fair, when is school in session and on holiday), and make sure that "community events are calendared and not just your church year stuff" (McNeal 2009: 78). In this regard, "monitor the amount of time spent in worship where the community is on the agenda. This includes sermon time, prayer, sharing stories of blessing encounters, interviewing community leaders," and "help church members see their existing community involvement, including the work they do for a living, as primary opportunities for ministry." (Ibid.: 79)

• A "people development culture" in the church will be reflected in such things as: relationships that people are intentionally cultivating; people released into service; personal life development; money spent on people, community, and mission rather than on buildings and administration; staff engaged in coaching people for their personal development and for skills people need to minister in the community. Such things as the number of volunteer hours (develop a way for people to track their volunteer and service hours), stories of what the church members are doing and the impact they are having, regularly should be celebrated on Sundays and at other times, stories of how people are blessing others should be included in sermons (with the people's permission, of course), and should be rewarded in some manner, in person and on the church's website, if it has one. Public recognition and reward demonstrate what the real values and priorities of the church are and encourage both the participants and others. (McNeal 2009: 77, 79, 112) McNeal concludes with a caution and a suggestion: "If only corporate church efforts like these are celebrated, the point will be missed again. To become more incarnational, do everything you can to celebrate the life and ministry of the people in their everyday lives beyond the church, right where they live, work, go to school, and have fun." (Ibid.: 53)

C. ***To be more missional, the church's resources have to be re-allocated toward the priority of mission***

All churches have different kinds of resources: physical (land, buildings, equipment); financial (money and income); personnel (people and their time, talents, and other resources). The primary issue is a matter of *priorities*. What a church does with its resources reveals what it truly finds important, just as Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (**Matt 6:21; Luke 12:34**). Here are some suggestions:

• <u>Physical resources.</u> "In a missional church, the first question about facilities might be, 'Do we really need to spend this money on building, or should we invest it instead in community infrastructure and need?'" (McNeal 2009: 79) Assuming one is building a church building, the church should ask, "How can we build buildings to bless our community and then figure out a way for the church to use them?" (Ibid.: 80) A question for churches with existing facilities is, "How can we use what we already have to bless the community? . . . The missional church figures out ways to serve the community with the facilities it has." (Ibid.) The church can be used as a meeting place for other ministries or NGOs; it can partner with schools to provide meeting space, training space for teachers, space for concerts, etc.; the church can allow its building to be used by other churches for their services or community outreaches. "One church discovered it could both serve hot evening meals to kids who didn't have enough to eat and offer seminars to parents in basic life skills, once it opened up its fellowship hall to being used for more than feeding club members at church activities. Another church has turned its indoor basketball facilities into a major community gathering place by working with the local department of recreation. By the way, prayer boxes are prominent

throughout the facility, and routine announcements are made about the availability of people to pray with people and offer counseling." (Ibid.: 81) One church "offered their facility to community service providers and gradually became home to Boy Scouts, the 4-H club, an aerobics class, a diabetic support group, a neighborhood crime watch group, and the Citizen's Police Academy. Even though church members were not leaders in any of those entities, by reaching out and being receptive the church gradually became known as the place where you can get help in the community." (Minatrea 2004: 179) Another result of making its facilities available to community groups was that "as more people came to the facilities for community events, they gradually began to develop relationships with some church members. Some started to attend worship at the members' invitation." (Ibid.) Another suggestion is to look for offsite facilities to rent or buy that could serve as venues for outreach in the community. Again, God's paradigm is not drawing people to our (large, fancy) church building (however much we like such things) but taking the church to the people.

    Many churches have land that is being underutilized. Fruit trees or other crops could be planted and the produce either sold for income or given to those in need. Another use of church land, at least in areas where most people do not farm their own land, would be to use some of the land as a "community garden" where different plots are given or leased to different members of the community. This would draw community members to the church. Get-togethers among the community garden members could be arranged.

    Many small churches that meet in small buildings or rent space in other facilities nevertheless maintain much electric music and sound equipment, large speakers, and public address (PA) systems even though the buildings are small enough that such systems are unnecessary. Additionally, PA systems may cause "feedback" or static or other distortions that actually make it harder for the congregation to hear and understand the speaker, especially in a small meeting room. In such cases, it may be better simply to speak naturally and not use the PA system at all. The same is true for large speakers and electric musical equipment. Acoustic equipment is more than sufficient, and considerably less expensive. The issue is stewardship of one's financial resources. Although some pastors in East Africa maintain that people expect such large sound systems and are drawn by the noise, that is really not true. To the extent that it is true, it is not biblical. People are (or should be) drawn by the power of the gospel. If the church is truly missional in its outreach to and involvement in the community and people are being discipled and growing in Christ, people will be drawn to it for that reason alone.

- Financial resources. All churches should keep financial records and have a formal written budget; that is simply a matter of biblical accountability and stewardship of finances. Local churches and denominations can take many steps to become self-supporting. Churches can engage in income-generating activities so that they are not solely dependent for their income on the donations of church members. Many churches own land but are not using that land productively. Churches could plant gardens on their land and then sell the produce. Some churches plant trees, which can be sold to power companies, construction companies, or turned into charcoal. For example, one Kenyan pastor indicated that about 200-250 eucalyptus trees can be planted on an acre of land. When they mature they can be sold for approximately 10,000 Ksh. apiece. A Ugandan pastor estimated that Irish potatoes could be sold for approximately 120,000 Ush. per bag. Thus, an acre of land planted with Irish potatoes could be worth anywhere from 5-10 million Ush. Those resources (and the income) are renewable. One Kenyan diocese began a piggery, and the Bishop is requiring each of his parishes to own its own cow. Churches can charge wedding parties and groups that want to meet in the church building a fee to pay for the use of the building, the electricity, etc. Some churches operate food catering services or guesthouses to generate income. The possibilities for income-generating activities are almost unlimited, depending on one's imagination and the resources available. However, it must always be remembered that the business of generating income is a *means* to help further the mission and purpose of the church. It should not *become,* or overwhelm, the church's primary mission and purpose. ECLEA's book *Biblical Stewardship* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#stewardship) includes a section on the church and finances, including the mechanics of record-keeping, budgeting, and becoming self-supporting.

    What we do with our money indicates more clearly than almost any other area of life what our priorities are, what we value, and what we consider most important. That is true for churches as well as for individuals. McNeal suggests that "a greater percentage of revenue go toward community ministry investment than toward internal expenses" (McNeal 2009: 83). To achieve what McNeal suggests in-and-of-itself would probably necessitate significant changes in the way the church operates. Milfred Minatrea states, "For every activity, it is appropriate to ask: 'How does this activity or event lead to the accomplishment of our purpose or mission?' 'Is this activity designed for members or to connect with those who are not yet members?' 'If we were not already doing this activity, would we initiate it today, on the basis of our mission and purpose?'" (Minatrea 2004: 104) Those questions apply to the general activities

and events at the church and to establishing a church budget. Minatrea points out, "No organization can continue to invest in new directions without discontinuing others. . . . When missional churches order their actions according to their purpose, they must continuously let go of those activities that do not result in accomplishing their purpose." (Ibid.: 106-07) This may be difficult, even painful, to do, but it is absolutely necessary to have a clear eye and make the choices that need to be made if *God's* purpose for the church is to be achieved.

McNeal's suggestion is attainable. A prime example is Antioch Presbyterian Church of Chonju, Republic of Korea. When the church was founded in 1983, one of its founding principles was that it would give at least 60% of its income to missions. "The church developed the nickname 'Tin Can Church' because Sunday school students announced that it looked like a tin can lying on its side, half buried in the ground. At the beginning, some people were concerned that the missions giving goal would hinder the growth of the church. On the contrary, according to Rev. Lee, money invested in the local church did not result in growth, but increased missions giving directly affected church growth. The congregation now has over 4,000 members. In 2001, the congregation gave 75% of its income to mission activities. In 2002, the amount was 70% and in 2003 it was 72.3%. In correspondence, one of the pastors confirmed these numbers and noted, 'Please understand. In 2002 and 2003, we invested only 70% and 72.3% out of the annual income in mission giving because we built a youth retreat and conference center' during those two years. To distribute the missions money, Rev. Lee of the Chonju Antioch Presbyterian Church and pastors from other congregations founded The Paul Mission in 1986. As of 2004, 248 missionaries had been sent out to 70 countries. The Paul Mission also promotes evangelism, church planting, theological education, prison ministry, mercy ministries, missionary training, children and youth programs, and family counseling. An evangelistic radio program in Thailand is another outreach of The Paul Mission. . . . The Tin Can Church has found that setting the goal of loving others because of Jesus Christ led to congregational growth and vitality as byproducts." (Ronsvalle 2004: "A Korean Church That Gives 60% To Missions")

Additionally, churches can conduct capital drives for community outreach projects just as they do for their own building projects or can tithe to community ministry funds received for any "internal" capital drive. McNeal suggests other creative financial ways to enhance the church's mission to the community: "Invite community leaders into your budgeting process. Let them inform you of needs and possible sources of revenue." (McNeal 2009: 84); "Offer financial planning seminars and services to the community, especially to help less affluent members of the community know how to budget better and plan for the future" (Ibid.); "Pursue microeconomic developments to help people start their own businesses or participate in the economy" (McNeal 2009: 84); "Find ways to help members monitor their own consumption expenses and reduce them. Celebrate freeing up monies for ministry personally and corporately by keeping track of how much money has been saved and redirected. Note that this will have to be modeled at the leader level, or it will not gain any traction among members." (Ibid.: 85); "Come up with clever ways of giving to the community. One church makes it a point to give to the community money at least equal to the property taxes it would pay if it had to pay those taxes." (Ibid.) "Partner with other congregations. In the traditional church, congregations competed against one another for dollars. In the missional church world, the problems being addressed are too big for one person or group to tackle, raising the need for cooperation between congregations." (Ibid.: 84) Minatrea goes so far as to say, "I cannot underscore this point too strongly: no significant Kingdom accomplishment will occur until churches value Kingdom more than their own sectarian accomplishments" (Minatrea 2004: 127).

• Personnel resources. Section **IX.A.** ***To be more missional, the church needs to change its mindset*** and section **IX.B.** ***To be more missional, the church needs to change its standard for what is considered a "successful" church***, above, have already discussed multiple ways in which both church leaders and members can become engaged more missionally. Additionally, the church could develop and publish a list of community needs and opportunities for service in the community. Many people would like to become involved in helping others, but they simply are unaware of the needs and how they can help. Consider involving non-church members in the outreach ministries of the church. Such people have skills that might be important for the ministry, and their involvement would expose them to, and involve them with, the church in a non-threatening atmosphere. They would first be exposed to the gospel in action, which would prime them for receiving Jesus as their Savior and Lord when presented with the gospel itself.

D. *Examples of missional outreaches*

The opportunities for mission are as many and varied as there are people, needs, and resources. Here are some examples of missional outreaches that churches are doing or can do:

- "A congregation located in a town housing a major correctional facility has taken on the challenge of placing every released inmate in some kind of mentorship and sponsorship upon leaving prison" (McNeal 2009: 1).

- "Assign people to apartment complexes, trailer parks, and condominium communities to serve as resident missionaries. Then support them with volunteers, money, and whatever else is necessary as they uncover needs and minister to people. The percentage of people who leave group housing communities to attend church is miniscule. It doesn't matter if a church is next door or across the street. Putting boots on the ground is the best way to gain a presence in these high-density population areas. One church supports a young couple as its apartment missionaries, paying a stipend and meeting the needs that the missionaries uncover as they build relationships in their low-income apartment community. One Sunday school class prepares lunch one Saturday a month for the residents; another fixed up the complex's community room." (McNeal 2009: 77)

- Every year, there is a large block party in Madison, Wisconsin, the location of the University of Wisconsin. After the party, the area is littered with paper, bottles, and other trash. A local newspaper reported, "Members of the Blackhawk Church, located on the west side of Madison, showed up at 6 a.m. Sunday to clear the remaining trash from streets, sidewalks and front lawns. This is the second year in a row the Blackhawk Church has helped alleviate cleanup duties for residents. . . . Though the Mifflin Street Co-op also scheduled a neighborhood cleanup this morning . . . because church members did such a thorough job, the Co-op deemed any additional cleaning unnecessary. 'While most of us were still in bed, this church group was cleaning out in the rain,' [government official Mike] Verveer said." (Heidmann 2006: n.p.)

- One small church conducted a bicycle clinic for the people in the neighborhood. Instruction and maintenance tips were provided, adjustments and minor repairs were performed, and refreshments were served. The clinic was well-received and will be repeated periodically.

- "One class of senior adult women spends every Wednesday morning cleaning and taking care of babies at the home of parents who gave birth to quintuplets, adding five children to the two already present. These ladies clean, fold diapers, cook, and do whatever else needs doing, and they've made a pledge to do it until the children are old enough to go to school. Some groups will combine their efforts as they discover others who share their ministry callings." (McNeal 2009: 76)

- "All of the missional communities I encounter set aside corporate days of service to their community as an act of worship. One congregation uses one Sunday per month as a day of service to the community. After congregants gather to pray and receive assignments, they head out to bless their town. Whole families will work together and often with other whole families during the day. Sometimes special challenges require all-women or all-teenager effort. The congregation then comes back together to share a meal and tell stories of encounters during the experience." (McNeal 2009: 60-61)

- Prayer-walking: "Prayer-walking can be done as a churchwide effort at a given time or done by individuals at a time convenient for them. This activity serves to focus people's attention on what God is doing or wants to do in a particular geographical area. . . . It is even more powerful if neighbors are aware that they can share issues and concerns with the prayer-walkers." (McNeal 2009: 71) Prayer-booths: "This involves some form of public prayer ministry that establishes a physical space where people can share their burdens and make prayer requests. . . . Some congregations I have worked with actually set up booths at their county fairs or community festivals where people can drop off prayer requests and even be prayed for on the spot if they desire." (Ibid.)

- Adopting community leaders for prayer: "The idea here is to contact local community leaders, informing them that they have been adopted for prayer, and giving them some contact number for forwarding any prayer requests they might have. Sometimes it helps to prompt these leaders by telling them they can simply list the challenges they face and then assure them you will ask God to help them deal with these. . . . Public officials and public servants receive plenty of complaints. Imagine how encouraged they would be to receive news that there are people pulling for them!" (McNeal 2009: 72)

- "Adopt a school. . . . There is no more successful strategy than this to call out people and their talent for community ministry." (McNeal 2009: 77) One church in the northeastern part of the United States reports, "A major partnership St. Paul's has is with the Norwalk International Academy at Brien McMahon High School that serves the needs of incoming refugee students. Fleeing the consequences of life in drug cartel, war-torn countries like Guatemala and Honduras, the teens we encounter have risked their lives to reach safety. Many have witnessed or been the victims of incredible violence. St. Paul's members serve as tutors and companions as students learn English and develop math skills. Volunteers need not speak Spanish; nor do they need to have a formal teaching background." ("Social Justice & Outreach" n.d.)

- God has created many plants that have healing properties and medicinal value. We can teach people in the church and in the community about these plants and how to grow them in our gardens. When we use these traditional remedies we can prevent illnesses from occurring and can save a lot of money by not having to buy modern, chemically-produced medicines. We need to take advantage of the resources our schools, government organizations, NGOs, private and charitable organizations, and libraries to increase our knowledge so that we will be able to act as thoughtfully and wisely as possible and enable the people of the church and the community to act as thoughtfully and wisely as possible.
- All of the suggestions discussed above in section **VII.C.** *Ministry within the church involves ministry in the "physical" realm as well as in the "spiritual" realm* can also be done with the community at large. The church should be the venue where people learn basic health information and financial planning. If the church has a nurse or doctor as a member, they periodically could hold a free medical clinic for the community (and the Christian nurse or doctor could recruit some of their colleagues to participate, even if the colleagues are not Christians). Christian carpenters or other tradesmen could teach job skills and Christian business owners could offer work experience. ECLEA's book *Biblical Stewardship* (http://www.eclea.net/courses.html#stewardship) gives several examples of basic health and cleanliness practices the church should be teaching and applying and provides practical applications of the stewardship of money and possession, including how to budget, in its sections on "Stewardship of the Body" and "A Biblical Overview of Money and Possessions."
- The importance of missional outreach is highlighted by the fact that every Friday Muslim women take good food to all the patients of large hospitals in Kigali and Dar es Salaam. I have been informed that no churches have ever done that. When those patients leave the hospital, when they have needs, are they more likely to go to a church or to the mosque for help? Although some pastors might say that "my church is too small to do what those Muslims are doing," if church A got together with churches B, C, and D, they could accomplish great things that not one of them could do on its own.

The church should be the most important institution in the village or community where it is located. It should be recognized as such by the local government officials and the residents. That will only take place when the church is visibly and actively involved in the community. The opportunities for such involvement are limited only by the vision and ingenuity of the church and its members.

X. UNITY (WHOLENESS)

The mission and purpose of the church is found in demonstrating unity and wholeness. "Unity in the church is so important that the New Testament gives more attention to it than to either heaven or hell. God deeply desires that we experience *oneness* and harmony with each other. Unity is the soul of fellowship. Destroy it, and you rip the heart out of Christ's Body. It is the essence, the core, of how God intends for us to experience life together in his church. Our supreme model for unity is the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are completely unified as one. God himself is the highest example of sacrificial love, humble other-centeredness, and perfect harmony." (Warren 2002: 160) Demonstrating unity and wholeness is an important sign that the church is properly worshiping God, discipling its members, and is truly engaged in God's mission to the world. Christ has specifically called the church to demonstrate unity in his High Priestly Prayer in **John 17:18-21**: *"¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."*

A. *Unity and wholeness of the church flow from the church's nature*

1. Christ prayed that we "may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us" (**John 17:21;** see also **John 17:11**). Paul pointed out that since Christ is not divided, we must not be divided (**1 Cor 1:11-13**). He implored believers *"to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (**Eph 4:1-3. 13**). Demonstrating unity thus is an important mark of maturity in the ongoing life of the church and of individual believers and also is an important mark of the goal to which we are all to strive.

2. Unity within the church and among local churches and denominations flows from the important things we all have in common. All Christians, all local churches, and all denominations share one Lord

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(**Rom 10:12; Eph 4:5**), one body (**Rom 12:4-5; Eph 4:4**), one purpose (**1 Cor 1:10; Phil 2:2**), one Father (**1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6**), one Spirit (**1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4**), one hope (**Eph 4:4**), one faith (**Eph 4:5**), one baptism (**Eph 4:5**), and one love (**Phil 2:2**). "We share the same salvation, the same life, and the same future—factors far more important than any differences we could enumerate" (Warren 2002: 161).

These are the primary matters. "Primary" matters are those issues that are central to the faith and that all Christians should agree on: the Bible is the Word of God; God is Trinity; humanity is radically fallen in sin and cannot save itself; Jesus is fully God and fully man; Christ is the only way to salvation; we are saved only by God's grace through faith in Christ; we are called to live a life of love. "Secondary" matters are those things that the Bible speaks about but is not absolutely clear about. Secondary matters include things such as: should infants be baptized or only people who profess faith? What should be the form of church government? Is Christ present in a special way during the Lord's Supper or not? What is the proper role of women in ministry? "Man-made" matters are those things that the Bible really does not talk about at all, but people have come up with particular rules or practices on their own. Man-made matters include things such as: the order of worship; the wearing of special clothes; what activities (e.g., music, movies, food and drink) are appropriate for Christians. Differences over secondary and man-made matters do not affect our salvation and should not affect our fellowship. Unfortunately, however, most divisions between denominations and among Christians are over secondary and man-made matters—i.e., the very things that are *least* significant. Maintaining close working relations with individual believers, churches, and denominations should not be affected if they differ from our own view on secondary and man-made matters. More unites us than divides us. We need to maintain unity based on the primary matters and have charity toward other believers concerning the secondary and man-made matters.

3. <u>The metaphors the Bible uses to describe the church show that the church must demonstrate unity and wholeness.</u>

> a. *The church is the body of Christ.* The church is one body with one head (Christ). Every individual is important, because each person is a "member" of the body. If one suffers, the whole body suffers. All members are needed and need to function properly for the body to be well and whole (**1 Corinthians 12;** see **Rom 12:4-5; Eph 1:22-23; 4:1-6, 11-16; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15**).
>
> b. *The church is a building or temple of God.* We are "living stones" who each have a perfect place in one building. A part of the building that is out of place or broken mars the building and is not how the building is designed to be (see **1 Cor 3:9-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 1:4-6**).
>
> c. *The church is God's family.* A good, well-functioning family is not characterized by anger, divisions, or fighting among each other. A good, well-functioning family demonstrates love, respect, joy, unity, and many other virtues together. The church needs to demonstrate, within itself and to the world, what a good, well-functioning family looks like (see **Mark 10:29-30; Rom 8:14-17; 2 Cor 6:18; Eph 1:5; 2:19; Gal 3:26-4:7; 1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2**).

B. *Unity and wholeness of the church flow from what Christ has done*

1. <u>Christ has reconciled us to the Father.</u> Therefore, we have the ministry of reconciling others (**Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:21-22; Heb 2:17**).

2. <u>Christ broke down the only wall of division that had any significance in the OT (the wall between the Jews and Gentiles).</u> Therefore, we should not be erecting new walls between ourselves (**John 17:11, 20-21; Rom 3:21-22; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 2:11-3:6; Col 3:9-11**).

3. <u>Christ did more than simply break down the wall of division between people; he created "one new man" out of formerly divided people.</u> Therefore, we should demonstrate both oneness and newness in Christ (**Eph 2:11-22**).

4. <u>Christ has purchased his people out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation in the world.</u> Therefore we should place Christ first and not separate ourselves because of racial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural differences (**Rev 5:9; 7:9**).

C. *Unity and wholeness of the church are important for the church's witness in the world*

1. <u>Christ prayed that we may be one "so that the world may believe that You sent Me" (**John 17:21**).</u> Our unity, or lack of unity and wholeness as a body, directly affects whether people will see Jesus for

who he is. In fact, the one sign that Christ gave us by which *"all men will know that you are My disciples"* is that *"you have love for one another"* (**John 13:34-35**). If we truly have that love for one another, and show it, then *we will have unity and wholeness.*

2. The apostles both demonstrated unity and called on us to demonstrate that unity and wholeness (**Ps 133:1; Acts 1:14; 4:32; Rom 12:16; 15:5-6; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:24-25; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:11-13; Phil 1:27; 2:1-5; Col 3:14; 1 Pet 3:8**).

D. *Unity and wholeness should be demonstrated at all levels—within an individual; relationally within a local church; and between different churches and denominations*

    1. <u>Wholeness begins within the individual.</u> Christ saves people from their sins and thereby brings healing (**Matt 1:21**; **8:16-17; 1 Pet 2:24**). He has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers (**John 14:16-18**). He guides us into the truth (**John 14:26; 16:13**). He gives us peace and the *"fruit of the Spirit"* that lead to a well-integrated life (**John 14:27; Gal 5:22-23**). We have the mind of Christ (**1 Cor 2:16**). He has adopted us into his own family (**Rom 8:14-17**). Indeed, Jesus came that people *"might have life, and might have it abundantly"* (**John 10:10**). As Christ works in our lives, and as we obey and follow and become more like him, each individual believer should manifest greater and greater inner wholeness.

    2. <u>The apostles' call for unity was largely directed to people within the local churches.</u> The apostles emphasized like-mindedness and *relational* unity within the body of Christ (see **Rom 12:16; 15:5-6; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:24-25; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:11-13; Phil 1:27; 2:1-5; 1 Pet 3:8**). Such relational unity naturally flows and will be obvious to others if and when the church obeys Jesus' "new commandment" which he gave to his disciples the night before he was crucified, *"that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another"* (**John 13:34-35**). If we truly see our local church as a family, and ourselves as brothers and sisters, we naturally should demonstrate love and unity toward each other.

    3. <u>Another important aspect to unity and wholeness in the church is unity between different local churches and between different denominations.</u> Different denominations and church traditions can bring out the richness of the church as a whole, much like the richness of an extended family is evidenced by the fact that some members of the family live in cities, others in villages, some are in business, others are farmers; nevertheless, when the entire family gathers, they all take joy in the fact that they are members of one, great family.

        a. Although denominations developed after the Bible was written, the prayer of Jesus in **John 17** and the calls by Jesus and the apostles throughout the NT for unity are broad enough to include calls for unity between different local churches and between denominations.

        b. Other statements by Jesus (**Matt 12:25, 30; Mark 3:24-25; 9:38-40; Luke 9:49-50; 11:17, 23**) and Paul (**1 Cor 1:10-15; Phil 1:12-18**) also deal with the situation of unity among different factions within the church.

        c. *Unity between different churches or denominations does not mean that we have to give up doctrines or practices that are important to us.* We need to distinguish between those matters that are the core doctrines and practices of the faith (i.e., the Bible is the Word of God; the nature of God; mankind's inherent sinfulness and inability to save itself; the person and work of Jesus Christ; the only way of salvation, by grace through faith in Christ; the law of love) and those that are not. Unity should be based on the core matters of the faith. We should work, share, and develop relationships with each other. We should not let beliefs or practices that are not core matters separate our fellowship. If we do this, we will find that far more unites us than divides us. Rick Warren concludes, "God wants unity, not uniformity. But for unity's sake we must never let differences divide us. We must stay focused on what matters most—learning to love each other as Christ has loved us, and fulfilling God's . . . purposes for each of us and his church." (Warren 2002: 161-62)

E. *Unity and wholeness within the church are demonstrated in different ways*

    1. Gathering together for common worship (**Heb 10:23-25**).

    2. <u>Participating in the sacraments together (see **Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 10:17**).</u> Although baptism, unlike the Lord's Supper, is to be done only once, a good practice that helps to knit the body together is to remember our baptism often. One way to do this is to have the members of the body reaffirm their own baptismal vows when someone is being baptized and promise to pray for the

baptismal candidate.

3. <u>Common meals and fellowship (**Acts 2:42, 46-47**).</u> Christian fellowship within the church is exemplified by the Greek word *koinonia* which means "close association involving mutual interests and sharing; communion; an attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship." Such fellowship should be the real unity, love, and enjoyment that is demonstrated by beloved members of a family toward each other. Gatherings by the entire church and small groups within the church are good ways to promote fellowship.

4. <u>Sharing and helping each other materially (**Acts 2:44-45**).</u> Families take care of each other. Helping those in need shows that we really are a family (see **Gal 6:10; Jas 2:14-26**).

5. <u>Working together where we can.</u> All churches and denominations face similar problems, especially those located in the same community or area. The people in a particular community or area—whether they are Christian or non-Christian—also face similar problems. The church is God's ordained presence in the world and in the community. The different churches and denominations could have a tremendous impact in their communities and areas if they would take steps to begin working together to deal with the problems they and the people all face. The simplest way to begin is for different churches of the same denomination to get to know each other, assess what their major needs and the major needs of the community are, come up with plans and strategies to meet those needs, and work together to solve the problems. The next easiest way is for churches from different denominations but within the same church traditions (Pentecostal; evangelical; mainstream) to do the same thing. Doing this makes it easier to cross denominational and traditional lines and do the same thing. This does not mean that churches have to do everything together, but they can do some things together. When they do, they will find that it is easier than they thought, God will reveal other areas where they can work together, and they will experience a new dynamic of life in the Spirit.

F. *Unity and wholeness will result if the church is doing what it is supposed to be doing*

1. <u>Christ's prayer "that they may all be one" (**John 17:21**) is in the passive tense.</u> This indicates that oneness (unity; wholeness) is a *result* or *by-product* of something else, not something that we can "directly" achieve. That "something else" is the other three primary missions and purposes of the church: worship; development (nurture); and service (outreach).

2. <u>The church will demonstrate unity and wholeness if—and to the extent—it manifests its other three primary missions and purposes.</u>

      a. We are not "whole" if we are neglecting any major purpose of the church. In that case we are unbalanced.

      b. As the church truly worships God "in spirit and in truth" it cannot help but be united and whole.

      c. As the church treats those within it as beloved members of a family, the believers will become whole as they are nurtured, developed, and equipped.

      d. *As the church serves and reaches out to others, the believers in the church will be using their gifts and abilities with which they have been equipped.* They will be building "spiritual muscles" just like physical exercise builds physical muscles (see **1 Tim 4:7-8**).

      e. *As the church serves and reaches out to others, those others will become believers and come into the church.* The church will grow.

      f. *The new believers will become worshippers.* As those new believers are discipled, nurtured, and equipped, they will become whole. They will then use their gifts and abilities and will reach out to others. The cycle will then repeat itself.

XI. <u>The Church: Conclusion</u>

In its visible and local aspect, the church is an organization. Yet the church is also an organism: it is a body, a family, a tree, a vine, a building of "living stones." As such, all members of the church are united; they must all use their gifts and work together. Just as Christ is not divided (**1 Cor 1:13**), so there should be no division in the church, *"and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it"* (**1 Cor 12:26**).

In the same way, all of the primary missions and purposes of the church are related and are necessary. None of the primary missions and purposes of the church alone is sufficient. Doing the first three primary missions and purposes well both *results in unity and wholeness* and *leads to an increase of worship, development (discipleship), and outreach (mission)*. The reason is that the church is doing what it is supposed to

be doing. That is the attitude of worship; that is the nature of love. When the church is doing what it is supposed to be doing we may rest assured that *"it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (**Phil 2:13**), to the end that *"the gates of Hades will not overpower it [the church]"* (**Matt 16:18**), and Christ is glorified, both now and forever.

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APPENDIX 1—DOCTRINAL HISTORY: ECCESIOLOGY

Apostolic Fathers [*Barnabas, Hermas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius*] (1st Century)—Writings
fragmentary—lack originality, depth, clearness and definiteness (37-39).[31]

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[31]Unless otherwise indicated, page references are to Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Carlisle, PA:
Banner of Truth, 1937 [reprinted 2002]).

Nature of the Church:
- Christians living in a "Christian community"—transitory nature of this world and eternal glory of the future world are stressed (41).
- The Church was regarded as the "communion of saints" which God chose as his possession, and as the true Israel, but its relation to historic Israel was not identified (227).
- Charismatic gifts still possessed and rejoiced in (41).
- Increasing respect for ecclesiastical offices—Bishop sometimes stands out as superior to Presbyters (41).

The Sacraments:
- *Baptism*–Begets new life and secures forgiveness for all or (*Hermas* and *II Clement*) past sins only (40).
- *Lord's Supper*–The means of communicating to man the blessing of eternal life (40).

Development of heretical movements (1st-4th Centuries)
Jewish movements within the Church:
- *Nazarenes*—Believed in the divinity and virgin birth of Jesus, but bound themselves to strict observance of the law (but did not demand this of Gentile believers) (44).
- *Ebionites*—Denied the divinity and virgin birth of Jesus; rejected the apostleship of Paul, and held that all Christians should be circumcised and were subject to the law (44).
- *Elkesaites*—Denied virgin birth; held that Jesus was a higher spirit or angel. Practiced strict asceticism, held the Sabbath and circumcision in honor, but also practiced magic, astrology, magical washings and had secret doctrines re. the observance of the law (44-45).
- *Gnosticism* (largely a *pagan/Gentile* movement)--Matter was inherently evil and had been created by a lesser God (Demiurge, the God of the OT); Christ was a special spirit emissary who provided secret knowledge through which certain persons could be saved. Special rituals (anointings, magic names) were used. Gnostics tended either toward asceticism or libertinism. Gnostic influence is still seen in Roman Catholicism's peculiar conception of sacraments, philosophy of a hidden God who should be approached through intermediaries (saints, angels, Mary), division of men into higher and lower orders, and emphasis on asceticism (45-49).

Montanism, Novatianism, Donatism (2nd-4th Centuries)
- *Montanism*—An ascetic reform movement; emphasized the charismatic gifts. *Montanus* and his associates regarded themselves as the last of the prophets, strongly emphasizing the nearness of the end of the world. Theologically orthodox, they insisted on strict moral requirements (celibacy or, at most, a single marriage); fasting; rigid moral discipline). They exalted martyrdom and forbade flight from persecution (54).
- *Novatianism* and *Donatism*—Sectarian reform movements similar to *Montanism* (although without the prophetic emphasis). They strove for moral purity in the Church, denied that the Church had the power to forgive those who had denied the faith during the persecutions of Decius and Diocletian, rejected unworthy bishops and insisted on rigorous church discipline (227-28).

Apologetes [*Justin Martyr* (d.165), *Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch*] (2nd Century) and **Anti-Gnostic Fathers** [*Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian*] (late 2nd-early 3rd Centuries)
Nature of the Church:
- The Church was held to consist of the people of God, the true Israel, and the high-priestly generation of God. They emphasized strict morality, holy love, and readiness to suffer with rejoicing (59).
- Drew on the Old Testament in emphasizing the idea of the Church as an external community, although they also mentioned that it is a spiritual community. They represent the visible organization as the channel of divine grace, and make salvation dependent on membership in the visible Church; those who separated themselves from the external communion thereby also renounced Christ. Because of Old Testament influences, the idea of a special mediating priesthood also was advanced (68).

The Sacraments:
- *Baptism*
  - Baptism stood in the closest relationship to the new birth, and marked the beginning of the new life (59).
  - Some early Fathers taught baptismal regeneration; *Tertullian* seemed to think that reception of the rite carried with it the remission of sins (248).
  - Infant baptism was practiced, but Tertullian opposed it on the ground of the inexpediency of placing young children under the heavy responsibility of the baptismal covenant. (248)
  - Baptism by immersion was practiced, but this was not the only mode, and was not considered to be of the essence of baptism (248).
- *Lord's Supper*—Initially accompanied a common meal; over time, names (oblations, sacrifices, thanksgiving) were applied to the Lord's Supper itself; then the thanksgiving prayer became regarded as a consecration of the elements, and the supper assumed the character of a sacrifice brought by the priest or bishop (251-52).

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Eastern Fathers (2nd-4th Centuries)

Nature of the Church:

- *Origen* regarded it as a congregation of believers, outside of which there is no salvation; however, he distinguished between the Church proper and the empirical Church. He recognized that all believers are priests, but also spoke of a separate priesthood with special prerogatives. *Clement* spoke of lower (based on fear and hope) and higher (based on perfect love) states of Christian life (75).
- *Cyprian*—Disciple of *Tertullian*, developed the doctrine of the *episcopal Church*:
  - The *bishops* are the real successors of the apostles, and are the foundation of the Church. They form the true priesthood in virtue of their sacrificial work. All bishops have parity.
  - The bishops determine who belong to the church and who may be restored to fellowship.
  - True members will always obey and remain in the Church, because outside of it there is no possibility of salvation.
  - The Church is universal and visible, bound together by a visible and external unity (228-29).

The Sacraments:

- *Baptism*
  - Baptism marked the beginning of new life in the Church and included the forgiveness of sins. *Clement* held that Eucharist bestowed participation in immortality, for through it the communicant entered into fellowship with Christ and the Spirit; *Origen* spiritualized the sacraments as symbols of divine influences, but also said that they represented gracious operations of the HS (75).
  - The bishop of Rome asserted that baptism administered by heretics could be regarded as valid; Cyprian denied this. The former view prevailed, and it became a fixed principle not to re-baptize those who had been baptized according to the Trinitarian formula (248).
- *Lord's Supper*—The symbolic view of the Lord's supper (*Origen, Eusebius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus)* was supplanted by the doctrine that the flesh and blood of Christ were in some way combined with the bread and wine in the sacrament *(Cyril, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus)* (252).

Augustine (354-430)

Nature of the Church:

- The church is the invisible communion of the elect; this is the real unity.
- At the same time, this exists only within the catholic, visible church, because only there does the Holy Spirit work and true love dwell.
- *Per Cyprian,* apostolic authority is continued by episcopal succession, and outside of it there is no salvation.
- The Church is, even now, the Kingdom of Heaven. The "city of God" was frequently conceived as the empirical church, and the "city of man" as the state.
- Whoever does not have the [visible] church as a mother does not have God as a Father (229-31).

The Sacraments:

- They are not mere symbols, but are accompanied by an actual exertion of divine energy (229).
- They are visible signs and mediums of invisible grace. He occasionally indicated that the sacraments depend for their operation on the faith of the recipient (243).
- *Baptism*
  - God forgives sin in baptism; baptism removes original sin as a matter of guilt, but does not remove it as a corruption of nature (229, 249).
  - Faith and repentance are necessary conditions for baptism of adults (248).
  - Baptism operated *ex opere operato* re. infants (i.e., it is effectual in virtue of its objective administration, regardless of the character of the priest or the faith of the recipient); the faith of the Church, represented by the sponsors, can be accepted as that of the child (248).
  - Baptism impresses on the child an indelible character in virtue of which it belongs by right to Christ and the Church (248).
  - Unbaptized children who die are lost (248).
- *The Lord's Supper*
  - The Lord's Supper gives spiritual refreshment to the soul (229).
  - He distinguished between the sign and the thing signified, and held that the substance of the bread and wine remains unchanged, although he did talk of the sacrament as being, in a sense, the body of Christ (252).
  - He stressed the commemorative aspect of the rite, and maintained that the wicked do not partake of the body (252).

Roman Catholicism

Papalism:
- Bishop of Rome's primacy over other bishops was recognized by Byzantine Emperor Justinian in 533; title of "Universal Bishop" was accepted by Boniface III in 607.
- *Council of Trent* (1544)—The Church is "the body of all the faithful who have lived up to this time on the earth, with one invisible head, Christ, and one visible head, the successor of Peter, who occupies the Roman see."
- *Vatican Council* (1870)—Papal infallibility when the pope is speaking *ex cathedra* (232-34, 240).

Nature of the Church:
- The Church as the *Kingdom of God on earth*, resulted in: (1) All Christian duties and activities must take the form of services rendered to the church–all that does not come under the control of the church is purely secular; renunciation of the secular is a special work of piety (i.e., monasticism as an ideal); (2) The blessings of salvation come only through the outward ordinances of the church; (3) As an external kingdom, the church had to define and defend itself against the other kingdoms of the world, resulting in great secularization of the church (232-33).
- *Emphases of the Roman conception of the Church:* (1) The church is visible, and is ultimately the continuation of the incarnation; (2) The clergy (teaching church) are distinguished from the laity (listening church) who are dependent on the former and receive the glorious attributes of the church only derivatively; (3) The church is made up like a body and soul–only baptized persons belong to the church, but some of the baptized (catechumens) do not, and people may fall away; (4) Christ distributes the fullness of his graces only through the church, and exclusively through the agency of the clergy–hence, the visible precedes the invisible; (5) The church is the exclusive institution of salvation, and functions to propagate the Word, effect sanctification by the sacraments, and govern believers by ecclesiastical law (232-36).

The Sacraments:
- *Peter Lombard* first named the 7 sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church (before this, they were said to number from 5-30); the *Council of Florence* (1439) officially adopted them: (1) baptism; (2) confirmation; (3) Eucharist; (4) penance; (5) holy orders; (6) marriage; (7) extreme unction (243).
- The prevailing view in the Middle Ages (*Bonaventura* and *Duns Scotus*) was that the sacraments do not contain, but only symbolize grace, although God has covenanted to accompany the use of sacraments with a direct operation of his grace in the souls of the recipients (243).
- *Aquinas* advocated the view of *ex opere operato*, i.e., they are effectual in virtue of their objective administration, regardless of the character of the priest or the faith of the recipient (243-44).
- The *Council of Trent* held: (1) Sacraments are necessary for salvation; (2) They operate *ex opere operato*; (3) The priest must intend to administer them sincerely, intending to do what the church does (but may otherwise be in mortal sin); (4) Baptism, confirmation and holy orders indelibly impress the soul and therefore are not repeated; (5) Only priests may legitimately administer them (243-44).
- *Baptism*
  - The Scholastics at first shared Augustine's view that baptism of adults presupposes faith, but gradually began to consider the sacrament as effective *ex opere operato* (249).
  - Roman Catholic Church adopted baptism as a sacrament of regeneration and initiation into the church.
  - The grace conferred *ex opere operato* includes: (1) The *character indelibilis* which brings one under the jurisdiction of the church; (2) Deliverance from the guilt of original sin, from the pollution of sin (although concupiscence remains), and from eternal punishment and all temporal punishments (except the natural results of sin); (3) Spiritual renewal by the infusion of sanctifying grace and the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and love; (4) Incorporation into the communion of saints and into the visible church of believers (249).
  - Because of its importance, baptism is to be administered as soon as possible, by laymen or even non-Christians if necessary (249).
- *Lord's Supper*
  - *Paschasius Radbert* (818) propounded the doctrine of transubstantiation, that the elements of the Lord's Supper are literally changed into the body and blood of Christ after consecration, a mere veil deceiving the senses.
  - This was controverted, but was formally adopted by the *Fourth Lateran Council* in 1215 (252-53).

The Reformation

The Magisterial Reformers re. Sacraments:
- All held that the grace imparted in a sacrament is forgiving grace; sacraments are signs and seals attached to the Word which communicate no kind of grace that is not also imparted by the Word and which have no value apart from it; the operation and fruit of a sacrament is dependent on the faith of the recipient and therefore presupposes saving grace. All rejected the Roman Catholic idea that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice

(245-47).

• *Luther* later held that their effectiveness dependent on their divine institution, not the faith of the recipient; divine power is present in the sacrament *as the visible Word,* and as such is the vehicle of divine grace.

• *Calvin* held that sacraments were signs and seals of the promises of God, and secondarily as acts of confession.

• *Zwingli* viewed sacraments primarily as signs of faith and secondarily as means of strengthening faith; they are memorials of profession only.

Lutheranism:

• *Nature of the Church:*
  ▪ Rejected an infallible church, sacraments that operate magically, and a special priesthood, and restored the "priesthood of all believers."
  ▪ Stressed the invisible and visible aspects of the church–the *invisible* church served to deny that the essence of the church was an external society with a visible head; the *visible* church is known, not by the rule of bishops, but by the pure administration of the Word and the sacraments. The external church will always include some hypocrites (236-37).

• *The Sacraments:*
  ▪ *Baptism—Luther* first made its effect dependent on faith, but later held to virtually an *ex opere operato* position that it creates faith in infants. Lutherans retained most Roman Catholic forms.
  ▪ *Lord's Supper—Luther* held to the doctrine of *consubstantiation*–the bread and wine are not a sacrifice, but the very body and blood of Christ are present "in and under" the elements (245-46, 249-50, 254).

Anabaptism

• *Nature of the Church:*
  ▪ Denied the identity of the Old Testament church with the New Testament church.
  ▪ Insisted on a church of believers only (which would not include non-professing children).
  ▪ Stressed the invisible church; and insisted on the separation of church and state (237).

• *The Sacraments:*
  ▪ Held to *Zwingli's* view that the sacraments are signs and symbols only, not seals; they give visible representation of the blessings conveyed to believers, but do this merely as acts of confession–they communicate not grace themselves.
  ▪ *Baptism—*Denied the validity of infant baptism. True baptism must be preceded by a voluntary profession of faith (250).
  ▪ *Lord's Supper—*Is a memorial and commemoration only; adopted *Zwingli's* view that the presence of Christ is figurative only (254-56).

Reformed

• *Nature of the Church:*
  ▪ Similar to the Lutheran view, but looked less to the external ordinances and offices of the church as a means of unity than did Lutherans.
  ▪ Some held that the possibility of salvation extended beyond the visible church; the Holy Spirit is not bound to use the "ordinary means of grace" to save.
  ▪ The true marks of the church are the true administration of the Word, the sacraments, *and* the faithful administration of church discipline (237-38).

• *The Sacraments:*
  ▪ *Baptism*
    o Baptism was instituted for believers; therefore, it does not work of itself, but strengthen faith.
    o Children should be baptized on the basis of the covenant; children became children of the covenant and entitled to all its blessings.
    o Some held that baptism warrants the assumption that children of believing parents are regenerate until they give evidence otherwise; other held that baptism is a means of grace that may work long after its administration, a seal of future faith; others held that it is nothing more than a sign of an external covenant (250-51).
  ▪ *Lord's Supper:*
    o Christ is spiritually present in the elements (the glorified humanity of Christ is the fountain of spiritual virtue or efficacy; this efficacy is mediated by the Holy Spirit to believing recipients of the elements; the body of Christ is therefore present in virtue of this efficacy).
    o Eating Christ's body is entirely spiritual, by means of faith, the unbelieving have no part in it (255).

Arminianism

• *Nature of the Church*
  ▪ Tended to deny that the church is essentially the invisible communion of saints, and considered it

primarily a visible society.
▪ Some yielded the right to discipline to the state, retaining for the church only the right to preach the Gospel and admonish its members (238-39).
• *The Sacraments:*
▪ *Baptism*–Denied that baptism was a seal of divine grace; it is a mere act of profession on the part of man (251).
▪ *Lord's Supper*–Adopted the Zwinglian view that the Lord's Supper is a memorial only, an act of profession, a means for moral improvement (256).

Post-Reformation—There have been no major developments in the theories of the Church or its Sacraments.

APPENDIX 2—DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES AND COURSES

1. <u>Discipleship resources.</u> There are many discipleship books, courses, and other resources available online, either for purchase or free of charge.
• **The Navigators** is a para-church organization specializing in evangelism and discipleship. It has a number of free discipleship materials available online (Navigators 2016c: "Tools"). These include a "Discipleship Library" consisting of audio and written discipleship materials (http://www.discipleshiplibrary.com/) and a description of its excellent discipleship course (for purchase), the 7-booklet series entitled "Design for Discipleship" (Navigators 2016a: "Design"). (The web addresses for the Navigators discipleship resources are in the main Bibliography.)
• **Verge Network** focuses on discipleship and mission. It has multiple articles, videos, eBooks, courses, webinars, and other resources for free (http://www.vergenetwork.org/). Registration for MyVerge Membership is free and enables one to download a library of missional and discipleship training resources.
• **Discipleship.org** is a collaborative community of men and women committed to being disciples of Jesus and making disciples of Jesus. It offers free downloads of eBooks relating to evangelism and discipleship and other materials on its "Resources" page (http://discipleship.org/).
• **Exponential.org**, which focuses on church planting but also is concerned with discipleship, offers free downloads of eBooks relating to church planting and discipleship on its "Quick Links" page (https://exponential.org/).
• **The Discipleship Ministry** provides free discipleship books and lessons, Bible studies, gospel tracts, and other material for personal study, one-on-one discipleship, youth ministry, small group Bible studies, Sunday school, and evangelism (http://www.biblestudycd.com/index.html).
• **Jesus Walk Bible Study Series** has more than 35 free Bible studies, including lessons, handouts for participants, and discussion questions, both of books of the Bible and other biblical subjects designed to build discipleship (http://www.jesuswalk.com/).
• **Global University** has multiple free, downloadable books and courses, including a course entitled "21st Century Discipleship," and material on the Bible, the gospel, evangelism, worship, starting new churches, spiritual gifts, and more by clicking on the "Find God," "Christian Life," and "Christian Service" icons (http://www.globalreach.org/).

2. <u>Discipleship courses.</u> Below are brief descriptions of some free *discipleship courses* which contain lessons, readings, and discussion questions that may be used as part of the small group discipleship process. Please note that many of the following courses may concentrate primarily on some, but not all, of the areas in which the church should disciple its members discussed above in section **IV.D.** *The substance of discipleship*. This means that more than one such course may need to be used, or other materials developed, so that Christians are discipled in all the areas discussed above. (The web addresses for the discipleship courses that are only cited below are in the main Bibliography.)
• **The Navigators** has two free discipleship courses online: **"Discipling by God's Design"** (Navigators 2011a: *Discipling*)—This study looks at how God's people were discipled in the OT and then in Jesus' day in hopes of guiding us to be more effective disciple-makers; and **"Responding Biblically to Poverty, Corruption, and Injustice"** (Navigators 2011b: *Responding*)—This is one of the few discipleship courses that deals with important societal problems facing many African Christians (two of the authors are Africans). The Navigators' companion website includes resources that complement the **"Responding Biblically to Poverty, Corruption, and Injustice"** course, including readings and discussion questions concerning families, communities, humility, patience, wholeness, and health (Navigators 2016b: "Resources").
• **Equip Disciples** was formed to facilitate missions aimed at building up and training Christian leaders who will be able to train others also. It is active in East Africa and Costa Rica. It has a fascinating discipleship course called **"Theological Discipleship"** (Equip Disciples 2007-2010: *Theological*; Equip Disciples 2007-2008: *Worldview*). This same course is available in **Kiswahili** (Equip Disciples 2007-2009c, d: *Uanafunzi*) and **Kinyarwanda** (Equip Disciples 2007-2009a, b: *Inyigisho*). The course essentially walks a person through God's plan, beginning with God and his creation and ending with the future kingdom. The course deals with God's rules for living, Jesus as the answer, reconciliation, identifying false religions, spiritual growth and spiritual warfare, walking on God's path in the community, and God's grace and our stewardship. What makes this course fascinating is that it is geared to people who are not primarily readers. Thus, each unit contains a complex drawing and a simple drawing for learning. The material provides different approaches to teach the material, the objectives of each unit, teaching points, biblical stories, and

supporting scriptures, but the work to actually put together Bible studies is left to the individual teacher.

• **Christ in Life Ministries** has several discipleship courses, including the foundational **“Living a Transformed Life in Christ”** course, which is a 4-part series that covers many topics in our walk with Christ. It also has courses on marriage (**“The Key to a Christ-Centered Marriage”**), **“Healing the Wounded Heart”** which is designed to give hope for healing to wounded Christians and give them spiritual understanding of God’s pathway to healing, **“Living as a REAL Man in Christ”** which deals with the issues men face as Christians, **“The Battle of the Mind”** which deals with the importance of our minds and Satan’s attacks on our minds, and **“Living From Christ in the Workplace”** which deals with a Christian’s identity at work. All of these courses may be downloaded here: http://www.christislifeministries.com/D0-DiscipleshipSeries.html. Syllabi of discipleship conferences on “Living a Transformed Life in Christ,” marriage, and “Living as a Real Man in Christ” are also available here: http://www.christislifeministries.com/D4-Discipleship-studies.html.

• **Discipleship.org** has a **“Discipleship Handbook”** which covers six important elements of a discipleship lifestyle: Jesus, intentionality, relationships, Bible, journey, and multiplication (Harrington and Patrick 2014: *Discipleship*).

• **Josiah Mission School**, an evangelism training school in southern Germany, has a discipleship course entitled **“Discipleship in the End Times”** (Discipleship Course 2016: “The Lessons”) that reflects the four stages of discipleship: *Module 1* deals with the everlasting gospel and the experience of salvation in order to gain an in-depth understanding of what conversion is and how it practically works. This will also help them to share the Good News with others. *Module 2* helps disciples grow spiritually. It starts with two lessons of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then it shows how to study the Bible personally and how to have a meaningful prayer life. The other lessons deal with different aspects of a victorious Christian life. *Module 3* focuses on teaching basic principles of evangelism and ways to share Jesus in the context of relationships (friendship evangelism). In addition, it provides training on how to start and lead an evangelistic small group and give personal Bible studies. *Module 4* deals with a thorough understanding of the discipleship path. The goal of this module is to equip the members to start the process of multiplication by starting a new discipleship group in order to intentionally lead people through the four stages of the discipleship path.

• **Core Discipleship** ministry is based around churches establishing “Core Discipleship Groups” of 3-4 people (Core Discipleship n.d.: “Core 3 Strand”). Their **“Core Discipleship Group Workbook”** (Core Discipleship 3003: *Core Discipleship*) gives the overview of core groups, covers spiritual life stages, and includes studies of several NT books. Assignments and Scripture memory verses are part of this discipleship course.

• **The Bridge** is a Reformed, missional, and evangelistically-minded church in Sacramento, California. They have developed a **“Discipleship Training Manual”** (Bridge 2013: *Discipleship*) in four modules with six lessons per module: *Module 1*-Pursuing Christ (including the gospel, repentance and faith, abiding in the Word, and prayer); *Module 2*-Loving God (including the attributes of God, obeying Jesus, overcoming temptation, and walking by the Spirit); *Module 3*-Cultivating Godliness (including use of time, money and possession, and forgiveness); *Module 4*-Making Disciples (including fasting, spiritual gifts, evangelism, and the cost of discipleship). Each lesson includes an Introduction, a Bible Study, some Steps to Take, and Scripture to memorize.

• **Ambassador Church** is an Evangelical Free Church in the Los Angeles, California area and is passionate about being missional, multi-ethnic, and multiplying. It has a **“Transformational Discipleship”** course (Ambassador Church 2010a, b, c: *Transformational*), which is a guide to learning to follow Jesus through the Gospel of John.

• **“The Gospel-Centered Life”** is a 9-lesson small group study intended to help you understand how the gospel shapes every aspect of life, grouped around three themes: What is the gospel? (the gospel grid, pretending and performing, and believing the gospel); What does the gospel do in us? (law and gospel, repentance, and heart idolatry); and How does the gospel work through us? (mission, forgiveness, and conflict). The “Participant’s Guide” is available online (World Harvest Mission 2009: *Gospel-Centered*). A Study Guide with Leader’s Notes is available for purchase here: http://stores.newgrowthpress.com/the-gospel-centered-life/. Even without the Leader’s Guide, a small group discussion leader should be able to flesh out any areas that may need to be supplemented. Additionally, the Leader’s Guide for the related **“The Gospel-Centered Life for Teens”** is available online (Serge 2014: *Gospel-Centered*).

• **“Fill-in-the-blank” discipleship books:** There are a number of other discipleship courses available online that could be used in individual or small group studies. These courses generally require quite a bit of reading and have “fill-in-the-blank” or study questions to answer. They include: **“Now That You Believe”** (West Highland n.d.: *Now That You Believe*); **“Discipleship Evangelism”** (Discipleship Evangelism n.d.: “Discipleship”); **“Knowing God: New Believers’ Study”** (Rock Church n.d.: *Knowing*); **“Bible Basics for the New Believer”** (Bearing Precious Seed Canada n.d.: *Bible*); **“Thirty Discipleship Exercises”** (Billy Graham 1998: *Thirty*); **“One to One Discipleship”** (Trinity Center 2014: *One to One*); **“Lifework Bible Study”** (Disciple Nations Alliance 2009: *Lifework*); **“21st Century Discipleship”** (Global 2008a [“Getting Started”], 2008b [“Facing Issues”], 2008c [“Making a Difference”]); **“Learn. Teach. Do”** (Rapidly Advancing Disciples 2014); and **“Basic Theology Booklet”** (Rapidly Advancing Disciples 2016).