

STUDY NOTES FOR

THE CHURCH

Masterpiece of the Ages

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WITH BIBLE TEACHER
J. B. NICHOLSON, JR.
MICHIGAN, U. S. A.



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*“Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus
throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”
Ephesians 3:21*

THE CHURCH: *Masterpiece of the Ages*

J. B. Nicholson Jr.

Lesson 1

THE CHURCH AS A MYSTERY: *The Design in the Heart of God*

“What is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

Although we are attempting in this series to be as thorough as possible in the time allowed (these notes are to provide more detail than the lecture can include), we know we are embarking on an inexhaustible study. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”* (see Rom. 11:33-36). We trust that our meditations will lead us into a greater understanding of the purposes of God for us, a greater zeal to obey the Holy Spirit in what we shall learn, and a greater sense of appreciation for the Son of God who *“loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”* (Eph. 5:25).

Some important introductory comments

1. In a study of this scope we will be addressing many topics considered controversial. Our intention is not to stir up arguments among the Lord’s people, but instead to stir all our hearts to worship the Lord for the wonders of His redemptive plan, culminating in a glorious Bride, masterpiece of His grace. Therefore we intend to be brotherly, treating all serious Christians in good faith. We only ask that we be allowed to present the truth as we believe it to be.

2. It would be foolish to set any group of believers up as a standard for others. Do we not all carry on in weakness and have much for which we need the grace of God? Only the One in the midst has the knowledge and right to properly assess a church’s condition: *“I know thy works,”* He says. Instead we hold up the Word of God as the true measure of our spiritual state; it *“discern[s] the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* May we eagerly submit to the Spirit as He shows us our need and the wonderful possibilities awaiting those who happily *“buy the truth”* whatever it may cost.

3. It is often asked, considering the wide array of churches and ways of gathering, whether the Bible’s portrait of the Church is “prescriptive or descriptive.” Is the book of Acts intended only as history, or is it modeling the way it should be done by all? This question will be discussed in Lesson 2, but perhaps for the time being grace could be granted the teacher to affirm that the New Testament has many helpful lessons relating to Church practice today.

The mystery of the Church

What is a mystery? When used in the Bible, a “mystery” is a truth that people could not discover for themselves, which was kept secret by God until the appropriate moment in history, when He revealed it to mankind. There are 14 mystery doctrines recorded in the New Testament. One of these is the mystery of the Church.

What is the mystery of the Church? The Word of God distinguishes the human race into three separate groups: *“the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God”* (1 Cor. 10:32). The “Gentiles” refers to all the nations of the earth—except the nation that came from Abraham, called out of Ur of the Chaldees circa 2000 BC. His family was chosen for a special role—to be the vehicle of God’s blessing to the whole world: *“And I will bless them that bless thee, and*

curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Through this nation, in spite of their failures, came the greatest gifts God ever gave the human race—the written Word of God and the Messiah.

To protect the Messianic line through Abraham and David to Christ, God erected a "middle wall." If the Jewish nation became absorbed into the other nations, how would God provide the "son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt. 1:1) as Saviour? So God walled off the Jews by giving them different food laws and customs which kept them from freely intermingling with other nations. But once the Saviour came, God took down that middle wall. "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us [Jews and Gentiles]" (Eph. 2:14).

Of course Gentiles could be saved in the Old Testament period—Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah are examples. But the mystery of the Church is this: "...the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:4-6). Believing Jews and Gentiles now not only come in on the same basis, but share all the blessings equally, with the believing Jews now having no advantage over Gentiles.

The Lord unfolds the secret

What is the Church? People have many ideas about the meaning of the word "church." But we are only interested in this study with the way the Bible uses the term. A fitting description of one New Testament church is given in this way: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2). Notice that such churches are to be composed of those vitally linked to Christ, separate from the world system—"saints"—and linked to all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Composed of Jew and Gentile, all members of the true Church have one thing in common. We have discovered the astounding truth that "the Son of God...loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). We have repented and believed the gospel (Mk. 1:15), receiving Christ by faith (Jn. 1:12). The Lord Jesus first introduced the subject in these words, "...I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18):

I THE ARCHITECT. Man-made structures are doomed to failure; this building alone will survive the collapse of the universe. Only the Creator of the universe (Jn. 1:3), described by Paul as "the Head of the church: and...the Saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23) has the capabilities to design, construct, and see to completion this "glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). And only He could afford it, redeemed with His own precious blood!

will THE PURPOSE. On very few occasions when He was on earth did the Lord Jesus express His own will. But He did express His mighty and certain will here in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My Church" and again in those words to His Father concerning us: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (Jn. 17:24). "The gates of hell," a malicious and relentless attack by the arch-fiend himself, "shall not prevail against it." In fact, we read concerning God's perfect Servant, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (Isa. 42:4).

build THE CONSTRUCTION. At this point the Church was still future; it would begin "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" in Acts 2. We know that the Church is a New Testament work only because it was to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). His death at Calvary would make the "peace" necessary to bring Jew and Gentile together. Now stone by living stone, the structure rises.

My THE OWNER. We must acknowledge no other head but the Lord Himself. We can obey no other and hope to be blessed. We have no more right to come up with a new way of conducting the activities of the church than we do a new way to be saved. Both blueprints are in the Scriptures. Paul would link them in these words: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ [that's the doctrine of the gospel]; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery [that's the doctrine of the Church], which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:8-9).

Church THE MASTERPIECE. The Church is not an earthly organization, certainly not a material building, but a living organism composed of all true believers as members of His body. Through it, God manifests His grace (Eph. 2:7), wisdom (Eph. 3:10), and glory (Rom. 9:23). Some day we will see her “*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*” (Rev. 21:2). O how beautiful grace will have made her then—“*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!*”

The meaning of the word “Church”

There are several words that might help us in understanding the biblical meaning of these important words, “Church” and “churches.” Since the church has “*ears*” (Acts 11:22), can “*pray*” (Acts 12:5), and can be “*persecuted*” (1 Cor. 15:9) among other things, it is obvious that the word refers to people and not to a building or organization.

1. First is the English word *church* itself, which derives from an anglicized form of the Greek word *kuriakos* meaning “that which belongs to the Lord (*kurios*).” He is our center, our gathering place. As the prophecy reads: “*The scepter shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*” (Gen. 49:10).

2. The word most often used is *ekklesia*, meaning “called out.” Those saved have been “*called...out of darkness into His marvellous light*” (1 Pet. 2:9). “*God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name*” (Acts 15:14). We have been called out of this world system into a new society of those who love and follow the Lord Jesus.

3. A third word often used in English is “assembly.” Although preferred as a better translation of *ekklesia*, it not only carries the idea of being called *out* but of being called *together*. The believer is no longer a part of this world but he is not alone. “Together” is one of the often repeated words in the epistles of Paul to the churches.

The first scattered congregations of Greek-speaking Christians...spoke of themselves as a “[convened] assembly”; at first each single congregation was so called, and afterwards the whole body of Christians everywhere was spoken of collectively as “the [convened] assembly.” That is the most literal translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*. This self-bestowed name rested on the certain conviction that God had separated from the world His “saints” in Christ, and had “called” or “convened” them to an assembly, which was “God’s assembly,” “God’s muster,” because God was the convener. —Adolph Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 112

The Church and the churches

In these notes we will distinguish between *the Church* and *the churches*. The universal Church (with a capital C) is that great company, most already in heaven, regardless of creed or denomination, to which each believer is added the moment he or she trusts Christ—“*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:47, NKJV). God “*gave [Christ] to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all*” (Eph. 1:22-23). We believe this embraces every believer from Pentecost to the Rapture.

However, the universal Church for practical reasons cannot meet on earth. Therefore groups of believers in every locale come together as a visible representation of it. Note the three expressions used in the New Testament:

- “*the churches of God*” (1 Cor. 11:16). God is the source, the giver, of all the churches’ blessings.
- “*the churches of Christ*” (Rom. 16:16). Christ is the Redeemer and Head, ministering to her needs.
- “*all churches of the saints*” (1 Cor. 14:33). Only saints should belong, made holy through the Holy Spirit’s work. Local churches are also referred to by their location: “*at Corinth,*” “*at Philippi,*” etc.

The grand purpose in God’s heart

The New Testament unfolds many reasons for God’s desire for the Church. Here are some of them:

- “*that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Eph. 1:4)—for eternal companionship.
- “*that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*” (Jas. 1:18)—only the beginning of a mighty harvest.
- “*that we should be called the sons of God*” (1 Jn. 3:1)—the Father wanted a family with which to share His joy.

- “that we should be to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:12)—we shall share in filling the universe with Christ’s glory.
- “that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4)—as part of the harvest from the Corn of Wheat that died.
- “that He might present it to Himself [to be His bride]...without spot or wrinkle” (Eph. 5:26-27)—Christ’s companion.
- “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). And to be eternal worshippers...and servants...and heirs...and on and on.

The design—form follows function

The nature of the local church is portrayed in 5 different and effective ways—all of which we will utilize:

- as *word pictures*, using metaphorical language to paint illustrations of the assembly in its varied aspects
- by *historical narrative*, primarily in the book of Acts, stirring our hearts with drama, pathos and triumph
- by *intercepted letters*, showing the breadth of knowledge and depth of passion in the early churches
- through *pastoral teaching*, included in these epistles, which lays out the divine plan in clear precepts
- in the very *words of Christ*, delivered through John to seven churches, and recorded in Revelation 2 and 3

Let us briefly look at the first of these—10 word pictures that give a general impression of the character of the church

- i. The BRIDE or CHASTE VIRGIN portrays the separatedness and devotedness of the Church for Christ
- ii. The TEMPLE and BUILDING (1 Cor. 3:9-17) shows the holiness of God’s dwelling and progress in construction
- iii. The BODY (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12) emphasizes joint co-operation and the rich giftedness of the Church
- iv. The FAMILY (2 Tim. 5:1-2) portrays the love and loyalty of the believers to one another, a hallmark! (Jn. 13:35)
- v. The FLOCK stresses the vulnerability of the Church, its dependence on the Shepherd, and the need to obey
- vi. The FIELD (1 Cor. 3:9, “*husbandry*,” KJV) reminds us of God’s ownership and the need for personal growth
- vii. The PILLAR and GROUND (1 Tim. 3:15): strength for service—grounded on truth; lifting it up for all to see
- viii. The LAMPSTAND (Rev. 1:20) reminds us that our witness is crucial; and we depend on the filling of the oil
- ix. The HOUSE (1 Tim. 3:15) where we must learn to behave! Submitting to godly order is the key to enjoyment
- x. The VINE with its BRANCHES (Jn. 15) explains that fruitfulness and joy comes only by abiding in Christ!

In conclusion—some practical applications

We are often quick in our study of the Church to think about the *mechanics*—the way the church gathers and functions, church government, ordinances, etc. These subjects are vital (since the Holy Spirit has revealed them to us). But at the end of this first study, perhaps we could offer our hearts to the Lord that the *dynamics* of the early churches might be the motivating influence in our lives and local gatherings as well. We often speak of the characteristics of the New Testament Church relative to the great and glowing doctrines revealed in the Word. And so we should! But perhaps for a few moments we could examine our hearts and ask the following questions:

- Do I act like a CHASTE VIRGIN for Christ by both being separated from other loves, and being whole-heartedly devoted to the Lord Jesus? Has some other affection got in the way—even a “good” thing like the service of God? Am I known for being a lover of Christ? Is my local church known in the community by its love?
- Like the BUILDING and the FIELD, am I making progress in my Christian life? Do others notice my personal growth? Or have I, perhaps as a more mature believer, settled down in a kind of spiritual retirement? Am I regularly helping younger Christians in my local fellowship to also be well grounded and built up in the faith?
- As the PILLAR and GROUND of truth, how is the regular ministry of the Word in our fellowship? Are we not only holding up the principles of truth but also basing our lives, our families, our business, and our relationships with others on the practices found in God’s blessed Book? When was the last time I was asked what made me different?
- How am I playing my part in the BODY? Am I using my gift for others’ benefit? And in God’s FAMILY, how is my love for my brothers and sisters? Is there something I need to make right with one of them? When should I do it?
- And what of the LAMPSTAND? Aren’t we glad that the One who trims the lamps doesn’t quench smoking wicks? Shall we ask Him tonight to make our flickering lights to shine more brightly for Him in this dark world?

Lesson 2

THE CHURCH IN THE ACTS: *Vigour, Beauty, Simplicity*

Introduction: As has been pointed out, Luke's first volume (the *Gospel According to Luke*) tells of "all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). His second volume (*The Acts of the Apostles*) tells of the things that the risen Lord Jesus continued to do by His Spirit through His people. You also notice as you come to the end of the book that it seems unfinished—what happened to Peter? to Paul? In a sense, the book is unfinished. Every disciple of the Lord has a part in the story. Only eternity will tell it all. So we must "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come" (1 Cor. 4:5).

Characteristics of the Church in the book of Acts

1. *They responded in faith to Christ's massive global vision* (ch. 1) How does the book of Acts begin? The disciples asked the Saviour (only moments from His leaving them to go back to heaven), "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (v. 6). He responded, "Ye shall receive power...and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (v. 8).

They were thinking small—of Israel; the Lord was thinking big—of the whole world. They were thinking about the past and restoring it; He was thinking about the present and redeeming it. They were thinking defensively; He was thinking offensively. They were longing for Israel. But He longed for the whole aching planet to come to Him.

Whose view won the day? Obviously the disciples caught the Saviour's vision. A while later, Paul wrote: "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). More than that, "The gospel...was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23)! Yet every generation must reach their world for Christ; Paul's generation can't do that!

We have the same Great Commission today. Has our generation made it the Great Omission? Have we concluded that Christ's promise to work with and through His Church "even to the end of the age" somehow has expired?

2. *They waited on the Holy Spirit "until" Pentecost "was fully come"* (ch. 2:1-13). Something new was happening!

- Now we have an Intercessor in the heavens (a real Man on the throne of God), see Rom. 8:26, 34
- And we have an Intercessor in the heart (the indwelling of God the Spirit in the hearts of every believer)

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED AT PENTECOST?

i. *It was a reversal of Babel* (Gen. 11). At Babel (the beginning of the great false system of Babylon), the people gathered themselves together in rebellion against the word of God, and to make a name for themselves. God "confounded" their languages and they were forced to spread out because no one understood another. But at Pentecost, the disciples proclaimed "the Name" in obedience to the Word of God. When the gospel was proclaimed, ironically "the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). This One whom they preached was truly the "gate to God"—the meaning of Bab-el. (For Babylon's end, see Rev. 17-19.)

ii. *It was a reversal of Sinai* (Ex. 32). At the giving of the Mosaic Commandments there were "about three thousand men" slain under the curse of a broken law (v. 28). This is called by Paul "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones" (2 Cor. 3:7). But at the proclamation of "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24)—what Paul calls the "ministration of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:8)—there were "about three thousand souls" saved! (Acts 2:41).

iii. *It was a complete fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost* (Lev. 23:15). In the Jewish year, Pentecost (held in the late spring) was the beginning of the harvest since all their field crops were winter growth. So the events in Acts 2

were the beginning of a mighty harvest that would result from that “*grain of wheat*” that fell into the ground and died that it might not abide “*alone*” (Jn. 12:24). Notice the connections between the *type* and the *anti* (over against) *type*:

PENTECOST in the OLD TESTAMENT

seven sabbaths plus one (*pente* = 50)
therefore the Lord’s Day

two loaves of *leavened* bread
made one offering by the *pouring out* of the holy oil

PENTECOST in the NEW TESTAMENT

the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week
Resurrection Day, the new beginning

two become one: Jew and Gentile (see Acts 10)
by the *pouring out* of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:18)

iv. *It was a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy* (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21). It was only a partial fulfillment because there was only a partial turning of the Jewish nation to God. When “*all Israel will be saved*” (Rom. 11:26)—after 2/3 of the nation will be destroyed along with Anti-messiah’s forces (Zech. 13:8-9)—then *all* of Joel 2 will be fulfilled. Please note that the promise of Joel 2 is NOT to Gentile believers; it is inappropriate to use it to explain the modern Charismatic movement. The use of the *dialectos* (Acts 2:8) tongues at Pentecost was a sign to Israel (“*For the Jews [not the Gentiles] require a sign,*” 1 Cor. 1:22). It was a judgment, as Joel 2 states, proving to Israel that their God doesn’t only speak Hebrew! He was now going out to the whole world. But Joel (and Peter) point out that “*in wrath*” the Lord “*remember[s] mercy.*” “*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Acts 2:21).

v. *It was the birthday of the Church* (Acts 2). As the disciples waited in obedience to the word of the Lord, the Holy Spirit—called “*the promise of the Father*” (Acts 1:4)—came down upon the assembled believers in the upper room. Later Paul would say, “*By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—have all been made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:13, NKJV). In other words, 120 believers went into the room; one body came out, united forever by the Spirit. Note the differences between the role of the Spirit in the OT and the NT:

The SPIRIT in the OLD TESTAMENT

He came upon both believers and unbelievers
to move them to fulfill God’s purposes

It was an individual act of God

God dwelt symbolically above the mercy seat

It was a temporary endowment

The SPIRIT in the NEW TESTAMENT

He indwells every true believer
to make them a dwelling place for God

Today the Holy Spirit unifies all believers

God dwells actually by His Spirit in the Church

“*that He may abide with you forever*” (Jn. 14:16)

3. *They constantly gave witness to Christ in the proclamation of the gospel* (ch. 2:14-41). Not every believer in New Testament days was a gifted evangelist, nor did everyone do it the same way. But notice, “*They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word*” (Acts 8:4). The commission to go “*into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mk. 16:15) includes you and me. We are not all evangelists, but we are all to be witnesses. If we are willing to be involved, God will give each one a custom-designed way to fulfill His call.

4. *They proved the unifying influence of the Spirit by co-operatively working together* (see “*with one accord*” in Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; etc.). Without cell phones, email, or faxes, the early believers kept in touch. It seems from his writings that Paul knew the spiritual state of most assemblies, if not every one within his sphere of influence. Although constantly harassed by civil and religious authorities (and internal struggles), the Christians doggedly pursued their goal of world evangelization. Neither the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Roman Empire, nor the gates of hell could stop them.

Occasionally it looked like one thing would stop them—division (Acts 6:1-5; also chs. 11 and 15)! But the matters were wisely and quickly resolved, and the gospel work continued unabated. We cannot expect the sinner to believe

he can be reconciled to a holy God if we cannot even be reconciled to one another. Remember our Lord prayed, *“That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me”* (Jn. 17:21). More on this in Lesson 3.

5. *They practiced baptism, and met regularly for the teaching of “the apostles’ doctrine” as well as for “fellowship...breaking of bread, and...prayers”* (Acts 2:41-42). Of course this is not an exhaustive list of the meetings of the churches. There were meetings for the elders, for matters of church discipline, for united gospel efforts, and for missionary reports, but these four were the chief reasons for corporate gathering. More on these subjects in Lessons 5 and 6. But we can briefly note that those who shared this new life had:

- A NEW RULE OF LIFE, *“the apostles’ teaching”* which was in fact the teaching of Christ through them (Jn. 16:13)
 - A NEW SOCIETY or BROTHERHOOD, the bond of *“fellowship”* with like-minded saints
 - A NEW ORDINANCE, the weekly remembrance of their Lord out of devotion to Him
 - A NEW ACCESS into God’s presence for resources to serve: *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name”* (Jn. 16:24)
- Thus the early believers were marked by the outflow of TRUTH, LOVE, WORSHIP, and POWER.

6. *They cared for each other, shared with each other, were in each others’ homes and lives* (Acts 2:44-47). This involved regular disciple-making, each one working with younger believers to help them mature in the things of God (Lesson 7 has more on this). Now here are six important reasons that we ought to *“Love the brotherhood”* (1 Pet. 2:17):

- because it is our Lord’s express desire (Jn. 15:9-14; 1 Thess. 4:9)
- because by loving those we can see, we love Him whom we have not seen (1 Jn. 4:17-21)
- because it is a most effective means of proclaiming our faith (Jn. 13:34-35)
- because it is a family characteristic (1 Jn. 4:7-11; 1 Pet. 3:8-9), just like our Father
- because they are loved above (Jn. 16:27) and we ought to love what God loves
- because they are blood-bought, Spirit-indwelt, heaven-bound, members of the royal family

7. *They took seriously the leading of the Spirit* (Acts 2:44-47). The apostles planned and acted, first praying that the Lord would direct their steps. And He did exactly that. When they *“assayed to go into Bithynia”* (Acts 16:7), the Lord did not allow them to do it, and the Spirit’s redirection was most welcome. This conscious and constant aligning of themselves under the eye of God was key to their success. Mark reminds us that *“they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them...”* (16:20). Luke states: *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (2:47, NKJV); *“And the hand of the Lord was with them”* (11:21).

8. *They were known for their good works* (Acts 2:44-47). Isn’t it amazing how much our Lord in His earthly ministry was involved in doing good works? He *“went about doing good”* (Acts 10:38), tirelessly ministering to the needs of others. And this was a pattern that the early believers followed. For example, *“There was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha...this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds”* (Acts 9:36). Her winsome ministry softened the ground along the Sharon Plain so that Peter’s seeding bore a mighty harvest.

Paul wrote: *“These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men”* (Titus 3:8). What happens when we do some good deed? *“...they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Mt. 5:16). You must give the Lord the credit, of course; otherwise they will think you are just a good person. But Paul links good works with our fruitfulness! Is it possible that we are unfruitful in the gospel because we do not *“maintain good works”*? (Titus 3:14).

Christians should be encouraged in this. We need to *“provoke [each other] unto love and to good works”* (Heb. 10:24). Those who are rich (who of us isn’t rich by world standards?) are to be charged: *“That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate”* (1 Tim. 6:18). *“...Our Saviour Jesus Christ...gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:13-14).

Widows over the age of 60 who have, during their married lives, been known for good works are a blue chip resource in the local church. They should not, after their husband dies, be forced to eke out an existence. They should be financially supported to do visitation and good works in the community. So says the Scripture (1 Tim. 5:3-10).

9. *They fulfilled the Lord's promise that "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father"* (Jn. 14:12). The early Church was hallmarked by "great power...and great grace" (Acts 4:33); by "great fear" which "came on all them that heard" and "great fear" which "came upon all" the church (Acts 5:5-11). And in spite of "great persecution" (Act 8:1), "there was great joy" among the saints (Acts 8:8). There is no hint that we should excuse our ineffectiveness by calling today the "day of small things." That phrase, from Zechariah 4:10, refers to the Tribulation when God brings in such a mighty harvest that John describes it as "a great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9)! The "small things" are the few resources He uses, not the results.

10. *Their lives were kept simple, vibrant and effective by concentrating on preaching and living Christ* (see 1 Cor. 1:23; Eph. 4:20). Notice the many references to "the Name" in Acts. They preached in that Name (2:21), baptized in that Name (2:38), healed in that Name (3:6), said that people were saved by that Name (4:12), taught in that Name (4:18), and "rejoic[ed] that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (5:41). Paul would say later to those tempted to allow their lives to be distracted and complicated by other things: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

11. *They lived in the moment-by-moment anticipation of the return of Christ* (see Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:10-11). What does this hope do for us? Of course, it makes every day an exciting one because this could be THE DAY! But as well:

- it reminds us about the long war we are in, and keeps us from becoming entangled in this life (2 Tim. 2:4)
- it keeps us pure (1 Jn. 3:3) and from being involved in anything that would be embarrassing then (1 Jn. 2:28)
- it motivates us to redeem the time (Col. 4:5) and to be serious about evangelism: "NOW is the day of salvation"
- it puts suffering and temporal disappointments into perspective (Rom. 8:18); it is "not worthy to be compared"

What it means to be a New Testament assembly

The word "assembly" simply describes a group of people together with a common purpose. The same word is used for the mob in Ephesus (sometimes we do look similar!). So the question is not whether we meet as assemblies, but is my local church a "New Testament assembly"? There is no local church, of course, that perfectly aligns itself with the description of the Church in the Word. But we should strain every nerve to become more like this model every day. But is this model a good practical way of doing things? It certainly is! For example:

- the New Testament design is *adaptable to every situation*. It will work with tribal groups, in prison camps, or among the disenfranchised in poverty-ridden inner cities. There is no need for expensive buildings, special vestments, highly-trained professionals or contact with earthly headquarters. And it is *transferable to every culture*.

- this design is *ideal for the rapid deployment of the gospel*. As soon as a group of people are saved, they can be mobilized for action. It is also *persecution-proof*. The first thing oppressive regimes do is to shut down headquarters, jail clergy, confiscate buildings, close seminaries. And with what are you left? Small, purified groups of believers meeting simply with the Spirit to lead them, the Word to guide them, and gifted local believers to minister among them—just what the Lord intended in the first place! They cannot reach the headquarters of those who "hold the Head."

There is no place for thinking ourselves superior to some other group of Christians, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12). There will be no room for pride if we honestly measure instead how far we fall short of the ideal. Nonetheless any group of believers who honestly desires to be true to the pattern in the Scriptures and seeks to obey everything the Spirit shows them can rightly claim to be New Testament assemblies, since they willingly study and submit to this standard.

Lesson 3

THE BODY: *Unity and Diversity in the Church*

“There is one body...But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:4, 7)

Introduction: The body, one of the most graphic and helpful portraits of the Church used in the New Testament, is applied both to the universal Church and to local assemblies. This first part of the study will focus on Ephesians 4 and the gifts given for the Church at large to see its growth beyond the limits of existing local churches. This is often a neglected aspect of the vision the Lord had for His people. We know He expected individual believers to reproduce, having children in the faith, as Paul called them. But the Lord also wanted churches to reproduce and has especially gifted certain men to be used in accomplishing this. These gifted men are introduced to us in Ephesians chapter 4.

The differences in the lists of gifts

There are four key passages when we consider gifts in the New Testament: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 (along with chs. 13-14), Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. In this lesson, we will be turning most of our attention to Ephesians 4. Here the risen Christ shares the spoils of His victory by giving special gifts to the Church. But notice the differences between this passage and the other lists of gifts given in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12:

	Rom. 12/1 Cor. 12	Eph. 4
The Giver	The Spirit	Christ
The gift	supernatural abilities	gifted men
Beneficiaries	your local church	the Church at large

2. The Head-body relationship and member-to-member relationships

1. *The relationship between the body and the Head.* There is one passage dealing with Christ’s headship relative to church government (1 Cor. 11:3); and one verse stating Him to be the capstone or “*head of the corner*” of the spiritual temple being constructed of “*living stones*” (1 Pet. 2:5-7). But apart from these, there are six key references to Christ’s headship relative to the body, three in each of the Ephesian and Colossian epistles:

- Eph. 1:22, which declares His *supremacy*, the place God gave Him due to His victory over death (Heb. 2)
- Eph. 4:15, which explains His *sustenance* of the body—“*from whom the whole body*” is supplied (v. 16)
- Eph. 5:23, using the husband-wife relationship, shows us the importance of *submission* to the head
- Col. 1:18 concludes a section showing the *sufficiency* of our head: Redeemer, Revealer, Creator, Sustainer
- Col. 2:10, it’s the *singularity* of our head (2 are *not* better than 1): “*He is the fullness...Ye are complete in Him*”
- Col. 2:19, again the *simplicity* of “*holding*” to this one head; don’t be beguiled (v. 18; see also 2 Cor. 11:3)

Believers who want to meet as New Testament churches will “*hold the head.*” But practically how do we do that? First, we cannot expect to acknowledge Christ’s headship together if we do not acknowledge His Lordship personally. Submission by a local church to Christ begins with the individuals yielding personally to Him day by day. Some may ask, How does the Lord communicate His desires to the local church? The Lord has no communications problem, does He? By His Spirit, He makes His will unmistakably clear, for those who “*will do His will*” (Jn. 7:17) shall

know if the matter is of God or not. We see this kind of direction throughout the book of Acts. He uses His Word (Acts 11:16), His Spirit (Acts 16:6), a sense of peace in the heart (Col. 3:15), prayer and fasting (Acts 13:2), other godly believers (Acts 11:28), and circumstances. We should be quick to pray, ready to search the Scriptures, and willing to do whatever the Lord shows us He wants. And of course ready to repent when we find ourselves on the wrong path. Elders are the ones most responsible for knowing the Lord's will for the church. They are not selected because they are clever but because they are spiritual. They are not a decision-making body but a discerning body, not to make up their own minds but to discern the mind of the Lord in the matter. We need to earnestly and regularly pray for them.

2. *The systems in place in the body.* Much like the skeletal, nervous, and respiratory systems—whose benefits are shared by all parts of the body—there is common life shared in the churches through prayer, fellowship, encouragement, worship, teaching, and the ministry of the Spirit. These are not for only some; all may enjoy them to the full.

3. *The particular organs of the body.* If the “systems” in place stimulate unity, the particular gift given to each individual reveals the diversity of the body, and therefore the inter-dependence needed—since you have spiritual abilities which I need (and do not have) while the opposite is also true. We need each other; the Lord has designed it this way on purpose. *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all”* (1 Cor. 12:7).

How important is unity to the heart of Christ? to the success of the Great Plan?

In John 17, the Lord Jesus prayed, *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me”* (vv. 20-21). Earlier He had told the disciples: *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (13:34-35). Could He have stated it any more strongly?

- If we visibly and practically show our love to one another, then, and only then, will *the world take us seriously.*
- If we visibly and practically show unity with each other, then the world will take *the claims of Christ seriously.*

How lightly we often take this two-fold charge! Dear brothers and sisters—are the offenses we cause and take worth such horrendous collateral damage? Shall we allow such offenses, hurts, tension, and ill will to continue even one more day? Can you take responsibility for the continuation of the offense though you may not be guilty of causing it? Eating humble pie can taste quite good, especially if we keep in mind the massive implications and waves of blessing that could ensue if we buried grudges and refused to recall them again (see Appendix 8). *“How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!...there the Lord commanded the blessing”* (Ps. 133:1, 3). If there is an obvious lack of blessing, we may not have far to look for the reason. The Lord tells us, *“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Mt. 18:20). This is often applied to regular church meetings, but the primary interpretation has to do with Christians meeting to seek reconciliation. The Lord is saying, “I’m all for that. I’ll be there, ready to help.” There are challenges, of course, but we who love Him should be able to unite around Christ and against our common foe. Blessed (though often bloodied) are the peacemakers.

A closer look at unity in Ephesians 4:1-6

1. *What is the “therefore” there for?* The Ephesian letter has been climbing up to one of the highest mountain peaks anywhere in Scripture. In chapter 1, he has told us of the plan in the heart of the Godhead and the particular ways in which each Member of the Godhead has contributed to that plan: the Father (vv. 3-6a); the Son (vv. 6b-13a); and the Spirit (vv. 13b-14). Each section ends with a call to the praise of His glory (vv. 6, 12, 14).

In chapter 2, Paul explains the extent of the damages to the whole human race which needed repair (vv. 1-3) and the special problem of the Gentiles who were *“without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers*

from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Bleak prospect indeed! But through Christ we have been not only reconciled to God; we have been united with believing Jews in the Church.

This is the reason Paul was a prisoner (4:1). He writes in 3:1, "a prisoner for you Gentiles." This fired the animosity of the Jewish leaders against Paul—preaching "the revelation of the mystery" (see Lesson 1). Paul wanted the Gentiles to appreciate what it had cost their Jewish brothers for preaching this universal gospel. We should as well.

As Paul comes to the pinnacle at the end of chapter 3, he concludes: "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (v. 21). And how is the glory of God revealed in the Church? The previous paragraphs tell us: THE WISDOM OF GOD is revealed in the Church (v. 10), as is the POWER OF THE inworking SPIRIT (v. 16), as well as THE LOVE OF CHRIST (v. 19). Now Paul begins our section with a "therefore" that calls us all, in the light of such a vast plan, to accomplish our part—"the vocation to which we are called"—by first getting along with one another. If we are going to exercise our giftedness in co-operation with others, there will need to be some lubrication to keep the expected friction from building. What are the graces provided for this?

- **lowliness:** to follow the example of Christ who "humbled Himself," willing to take the low place to save your soul! Are we then willing to take such a place, to do whatever it takes, to fulfill our calling?
- **meekness:** a mildness and gentleness of spirit that belies the influence I could use to get my way; strength in control. The Lord invites us into His school to learn meekness and lowliness from Him (Mt. 11:28-29).
- **longsuffering:** steadfastness in times of difficulty, long-tempered: "that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate; the opposite of anger, associated with mercy" (Vine).
- **forbearance:** to hold up, to hold one's self erect while under a load, to sustain, to bear, to endure, not to let go one's end of the load even under difficult circumstances. To be the kind of person one can count on at all times.
- **love:** *agape*, selfless love that does not think of itself, seeking the highest good for others. Supernatural evidence that we are saved: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 Jn. 4:12).

Two kinds of unity

- "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). In this God-provided organic unity, all true believers are one—no ecumenical compromise needed! God's people *are* one and it is our responsibility to "keep" it.

—one BODY: we have the unity of a common life, provided through Christ's mighty sacrifice.

—one SPIRIT: we have the unity of a common Teacher, Guide, and Provider.

—one HOPE: the unity of a common objective; we long to be with Christ and like Christ.

—one LORD: we have the unity of command from one Captain, "and all ye are brethren" (Mt. 23:8).

—one FAITH: a common body of truth, "the faith...once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

—one BAPTISM: a common Church history! We all look (or should) back to the same historic event.

—one GOD AND FATHER OF ALL: He is the Father of all, above all, through all and in us all.

- "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (v. 13). This is not an historic fact but a promise that will come true through a process. And that process is outlined in vv. 11-12. The resurrected and soon-to-be exalted Christ gave gifted men to the Church (Ephesians primarily has the whole Church in view). These gifted men were to continue the chain reaction begun by Christ equipping them. Their ministry was "for the perfecting of the saints" so the saints could do "the work of the ministry" and the end result would be "the edifying of the [whole] body of Christ."

The five special kinds of gifted men

The APOSTLES and PROPHETS had ministries that were obviously not only to one particular local church. What did they do? And do we still have apostles and prophets today?

• **apostles:** the word is an anglicized form of the Greek, meaning a messenger, one who is sent at another's behest. Peter explains that such apostles, along with obvious spiritual qualifications, must be trained personally by Christ and were witnesses to His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). Paul was especially qualified, though "*born out of due time*" (1 Cor. 15:8) because he was a witness to the resurrected Jesus, and was personally trained by the Lord (Gal. 1:11-12). Of course the word can be applied in a wider sense (as it is to Timothy, Barnabas and Silas) when we speak about missionaries, or those sent on a mission. But that is not the way in which Paul was using the word in the epistle to the Ephesians. These men, he says, had a foundational work to do (Eph. 2:20). Once a foundation is laid, it is time to build the superstructure upon it. The only apostolic succession Paul knew about is found in Acts 20:29!

• **prophets:** from two words meaning "to speak before," it was used of holy men raised up by God both to foretell and to tell forth His thoughts. Again it can be used sometimes of any servant of God who speaks His Word, especially those who speak to present needs. However once again in this epistle it is used of the foundational gift given to those who completed the canon of Scripture, as Peter would write: "*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Pet. 1:21). Peter goes on to explain, "*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you...*" (2 Pet. 2:1). Notice the change. While the Scriptures were being written—while there were true prophets—there were also false prophets to beware. Now the danger is of false teachers; every prophet (in this sense) would be false since the Bible is a completed work.

However, note the following: while we no longer have these two kinds of gifted men working among us, we still have their ministry—apostolic authority and prophetic revelation—captured for us in the Word of God, which is able to prepare us all "*for every good work.*" Indeed it is, for everyone who wants their church life based only on the teaching of God's Word, lest we fall into the trap of which our Lord spoke: "*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition*" (Mk. 7:13). Of course He was not condemning our doing things not specified in Scripture (times of our gatherings, etc.) in a sensible, Christ-honoring way. He was condemning the teaching of traditions as if they were the commandments of God. Woe betide those who put a heavier obligation on the Lord's people than He does!

• **evangelists:** again an English form of the Greek, for "a bringer of good news." While local churches have also been equipped with gifted evangelists, these special gifts from Christ have a broader task. Not only are they to spread the gospel, they are also to equip the saints so they can also evangelize. How important this is! As well, these evangelists break new ground for the good seed, "*to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand*" (2 Cor. 10:16). We must remember to pray for and financially support such pioneers, "*Because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles*" (3 Jn. 1:7).

• **pastors:** this is simply the word for shepherds, and again the elders of the local churches are also shepherds. But these pastors, men like Timothy and Titus, worked alongside the evangelists and stayed afterward to help the fledgling believers. Their role (described in detail in the pastoral epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) was to prepare these new Christians for their life and ministry, to see the new church functioning properly, and as soon as possible to point out the elders that God had raised up in their midst. They would then move on to work with other new groups of believers to do the same work there. Today, unfortunately, because the elders in some places feel unable or ill equipped, they ask for a man with pastoral gift to head up the shepherding work—or do it all. This is a redundant arrangement, duplicating the work and robbing this man from a work he should be doing among new Christians. It also robs the believers of all having a vital part in the work of God.

There is another problem. Because some of these evangelists "go into all the churches to preach the gospel" instead of going into all the world to do it, there are few new gatherings of believers for these pastors to help in this way.

• **teachers:** those with the special ability to clearly explain the Word of God. In the case of these teachers (as opposed to those given for one locale), their ability also includes the training of the local teachers and every student of the Word. Apollos was just such a man. His gift was not to replace those who ministered the Word locally but to encourage them in becoming better and more useful teachers of the Word. This is very needed today: men who can help to improve the calibre of public ministry and teach the people of God to effectively study the Word themselves.

Lesson 4

INTERDEPENDENCE: *The Spiritual Gifts at Work*

Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12

Introduction: Every child in God's family is a gifted child! So says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all*" (1 Cor. 12:4-7). There is no doubt we are all custom designed; every believer is equipped for the Lord's service in a different way (we will study this later in the lesson) but Paul makes it clear: "*the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.*" What is a gift in this sense? What gifts are available? And how do I discover which gift I have been given? Are all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament still in use today? These and other important questions are in our thoughts now. How important it is to know what ministry the Lord has called us to, for there are no biblical distinctions between clergy and laity. Peter tells us that we are all "*the servants of God*" (1 Pet. 2:16).

Spiritual gifts distinguished

The Spirit Himself is a very special gift to every believer, given by the Father at the request of the Son (Jn. 14:16). Then through Him, as the already quoted 1 Corinthians 12:7 shows, each child of God has received a gift. Let us begin by seeing what a gift is not:

1. *A gift is not a natural talent.* Just as we received certain natural talents by our natural birth, so we receive some supernatural gift by our new birth. We may distinguish between the two by asking which abilities may be shared with unbelievers. On the one hand, natural talents include the ability to draw, sing, speak well, etc. On the other hand, showing mercy in a Christ-like way to those undeserving, preaching the gospel, or teaching the Word—these are obviously spiritual gifts. Now many natural talents can also be used for the Lord, often in conjunction with a gift. All such resources, natural or spiritual, should be developed for the use of the Master.

2. *A gift is not an "office."* In the governing of the local church, certain men are called by God (elders) or chosen by the congregation (deacons) to a responsible stewardship. Obviously elders and deacons are gifted, but they at some point are called to take up a special burden on behalf of the Lord's people. It is not only gift that qualifies such for this responsibility. They must also be scripturally, morally, domestically, and socially suited for it.

3. *A gift is not a fruit.* The Spirit of God is the active agent in our receiving a gift and in our bearing fruit. However these are different. Warning: you may use your gift and see blessing, all the while being thoroughly unspiritual!

GIFT

outward demonstration
others benefited
His work through me
Like the bell...

FRUIT

inward development
character benefited
His work in me
and the pomegranate

4. *A gift is not a ministry.* This we notice from the distinctions made in I Corinthians 12:4-6 and again chart out:

Different GIFTS	meaning varied supernatural abilities	by the SPIRIT
Different MINISTRIES	meaning varied tasks for those tools	by the LORD (JESUS)
Different OPERATIONS	meaning varied results from power given	by GOD the FATHER

Different groupings of the gifts

We can see different groups of gifts clearly in Peter's description: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...." (1 Pet. 4:10-11). Here Peter distinguishes between speaking gifts and serving gifts.

We noticed in the last lesson the distinction Paul makes in the Ephesian epistle: the gifts of apostles and prophets were FOUNDATION GIFTS; the gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers were MATURATION GIFTS, and to that Paul would seem to add a third in his detailed explanations in 1 Cor. 11-14: CONFIRMATION GIFTS. Because the Jews required a sign, and Joel 2 promised a sign, and when God was going to act decisively He gave Israel signs (primarily with Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, Christ and His apostles), it is no surprise that these sign gifts were given. But it is interesting to note certain facts about these sign gifts:

- Paul said these gifts would cease—the gift of prophecies, of tongues, and the gift of knowledge (1 Cor. 13:8)
- These gifts are only mentioned in the earliest of Paul's letters—1 Corinthians. They are not mentioned in Romans 12, Ephesians 2 or 4, or 1 Peter 4.
- Historically it did happen. Some of the "Early Fathers" in their commentaries on Paul's epistles confessed they were unfamiliar with this gift of tongues. As the evangelists were more and more rejected by the Jewish community, the need for these authenticating signs disappeared.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the distinction between different groups of gifts is more subtle. But it helps to know that the Gk. uses two words for "another"—another of the same kind and another of a different kind, thus subdividing the list. It would read like this (inserting ^s for *allos*=another of the same kind and ^d for *heteros*=another of a different kind): "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another^s the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another^d faith by the same Spirit, to another^s gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another^s the working of miracles, to another^s prophecy, to another^s discerning of spirits, to another^d different kinds of tongues, to another^s the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:7-11). Thus these markers divide the list as follows: word of wisdom and word of knowledge are group 1; faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy and discerning of spirits are group 2; different kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues are group 3.

Group 1 would be two gifts which I believe were necessary before the completion of the canon of Scripture. Elders couldn't say to a troubled young believer, "Let's turn to 1 Timothy" since it had not been written. So some were given a supernatural ability to explain doctrinal issues (word of knowledge) and others could explain practical issues (word of wisdom), which gifts were no longer necessary after the Scriptures were completed. No doubt these gifts would be replaced by the gifts of teaching and exhorting. Again note that "word of wisdom" is only in the early epistle of Corinthians; "exhortation" is in the Romans 12 passage. Likewise "word of knowledge" is only in 1 Corinthians 12 (and 13:8); the Romans 12 list gives "teaching."

Why are tongues and interpretation of tongues in a separate category? The citing in 1 Corinthians 13:8 may help. It reads: "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away." Here the translators have used three different English words to explain that some gifts were going to stop functioning: "fail...cease...vanish away." The first word, *fail*, is not the same Gk. word as "Love never faileth." It is a word that carries with it a ceasing *because of something else*—a causal relationship. Likewise

the words “*vanish away*” are used to translate the same Greek word, something stopping because of something else. But the middle word, “*cease*” is a different Greek word, actually meaning “*to pause*.” It is not causal.

Let’s think about the effect of the completion of the Scriptures. They now carried their own proof of this being a work of God. It was the power of God unto salvation. Signs of divine power were no longer necessary. Even the apostle Paul in his later ministry did not heal Timothy with his “*oft infirmities*” or Epaphroditus who was “*nigh unto death*” or find relief from his own “*thorn*.” Yet in the early days he was used to bring life to Eutychus! Something was happening in the life of the Church. These incomplete parts of divine revelation (see 1 Cor. 13:9), these immature forms of communicating truth (v. 11), these imperceptive sights of divine reality (v. 12) would be replaced by some perfect thing (v. 10). The only perfect thing I know is the Word of God.

If you assume with me that is true (thank you for your graciousness!), then these word distinctions make perfect sense. Both the gifts of knowledge (explained earlier) and the gift of prophecy would not be needed once the Scripture was finished. And while the power of the Word would now be the convincing proof rather than sign gifts, tongues would not immediately become useless as a result of the Bible’s completion. It would pass away of itself. More exactly, it would pause. For Joel prophesies a day when what was partially fulfilled in the Jews at Pentecost will be completely fulfilled at the conclusion of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. Then the believing Jews who embrace their Messiah will have a message to preach to all the nations when “*the kingdom is restored*” to Israel. Once again, as at the inception of the Church, it will be used in the rapid spread of the gospel.

Listing the gifts (not in order) Note: 1 Peter 4 gifts are general; Ephesians 4 lists a different category of gifts

I CORINTHIANS 12:8-10	I CORINTHIANS 12:28-30	I CORINTHIANS 13:8	ROMANS 12:6-8
word of wisdom			exhortation
word of knowledge		knowledge	
faith			
healing	healing		
miracles	miracles		
prophecy	prophets	prophecies	prophecy
discerning spirits			
tongues	tongues	tongues	
interpret tongues			
	apostles		
	teachers		teaching
	helps		ministry
	governments		ruling
			giving
			showing mercy

Some suggestions as to the nature of 18 gifts

- apostles*: given authority to settle foundation issues (e.g., Gentiles’ relation to law), give definitive answers
- prophets*: unveiling of hidden truth; explanation of typical truth, clarifying of seeming contradictions, selection
- evangelists*: blazing new trails for the gospel, articulating the message, training a generation of witnesses
- pastors*: *pro tem* elders, seeing new souls confirmed, churches established, elders trained and recognized
- teachers*: clearly explain the Word with practical applications, teach others how to study and teach locally
- word of wisdom*: ability to clearly explain practical application of truth before the completion of the canon
- exhortation*: encourage practical biblical change in others; showing wrong in a way that they want to make it right

word of knowledge: ability to clearly explain and settle doctrinal disputes/concerns before completion of canon
faith: trusting God for a great deal in such a way that it inspires others to at least trust Him a little more
healing: the ability to reverse some visible effects of the curse as a living parable of deeper spiritual truth
miracles: a more general term (also wonders, signs); ability to give a taste of the coming millennial reign of Christ
discernment: the ability to see things, not as they appear, but as they really are, and convince others of danger
tongues: the ability to communicate the gospel to a needy soul in a known (but personally unlearned) language
interpretation of tongues: the ability to hear and understand an unlearned language, then translate convincingly
helps (ministry): easing of the burden of others engaged in His work to encourage and enlarge their effectiveness
governments (ruling): understand, coordinate related ministries; help others see the significance of parts to whole
giving: a sensitivity to see material need, and a strategic (not always large) placement of resources to do most good
mercy: a manifestation of the character of God in others' lives by showing a Christ-like grace in the face of need

How to discover and begin using your gift

Having been convinced that you have been engifted by the Spirit and that your gift is to be used for the glory of God and the blessing of others (one of the problems with the modern tongues phenomenon), what do you do? One thing we should not do is "*lean [to our] own understanding,*" taking some kind of aptitude test. Instead, simple obedience will do! There are two general principles that are helpful: "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*" (Eccl. 9:10). Paul's personal confessions of zeal in God's work and his charges to Timothy are similar. The second is this: "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much*" (Lk. 16:10). And the interesting thing is this: if we take only those gifts still for today, we discover we have already been commanded to do every one of them! To give? Surely not just the one with the gift of giving is to give. And showing mercy? Helping? Sharing the gospel? What about teaching? Yes, everyone is to be able to clearly explain why they believe what they believe (1 Pet. 3:15). To lead or govern? Yes, we are all leading someone and we need to "*make straight paths*" for our feet to lead well.

Thus as we do all these things in faith and obedience as we have opportunity, the Spirit will nudge us into those areas where we have been especially gifted. Others will see it too, as we stir up the gift in us. Then we must make "*full proof*" of our ministry so that the rest of the body is able to "*grow up into Him*" along with us.

A word on deacons

The Lord has called every believer into full-time spiritual ministry: "*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ*" (Col. 3:23-24). One of the most common words for a servant is the word from which we get "deacon." Now it seems that there are special deacons within a general "deaconship." While everyone was to be a servant, some especially trustworthy people who had the confidence of the Lord's people were entrusted with special tasks on behalf of the church. Often it had to do with material things like looking after the poor or widows. The first occasion when deacons were appointed was for that very reason. In Acts chapter 6, it shows the differences between elders and deacons:

DEACONS

selected by the Christians
 assisted in the more material matters
 "deaconed tables"
 only when required to relieve elders

ELDERS

appointed by God (Acts 20:28)
 this freed elders for more spiritual tasks
 "deaconed the Word"
 necessary for proper function of assembly

Nevertheless, because elders represent the Chief Shepherd and deacons represent the assembly in their dealings, Paul gives similarly high standards for both (see 1 Tim. 2). The only appreciable difference is that deacons need not be able to teach. Good deacons (like Stephen) should inspire us all to more faithful service for our blessed Master.

Lesson 5

ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH: *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

Introduction: The religious life of the Old Testament was full of ritual, ceremony and God-ordained activity. There were special officiants, garments, furniture, days, and symbols. Complexity and endless repetition marked the Jewish religion (the only religion given by God). Everything was prescribed; virtually nothing was explained—why a lamb here, a goat there? why an ephah or a cubit or blue instead of purple? Any explanation at all had to await the unveiling of the “types” in the New Testament.

But Christian worship is the opposite: very little is prescribed; virtually everything is explained. There are no vestments or ritual; no officiating priests or liturgy—since every believer is a priest (see 1 Cor. 11:23-34; 1 Pet. 2). Even the occasion for the Lord's Supper is left to us in the words “*as oft*.” In a law relationship it would be right to dictate the day, but how do you dictate to your spouse when to tell you when to say “I love you”? Of course those nearest to the Lord thought He intended a weekly remembrance (see Acts 20:7, “*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread*”). Certainly the Lord Jesus did not mean “as seldom”!

Another clear difference between the OT and the NT: the Jewish natural and visible “shadows” are replaced by spiritually discerned substance. Their tabernacle or temple, priesthood, altar, sacrifices, etc. were seen by all but they were only “figures of the true” tabernacle which is in heaven. Now, as the Lord Jesus said, we no longer must worship in Jerusalem; we “*worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him*” (Jn. 4:23). We “*enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*” (Heb. 10:19), something no ordinary Israelite could do.

Baptism, the troubled waters of the Church

1. MEANING of the WORD: Baptism is mentioned 76 times in the New Testament. The word is a transliteration of the Greek *baptizo*, meaning “to immerse, submerge and emerge.” It was used for the dyeing of cloth and there is no idea of sprinkling or pouring in the word. Note the example of Phillip and the eunuch: “*And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water...*” (Acts 8:38-39).

2. DIFFERENT BAPTISMS: There are seven different baptisms mentioned in the NT and these must be kept distinct:

- Israel to Moses, their new leader (1 Cor. 10:2)
- Israel by John (Lk. 7:29), an act of national repentance and preparation for the coming of Messiah
- Christ by John (Mt. 3:16), a distinct act of identification with Israel, and prefiguring His death
- Anticipated persecution of the disciples and the early Church (Mt. 20:23)
- Christ on the cross (Mt. 20:23) when He could say, “*all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me*” (Ps. 42:7).
- Holy Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13), a once-for-all historic act that unified all believers into one body
- Believer's baptism (Acts 8:36-38) expressing the practical truth of a completed act (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12)

3. WHAT BAPTISM IS NOT:

- a doorway to the church—either universal or local
- a means of salvation from the penalty of sin (or necessary for it)
- a replacement for circumcision. Col. 2:11-12 is speaking of the value of the death of Christ, not baptism

4. WHAT BAPTISM IS:

- an ACT of OBEDIENCE to the LORD (Mt. 28:19) to His simple request included in the Great Commission

- the ANSWER of a GOOD CONSCIENCE (1 Pet. 3:21; see also 2:19; 3:15-16 for a good conscience)
- a MARK of IDENTIFICATION with CHRIST (Rom. 6:4); I will not be able to be baptized in heaven; now is the time to identify with the Lord in the day of His rejection
- a DECLARATION of DEATH to the WORLD (Col. 2:12), a “happy funeral,” rising to a new kind of life

5. THE ORDINANCE of BAPTISM:

- Baptism is part of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) and seems to have been practiced by evangelists soon after a person confessed belief in Christ. There is no evidence of:
 - a long waiting period between belief and baptism (perhaps 3 days at the most)
 - a believer remaining unbaptized (barring the thief on the cross!)
 - a person who did not claim salvation being baptized
 - infants being baptized; “households” baptized evidently were all believing (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:16)
- A new believer should be taught the meaning and importance of this act. The only requirement is *believing*:
 - “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41).
 - “When they believed Philip preaching...they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).
 - “And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).
- There may be cases—severe infirmity, underage children forbidden by unsaved parents, wives of uncooperative husbands, and other circumstances that preclude baptism. If the person is willing, this should not be an impediment to full fellowship and participation in the life of the local church.

6. SOME HARD VERSES about BAPTISM:

- Mk. 16:16; notice the negative statement (help is found for the first two verses in 1 Cor. 1:17)
- Acts 2:38 where the Jews are called on to do the opposite of what they had just done: receive, don’t reject Christ; and as your rejection of Him was public (at the cross), so your repentance should be public. This is more like John’s baptism which was for the nation of Israel
- 1 Cor. 15:29; why do we come out of the water? just to breathe? Or is it a picture of resurrection?
- 1 Pet. 3:21; Jesus, by the Spirit, preached through Noah to those now in God’s prison. He went under!

The joys and responsibilities of worship in general

Please note that Christians should not limit their worship to the Breaking of Bread! “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 1:11).

1. WORSHIP is the HIGHEST ACT of SERVICE: Some definitions:

- the old English word “worthship”
- the Hebrew “to bow before” (*sahah*) see Gen. 18:2
- the Greek:
 - i) “to kiss towards” (*proskuneo*);
 - ii) “to revere, be devoted, feel awe” (*sebomai*);
 - iii) “to render homage or service” (*latreuo*)

2. EVERY BELIEVER should be EQUIPPED to be a WORSHIPPER—but not only at the Lord’s Supper

- our SPIRITS made alive through the new birth (1 Cor. 2:9-16)
- our MINDS enlightened by the Holy Spirit and the Word (Jn. 16:14)
- our HEARTS aflame with love to Christ (see Lk. 24)

3. SOME HELPS in our PREPARATION

- what passages are helpful: prophecies, messianic psalms, gospels, esp. Lord’s Passion, epistles, Revelation
- books: *Worship and The Lord’s Supper* (Gibbs); *Plant of Renown* (Sheldrake); *Worship and Remembrance* (D. Smith); *Glories of Our Lord* (Hewlett); *The Suffering Saviour* (Krummacher) and others

4. The ART of MEDITATION—LET'S ACTUALLY WORSHIP!

- Read Scripture passages carefully and often: look especially for attributes, acts of the Father, Son, and Spirit
- Think it through in different ways: other verses help; what does it teach me?
- Pray it up to God in thanksgiving
- Consider how you might share the blessing with others

The Lord's Supper: remembrance

Remembrance more focussed: there are things suitable for worship that are inappropriate at a time of remembrance

1. The DIVINE INSTITUTION of the LORD'S SUPPER (Mt. 26:26-30)

"Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body." This was obviously a symbolic act since He was in His physical body.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Notice the simple eloquence, the fervent passion, the unmistakable meaning, and the practical consideration in this act.

"They who once knew the sweetness of celebrating the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day will not, I am sure, be content to put it off to less frequent seasons."

—C. H. Spurgeon

2. PREPARATION for WORSHIP at the LORD'S SUPPER

- the condition of our BODIES: rest, food, etc.
- the condition of our MINDS: Brethren, *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"*
- the condition of our SCHEDULES: jobs, houses, planning ahead
- the condition of our SOULS: *"examine himself"*; key of getting and giving away

3. The SIMPLICITY and ELOQUENCE of the SYMBOLS:

- They have historic scriptural significance (Gen. 14; Ps. 104:15; Eccl. 9:7)
- They teach both UNITY and PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY—all and each
- The PROCESS of preparing the BREAD and WINE is expressive of the suffering Saviour
- They are both GENERAL and SPECIFIC, with worldwide availability

4. The PURPOSES of the LORD'S SUPPER:

CENTRALITY: He is *"in the midst"* and in a special sense He meets there with us week by week

SUPREMACY: It is *"the Lord's Supper,"* the only meeting of the church expressly and solely for the Lord

INTIMACY: *"remember Me"*—not remembering one long dead but *"calling Him to mind"*

TESTIMONY: To declare or *"show forth"* the Lord's death *"until He comes"*

ACCESSIBILITY: To worship as priests (both men and women, 1 Pet. 2) into the *"holiest"*

a) *"speaking to yourselves"* in song—as our hearts warm should hymns give way to personal worship?

b) to one another by the Word—only that which ministers Christ to the heart; not a teaching time

c) to Him in prayer—no need to be long, but a need to be real, and so all can say *"Amen!"*

HARMONY: *"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread"* (1 Cor. 10:17)

5. The REQUIREMENTS for participating in the Supper:

- saved and walking in obedience (the pattern, though not a rule: saved, baptized, continued steadfastly)
- self-examined *"and so let him eat..."* (not *"so let him stay at home"*)
- something to offer Him (only what He has already given me, see Ps. 116:12-13)
- we should come reverently, regularly, respectfully, rejoicing in our Saviour, ready to be led by the Spirit

6. The LORD'S SUPPER is the weekly CLIMAX to the LORD'S TABLE (1 Cor. 10)

At the Table, cup first, then the bread; at the Supper, the other way around

Table is both an OT and NT idea; the Supper is unique to the NT

I am to be at the Table all the time (a spiritual idea); at the Supper weekly (Acts 20:7)

7. The LORD'S SUPPER compared with the other ordinance, BAPTISM:

THE LORD'S SUPPER

a picture of COMMUNION (so done often)

His identification with me

"My body...My blood for you"

shows that Christ is in me

(take, eat...)

BAPTISM

a picture of UNION (so only once)

my identification with Christ,

"into His death"

shows that I am in Christ

(like Israel baptized *"in cloud, in the sea"*)

Every believer a priest

In the Old Testament, God also desired a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19), but due to man's failure, it was not possible. In the lives of Job and Abraham, during the patriarchal period, the heads of families acted as priests (Job 1:5; Gen. 8, 12). Then in Exodus 28, Aaron's family was taken to function as priests on behalf of God. This system eventually became so corrupt that it was the very priests who instigated the execution of the Lord Jesus!

However, Christ Himself, having replaced the repetitive offerings with His one sacrifice and the dying priests with His ever-living and unchangeable priesthood, instituted a new order of priesthood. It was not based on law but on grace. And although in type He followed the Aaronic priesthood, as to order He is after Melchizedek, the king-priest.

Now all who trust the Saviour become priests, male and female (1 Peter 2 has no mention either of gift or gender—more in Lesson 9). There is no longer a selective priesthood; every believer has access into *"the holiest by the blood of Jesus,"* a new and living way He consecrated for us. Peter explains that our priesthood has two distinct aspects:

HOLY PRIESTHOOD

built up

to offer up spiritual sacrifices

for worship

primarily towards God

"holy" reminds me that I

no longer belong to this world

ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

go forth

to show forth His virtues

for witness

primarily towards men

"royal" reminds me that I

now belong to the world to come

What priesthood involves

Purification: the condition of priesthood (Heb. 9:14; 10:22): *"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord"* (Isa. 52:11)

Responsibility: the charge of the priesthood (1 Pet. 2): worship and witness; represent God to men, men to God

Identity: the character of our priesthood: He *"hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father"* (Rev. 1:6)

Entrance: the claim of priesthood (Heb. 4:14-16; 6:18-20)—all welcome, under all circumstances, at all times

Sacrifice: the costliness of priesthood (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16), the daily burnt offering

Testimony: the calling of our priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9-20) speaking well of God to the people we meet each day

Lesson 6

IN TOUCH WITH HEADQUARTERS: *The Apostles' Doctrine and Prayer*

Introduction: The time we spend in communion with God is the most important time of our lives. Through the Word we hear His voice; in prayer He hears ours. It is then I am renewed in spirit for He “*restoreth my soul*” (Ps. 23:30). There we are transformed when we behold “*as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2 Cor. 3:18). There we get direction for the path, comfort in our sorrow, encouragement to keep going and catch a broad vista of the possibilities before us. Yes, we need time communing with Him.

What is Bible doctrine?

DEFINITION: The word “doctrine” is simply “teaching” and can refer either to the act of teaching or that which is being taught. There are two related Greek words used, *didache* and *didaskalia*. “Whereas *didache* is used only twice in the Pastoral Epistles, 2 Timothy 4:2 and Titus 1:9, *didaskalia* occurs fifteen times. Both are used in the active and passive senses (*i.e.*, the act of teaching and what is taught), but the passive is predominant in *didache*, the active in *didaskalia*; the former stresses the authority, the latter the act (Cremer). Apart from the Apostle Paul, other writers make use of only *didache*, save in Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7 (*didaskalia*).” —W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary*

Teaching the apostles' doctrine

“*The things that thou hast heard of me...the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2).

1. BE AWARE: Sheep, while eating, have their eyes only inches from the ground. That is one reason they need shepherds. One name for shepherds is “overseers.” The elder should be able to see over his little flock to notice any dangers at a distance—while there is still time to react and protect the sheep. Coming storms, strangers, thieves, and predators, each requires a different response, but we can’t wait until the problem is on us. Then it is too late.

How can we be aware? We ought to know the influences that are affecting the church at large and our assembly in particular. There are some periodicals that may help to keep elders apprised of trends and approaching dangers.

2. BE PREPARED: Of course, what we really need is preventive medicine. Nothing will help as much as knowing the truth. With the plumbline in your hand, you will be able to distinguish easily between straight and crooked doctrine. Here are some helpful books to give a framework at least for a careful, consistent study of Bible doctrine: Strong’s *Systematic Theology*, Ryrie’s *Basic Theology*, Thiessen & Walvoord’s *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Lockyer’s *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, Heading & Hocking’s *Treasury of Bible Doctrine*, Chafer & Walvoord’s *Major Bible Themes*, Tatford’s *The Faith: A Symposium*, Hoste’s *Doctrine*, etc. Of course you will apply the Berean principle to these books. When eating the meat, don’t choke on the bones. Keep good notes. Take your time and do it right.

3. BE CAREFUL: This is no place for sloppy thinking, for approximating. The three rules for Bible doctrine are: 1. Accuracy; 2. Accuracy; 3. Accuracy. Don’t be afraid of calling someone in on your deliberations. When speaking on doctrine, feel free to read carefully crafted definitions of the truths being discussed. Anticipate areas where young Christians could easily misunderstand. Be available after for questions and clarifications.

We ought to be even more careful handling these “holy things” than the priests in Israel as they functioned in the tabernacle. They had the shadow; we handle the substance. This is true of all doctrine, but especially of those relating to God, the impeccability of Christ, His perfect humanity, His full deity, the value of His death, etc. All the ves-

sels were holy, but what of the Ark in the “holiness of holinesses”? This is no place to try out pet theories or ad lib.

4. BE THOROUGH: If ever the adage is true—“A job worth doing is worth doing well”—this is it!

i) *Understand the progress of the doctrine.* “The Bible is not simply a compendium of doctrine, nor are its doctrines arranged systematically. The wonder of God’s Word is that in it we are faced with an almost unstudied presentation of the loftiest of truths in order to spur us to even the lowliest of duties” (C. E. Hocking, *Treasury of Bible Doctrine*).

ii) *Be as extensive as you can* in unlocking the fullness of the doctrine. Often we stop too soon, just before the full impact of the truth dawns on us. Jesus said, “*Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*” (Jn. 6:27). It is labor. Therefore the call to *search* the Scriptures is not merely a turn of phrase.

iii) *Always study in the context* but remember that ultimately every truth must be seen in the context of the whole Bible. You can take not only a verse, but a chapter (1 Cor. 13) or even a whole book (James) out of context.

iv) *Remember: “the truth is in Jesus.”* All doctrine should exalt the Lord in our hearts. He is the truth. You may share with the saints your analysis, but don’t forget the synthesis! When it comes together, doctrine should show us Him.

v) *All true doctrine is “practical theology.”* There is always a “*therefore*.” The fourfold aim and effect of the proper application of biblical truth is to teach sound doctrine, refute false doctrine, correct bad morals, and instruct in good morals (2 Tim. 3:16).

Paul’s warnings about doctrinal error

With a Book having the scope, depth, and supernatural character which the Bible has, it is not hard to understand why, through the ages, there have been varying views of the doctrines contained in it. From the Bible’s friends much error has come merely by having the truth out of *place* or out of *proportion*. From the Bible’s enemies, there are the three tactics used by the serpent in Eden: doubt, distortion, and flat denial of God’s Word. What is unfortunate these days is the difficulty in distinguishing between the Bible’s supposed friends and its enemies! Paul warned Timothy about the last days. Here are those warnings:

1. A VESTED INTEREST IN ERROR: “*Charge some that they teach no other doctrine*” (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul saw that there would be those that would debate issues rather than teach the kind of doctrine whose fruit would be “*godly edifying*” (vv. 3-4). As John Bunyan said, “Some love the meat; some love to pick the bones.” The reason, Paul states, is simply this: sound (healthy) doctrine judges unsound living. If Timothy would war a good warfare, he must also have a good conscience (vv. 18-19). Some people teach wrong doctrine, not because they don’t know what is right, but because they do not want it to be true—it judges them and pronounces them guilty.

2. AN INCONSISTENT LIFE: “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine*” (1 Tim. 4:16). Paul was very concerned that Timothy’s influence for God not be diminished by a lifestyle that did not match his teaching. Timothy’s example of believers was to include his conversation, way of life, love, spirit, faith, and an unblemished life. How would this come about? By being attentive to reading the Word, exhortation, doctrine, the development of his gift, meditation, and whole-hearted purpose of life. Only by examining his own life in the light of Scripture could he expect to be taken seriously when he attempted to teach others (vv. 11-16).

3. A CARELESS APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY: “*Study to show thyself approved unto God...rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15). Accuracy is of prime importance in the understanding of doctrine. Biblical distinctions must be carefully maintained without making more of them than the Word does itself. For example, there are clear differences between Israel, the Kingdom, and the Church. Blurring these lines can lead to a view of Scripture that is consistently distorted on almost every page. Those who are careless in this way “*subvert*” their hearers and their influence is like a creeping gangrene (vv. 14, 17), eventually overthrowing the faith of some. We are personally obligated to “*purge*” ourselves from such influences, “*avoid*” questions that lead us into doubtful areas, and “*not strive*” with such who have “*erred*” (v. 18), but gently instruct them in the truth.

4. A LACK OF APPETITE FOR WHOLESOME FOOD: “*The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine*” (2 Tim. 4:3). What happens when the audience’s taste is so overwhelmed by the leeks, onions, and garlic of the world that they lose their appreciation for the delicate flavor of heaven’s Manna? There will be those teachers who are quite ready to change the menu to include *nouvelle cuisine a la Egypt* (v. 3). They will turn away their ears from the truth “like a windmill whose owner has turned its vanes so that they will not catch the wind.” And the result? You cannot live in a vacuum: they “*shall be turned unto fables*” (v. 4).

“Experience shows...that agnosticism regarding a doctrine is the first step to denying it. The brother who says of a certain truth, ‘Well, I used to believe that. I’m not sure now...I don’t think anybody can be sure on such points,’ is probably a good half way to heresy. This type of agnosticism is increasing among believers with the increase of higher education. It is the fashionable cant of the intellectual world, the idea being that truth is unattainable anyway, and that orthodoxy is the badge of a low intelligence. But this position cannot be squared with Christianity. For Christian teaching is a dogmatic assertion of truth received by divine revelation. It is ‘*the faith once delivered to the saints*’...To be a straw Christian—‘*carried about with every wind of doctrine*’—may be a mark of intellectual sophistication, but it is not a mark of spiritual maturity.” —Frank Holmes, “Correctness of Doctrine,” *Treasury of Bible Doctrine*

The tests of orthodoxy

Here are ten questions to ask to test a teaching to see if it could be dangerous to the flock:

1. Does it demean the person of Christ, undermining His nature, offices or ministries? I know He is “*altogether lovely*” so anything that makes me think less of Christ must be wrong.
2. Does it elevate man apart from the cross work and his standing in the Lord Jesus?
3. Does it depend on an obscure verse or a forced interpretation?
4. Does it contradict the overall tenor of Scripture?
5. Does it unduly emphasize the Holy Spirit? I know the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me. Any movement truly of the Spirit will emphasize Christ, not the Spirit.
6. Does it excuse or encourage wrong behavior? Right doctrine Paul calls “*healthful*.”
7. Does it confuse the distinctions between Israel and the Kingdom and the Church?
8. Does it focus on the temporal rather than the eternal, the material rather than the spiritual?
9. Is it a thinly disguised version of a contemporary secular trend?
10. Is it believed by those whom I know to be walking with the Lord? (See 2 Tim. 3:14.)

NOTE: Appendix 3 is a fairly comprehensive list of Bible doctrines. Some elders may find it helpful to check how balanced the public ministry is from their platform. If there are substantial gaps, one then can move to stand in the breach. Remember that anything we fail to teach the devil will teach his way.

Prayer defined

Prayer is a vital resource provided to the believers by God so we may approach Him in a real and significant way. It is the means by which we communicate with God. The pattern of access is to the Father (He is the giver of all) in the Spirit (He helps our infirmity in prayer) and presented through the Son (because we are “*accepted in the beloved*”—e.g., Jn. 14:14; Eph. 3:14). We want to think, however, about the specific area of united prayer in the church.

Kinds of prayer

- *intercession*: requests made for others, especially those who do not or cannot pray for themselves
- *supplication*: requests made for our own needs
- *imprecation*: never found in the New Testament; a request calling for judgment on enemies; in some Psalms

- *meditation*: a prayerful attitude of expectancy as I consider the Word of God
- *confession*: an expression of contrition concerning a known sin
- *thanksgiving*: expressions of gratitude for the Lord's blessings
- *adoration*: ascriptions of praise for who God is in Himself

Pattern prayers for our use

We sometimes say to the Lord that we do not have the words to adequately express what should be said. While it is true that we will always come short, this side of heaven at least, He has provided us a Book full of God-ordained words! Both the Old and New Testaments sparkle with glorious examples of every kind of prayer, the highest of these being the prayers of the Saviour Himself. These prayers are there to make them our own and pray them up to God. We know they match His will, being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

There are very few prayers of the other apostles recorded in the New Testament. Jews, after all, understood the principles of prayer. But we Gentiles had no clear understanding of true prayer. And so Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, left on record a great number of prayers to stimulate our thinking in this holy art. Paul's prayers are expansive and inspiring. We would do well to make them our own and pray them up to a God who loves to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Paul's prayers

Notice that only one or two prayers of this whole list are requests for material or temporal things. All the others are praying down spiritual blessing or praying up spiritual thanksgiving and praise. We would do well to check the proportion in our public and private prayer life.

- Romans 1:8-10, Thanksgiving and Request
- Rom. 10:1, Request (for Israel's salvation)
- Rom. 15:5-7, 13, Requests for blessings
- Rom. 15:33, 16:20, 24, 27, Benedictions
- 1 Cor. 14:18, Thankfulness
- 1 Cor. 16:23-24, Benediction
- 2 Cor. 2:14, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor. 9:15, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor. 13:11, 14, Benedictions
- Eph. 1:15-23, Request for Spiritual Illumination
- Phil. 1:3-5, 9-11, Thanksgiving and Requests
- Col. 1:9-13, Thanksgiving and Requests
- 1 Thess. 2:13, Thanksgiving
- 2 Thess. 1:3, Thanksgiving (growing faith and love)
- 2 Thess. 2:13, Thanksgiving (for God's choosing)
- 1 Tim. 1:17, Worship
- Phm. 4-6, Thanksgiving (for Philemon's progress)
- Rom. 7:24-25, Thanksgiving
- Rom. 11:33-36, Worship
- Rom. 15:30-33, Request for deliverance
- 1 Cor. 1:4-7, Thanksgiving
- 1 Cor. 15:57, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor. 1:3-4, Blessing God
- 2 Cor. 8:16, Thanksgiving
- 2 Cor. 13:7, Request for uprightness (in the Corinthians)
- Gal. 6:18, Benediction
- Eph. 3:14-21, Request for Spiritual Strength
- Col. 1:3, Thanksgiving and a Request
- 1 Thess. 1:2, Thanksgiving
- 1 Thess. 3:11-13, Requests (for established hearts)
- 2 Thess. 1:11, Request (God might count them worthy)
- 2 Thess. 2:16, Benediction
- 2 Tim. 1:3, Thanksgiving and Request (for Timothy)

In conclusion

The regular, rich and practical teaching of the Word should be linked with instruction on being a student, teacher, and model of the truth. Add to that prayer times with up-to-date and heart-felt requests, and focussed, impassioned prayers, mixed with much thanksgiving—this is the way that makes for a vigorous local assembly, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 7

LOCAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT: *The Shepherds and the Flock*

1 Tim. 3; 1 Tim. 5; Titus 1; 1 Pet. 5

Introduction: The New Testament design for local church governance is simple but adequate. It has survived through fierce persecution and internal struggle. And yet there is no use pretending about the challenges of a local church led by elder rule. It isn't easy being an elder at any time—but especially when the sheep misbehave. And dangers lurk on every hand—hirelings who flee at first sign of danger; wolves on the prowl; thieves and robbers; and, most surprising, “*men of your own selves speaking perverse things.*” On top of that the demands on your time and energy, the loneliness of “*the care of the churches,*” the sometimes unreasonable standards to which you and your family are held, and the constant need for prayer, Bible study, visitation and discipling. And then there is the criticism and second guessing of every decision. And the thanks of the assembly? Better wait for the Lord's smile. No, it isn't easy being an elder. Sometimes you wonder if it's worth it. But then, this the Lord's idea, isn't it...

It isn't easy being one of the sheep, either. Sometimes it seems the elders are too busy to care. They often make decisions that affect our lives without hearing our concerns. Some assemblies suffer under a despotic man who rides the sheep hard and doesn't listen to his fellow elders. What can one little sheep do? You pray and pray, but little seems to change. Sometimes you wonder if it's worth it. But then...

Let's make some general statements to begin:

1. The Lord knew He was putting us all in vulnerable positions when He designed the church the way He did. He is all-wise and nowhere in Scripture does He make apology for the way things were designed.

2. The people in your local church are not perfect, but then neither are you. This isn't the end of the story; it is the middle of the process. The Lord designed the local church to keep us dependent on Him, to minimize the glory of man and to keep us humbly seeking His throne in every time of need.

3. It is in difficult times that we find out if we really believe in the true Headship of Christ, or look to our own resources to try and solve the problems.

4. Even a difficult assembly can be a good school, teaching me the grace, patience, and meekness that will, if I learn from the experiences, make me like the Lord Jesus.

The definition of an elder

There are three words used for those who care for a local church (note that elders are always found in the plural):

1. elder, *presbuteros*, used for age, rank or office, but emphasizes his *maturity* and fitness for the role
2. bishop, *episkopos*, better translated an overseer, emphasizes his solemn *responsibility*
3. shepherd, *poimen*, one who cares for the flock, illustrates his *function*, to feed, lead, and take heed

Please note: Titus 1:5, 7 demonstrates the elder and bishop speaks of the same person; 1 Peter 5:1-4 shows the same for elder and shepherd. Only ecclesiastical bias caused the distinctions we see among the prelacy today.

The design of elder rule

1. The elders are always seen in plurality in the New Testament. In addition, elder rule is never seen in conjunction with a pastor or clergyman presiding over them. This makes true elder rule impossible.

2. The sharing of the oversight of the local church means that the elders are humble, servant men who do not want their own will, do not have a private agenda. They believe the strength of the biblical design is that *"in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."* However they recognize there is a variety of gift and learn to appreciate the various abilities they share together in the eldership.

3. Only male leadership is countenanced in Scripture. This matter is fully discussed in Lesson 9.

4. Fellowship in the local church involves not only the embracing of the privileges and responsibilities there, but also a willingness to submit to the oversight of that assembly. The elders recognize they have no jurisdiction outside of assembly life and act as loving fathers, *"not lording it over God's heritage."*

The elders' qualifications

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7. There are two extremes to be avoided in this regard. One is to make too little of these qualifications, suggesting that the list is unreasonable and something only to be aimed at. But the word *"must"* in v. 2 means *"is bound to be"* these things. The other extreme is to make the description one of perfection. There *are* perfect elders—unfortunately they are all in heaven! In fact, the list is not unreasonable. Since elders are to be examples to us, all believers should live this way. But elders *must* fulfill these requirements. They are given in grace. For example, a man having serious trouble with his family neither has the time nor the heart to be helping other families with their struggles. Of course every elder will have challenges with his own family; otherwise he will be of little help to those who do. But it does mean that his wife recognizes his God-given authority and his children learn to submit to him because of his consistent life and moral suasion. If he cannot look after his own family, the Lord says, *"I don't want him trying to care for My family."*

One more thing we should note: The phrase *"office of a bishop"* is in fact better translated *"work of an overseer."* Woe betides the man who has a lust for office, who thinks that an elder is someone who meets every so often to make a few decisions for the assembly, and then carries on with his life. When the Scripture says, *"we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (1 Jn. 3:16), that is exactly what it means. It is what that Great Shepherd of the sheep did, and it is expected of the under-shepherds as well.

Now notice the specific qualifications mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:

- **FAMILIAL** qualifications: *"husband of one wife"* or lit., a one-woman man, i.e., loyal to his vows; he must be serious, watchful, and hospitable; also *"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"* (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

- **SOCIAL** qualifications: *"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil"* (v. 7). A man who lives a double life plays into the devil's hands. The elder must be in business and in the community above scandal, avoiding even the appearance of evil.

- **MORAL** qualifications: *"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous"* (v. 3). How can he be soon angry and patiently care for God's lambs? No hot-tempered elders, please!

- **DOCTRINAL** qualifications: the words *"apt to teach"* means that the elder takes his Bible seriously and spends time studying it to help God's people. The verse does not say that he must do this from the podium; he may instead be a help to young Christians, the widows and shut-ins, or couples.

- **DEVELOPMENTAL** qualifications: *"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil"* (v. 6). It is no kindness to put someone in the forefront who has not yet learned to resist the devil in the faith. We are setting him up for a fall. However, some see in this verse the necessity of long decades of preparation for eldership. To some degree this qualification would be variable. A man who qualified to be an elder over the young Christians in Thessalonica would not necessarily qualify at the assembly in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it seems that Paul took less than two years for the development of every elder he disciplined. And he was starting in many cases with raw pagans! You can be sure those candidates for elder were not wasting any time!

The elders' responsibilities

- “to feed the flock of God” with good and nourishing food from God’s Word (1 Pet. 5:2)
- protect the assembly from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9-11)
- care for the sick, especially those who also need spiritual restoration (Jas. 5:14)
- to guide the assembly both by godly example and by biblical precept
- to disciple other believers

Discipling younger believers

Disciple-making is the Lord’s design. And it is the need of the hour! We will convince no one that we are New Testament assemblies if we are not engaged in this vital work. Why?

1. Because it is the express will of God. “Go ye therefore, and [make disciples of] all nations...” (Mt. 28:19). You say you have no younger believers to disciple in your assembly? Start with the unbelievers around you—of which there is no shortage. Disciple making begins with the gospel, not merely arranging a gospel meeting but going to the lost with this wonderful news, as our verse commands.

2. Because it is the only way to accomplish the Great Commission. It cannot be accomplished through the work of a few preachers. The Lord designed the project so everyone could be involved. If you feel there are many things you cannot teach young Christians, surely there are some things you can teach. Can you show them how to pray for the lost, how to be hospitable, how to use a concordance? Can you introduce them to a good book, or to a divine principle which has transformed your life? Then by God’s grace, do that.

3. Because it is the way to lay a sure foundation for the next generation. Of course we should live in the daily hope of the Lord’s return. However, He may wait a little longer (2 Pet 3:9). How will you personally have prepared your young believers for such an eventuality? Is your generation passing on the sacred treasures which previous generations entrusted to you? As Paul enjoined Timothy, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

In disciple-making there is the need for regular close contact. We will not rub them the wrong way if they know we are interested in their good. This is often difficult for an older Christian—to make oneself available, to be both transparently honest and gently caring, to be forgiving with our young charges when they fail. If this is not handled properly, it may be the last we see of our young people.

Notice the two reasons for the Lord gathering disciples: “And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that he might send them forth...” (Mk. 3:14). Here is the secret. If we can honestly convince young believers that, with all their faults and immaturity, we want to spend time with them, and if they know we see potential in them for God, we will have won their loyalty. Just spending time—happy times, hard times, times in the Word, in prayer, in visiting, at the table, in the work—this is the investment that pays rich dividends.

You say you are too busy? More busy than the Lord Jesus? Then you are indeed too busy. But this is the beauty of the plan. Carry on with your life and ministry—but take young believers with you. It may be awkward at first, but keep it up and you will find not only that the young people will benefit; you will benefit. You will catch some of their enthusiasm, the freshness of their enjoyment of truths new to them. You will find encouragement in their progress, and gain new strength given by heaven to accomplish this ministry.

What would we like young converts to become? In other words, what are the spiritual skills we would like our disciples to acquire and how will we teach them these things? Here are a few suggestions.

1. To be servants (Mt. 20:25-28). In the world, the more servants you have the greater you are. But in the Church it is just the opposite. The Lord said, “So shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your min-

ister..." (Mk. 10:43). Most churches in Christendom have paid servants or ministers, and are designed for people who want to be served. But the original design was that everyone was to be a minister. The Lord wants to maximize the sacrifice in order to maximize the blessing. Teaching our young people by example how to be servants could be the greatest thing we do for them.

2. To be stewards (Lk. 12:42). The Lord Jesus did not call us bondslaves, but He did call us stewards. As such, every young believer must learn how to handle the Lord's possessions. Their bodies are not their own, but temples of God's Spirit. Their material possessions are borrowed and will have to be accounted for: "*As having nothing, and yet possessing all things*" (2 Cor. 6:10). The use of their time is also a sacred trust, and will appear for final audit at the Bema.

3. To be witnesses (Acts 1:8). How strange to see a farmer throw one seed here today, another there tomorrow. He would soon be out of business. And are we teaching our young people that a tract left at the restaurant, a casual word here and there, is God's idea of evangelism? The three pictures of evangelism in the New Testament—farming, fishing, and fighting—are all high risk, high energy endeavors. We need to teach young believers the essentials of the gospel, the critical role of prayer and the Spirit's guidance, the skills necessary to win souls for Christ, and the hard work it entails. The New Testament does not treat evangelism as a hobby, nor should we.

4. To be students (2 Tim. 2:15; Jn. 8:31). Diligence in studying the Word should be taught, not learned by the hit-or-miss method. Unfortunately many older Christians were not taught how to study their Bibles, especially women—as if the study of the Word is a men-only activity. This may mean swallowing some humble pie by telling your understudy that you were not taught good study methods but "How would it be if we learn together?" It could be the beginning of a rich time discovering truth for yourself rather than living off commentary tidbits or hand-me-down truth from others. Teaching a young believer to rightly divide the Word is of lifelong benefit to himself and to others, protecting from error, preserving from sin, and equipping for service (1 Tim. 4:16).

5. To be warriors (2 Tim 2:3-4). Surely this is vital in a day when many believers are falling in battle. There must be a willingness to submit to authority, to take correction, to be accountable. One must learn how to put on the armor, how to wield the Spirit's sword, how to battle on our knees in prayer. We must warn our young people about the dangers of premarital intimacy, internet pornography, social drinking, rampant materialism, and other wiles of the devil. But we must also provide wholesome alternatives to give them opportunity to enjoy the company of other assembly young people, to labor and learn together in the work of the Lord.

6. To be fruit-bearers (Jn 15:8). What we are is more important than what we do. Your young people need to understand that what we want for them more than anything else is to be Christlike. This will involve time alone with the Lord, being wholehearted in our obedience to His Lordship, and allowing the heavenly Gardener to prune us all that we might bear "*much fruit*" and that our fruit "*might remain.*"

The response of the flock to the shepherds

1. We should "*obey*" them (Heb. 13:17). This means we should take the initiative to know how they were saved, their favorite books, and how best you can encourage them. All the visiting shouldn't be one way. Go visit them!

2. We should "*esteem them...for their work's sake*" (1 Thess. 5:13). Some day they will give account for our souls. We want them to do it with joy. And it couldn't hurt to encourage them, too!

3. We should follow their faith (13:7). All men have failures and foibles. You wouldn't follow Moses in his marriage relationship or David in the way he raised his boys. But surely you can follow them in the ways they were faithful (read Heb. 11 if you forget—even Samson and Jephthah had some area of faithfulness you can follow).

4. We should pray for them. If we used our criticism times for prayer times, what a difference it would make. In fact, we are not even to listen to an unsubstantiated criticism of them.

5. We should entreat them as fathers (1Tim. 5:1). If there is some matter to discuss with them, be gracious. Make your words sweet. You never regret being kind.

Lesson 8

RELATIONS IN THE FAMILY OF GOD: *Fellowship and Discipline*

Much help was derived for this section from an article titled "Local Church Discipline" by W. H. Burnett in the Mar 2001 *Uplink*

No fellowship based on people will ever work. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." If this fellowship with the Lord is right, then we will find the true basis for fellowship "with one another" (1 Jn. 1:3). We will love whom the Lord loves, and receive all whom He receives (Rom. 16:2; Phil. 2:29).

Fellowship defined

The Gk. word *koinonia* in the New Testament refers to a mutual sharing or common interest in something, and is used of sharing a truth, a burden, a common bond, a joy, a provision, or a responsibility. Believers are called:

- fellowcitizens (Eph. 2:19) with the same Homeland
- fellowheirs (Eph. 3:6) with the same inheritance
- fellowlaborers (1 Thess. 3:2) in the gospel
- fellowsoldiers (Phil. 2:25) opposing the same enemy
- fellowdisciples (Jn. 11:16), following the same Master
- fellowhelpers (3 Jn. 8) "to the truth"
- fellowservants (Col. 4:7) with the same commission
- fellowworkers (Col. 4:11) seeking the same kingdom

Church Membership and Fellowship: *A study in contrasts*

It is helpful to keep in mind the difference between becoming a member of Christ's Body through salvation and choosing to link myself with a local gathering of believers.

MEMBERSHIP (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27)

in the universal Church, the "one body"
 compulsory and immediate upon believing
 only believers (recall that the true Church is invisible and indivisible; Christendom is visible and divisible)
 nothing can separate us from the 7-fold unity in Ephesians 4:4-6

FELLOWSHIP (Acts 2:42; 1 Jn. 1:7)

in a local church, of which there are many
 voluntary, and hopefully after understanding
 unfortunately sometimes includes "false brethren" (Gal. 2:1-4) and "ungodly men" (Jude 4) See also Rev. 2:2, 6, 9, 14, 15, etc.
 we may be separated through choice, unholy living, circumstance, false teaching, man-made restrictions, assembly discipline, or death

How should we come into local fellowship?

Our link with other believers is not based on race, personal preference, social status, or other human criteria, but on our common life in Christ. Some Christians feel no need to "join" themselves (Acts 5:13; 9:26) to a local church, attending at whim. But this is not the teaching of the New Testament. We need to be in a local family of believers, under godly shepherds who care for us as part of "the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made [them] overseers" (Acts 20:28). We need the mutual care, teaching, fellowship, and opportunities that a biblical local church can provide.

HOW DO I DECIDE where I should be in local fellowship? Our decision should be made, not on personal preference, but with the Bible in hand to evaluate the degree to which this local church conforms to the divine pattern. There is not always an easy answer to this question since there is no perfect church on earth. Some churches may have

certain admirable and biblical characteristics while other features of the New Testament plan may be missing. In the end, we must believe that the Lord places us in a local fellowship for His own purposes. This confidence will help us through difficult days and keep us from wandering about, always looking for a local church that is more acceptable.

When I join in with a local church I am to shoulder the *responsibilities* of shared life with the Christians there. I also embrace the *privileges*. Thirdly, I express my willingness to *submit to the leadership* of that flock. Some want privilege without responsibility. Others crave a significant role in the assembly but will not submit to the elders. If so, how can they truly be in fellowship if they are unwilling to “*walk together*” in the direction the shepherds are taking the flock?

But HOW DOES THE ASSEMBLY DETERMINE those whom they receive? Some churches accept all who enter their door, no questions asked. We applaud their charitable spirit, but the local church should be composed of believers only. Those received into church fellowship should already have been received into the fellowship of God. Of course we are not talking about someone attending to hear the gospel; all these should feel most welcome.

SO WHO SHOULD BE RECEIVED (not by the elders but by the whole congregation)? All those whom “*God hath received*” (Rom. 14:3). Listen to a fragment from a First Century letter of recommendation (a common courtesy which ought to be practiced among all churches). It was written to introduce Phebe to the Christians in Rome. Paul writes: “*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, ... that ye receive her in the Lord (as is appropriate for) saints...*” (Rom. 16:1-2).

Unfortunately some elders seem to have higher standards than the Lord Himself! They refuse those whom Christ has received. To them the Word declares: “*Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God*” (Rom. 15:7). How deeply solemn for those elders to stand before the Lord some day to answer for this. In another context, we hear Him say to those who would not receive His people, “*I was a stranger, and ye took me not in*” (Mt. 25:43).

Some practical aspects of local church fellowship

The New Testament is full of references to local church fellowship. Here is a partial recording of them:

1. Confession of faults one to another and the restoring of such a one by lifting up the hands that hang down and strengthening the feeble knees (Jas. 5:16).
2. Gathering together to exhort and edify one another, and to provoke to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).
3. Partaking of the Lord’s Supper in His way according to 1 Cor. 11:24.
4. Bearing the infirmity of the weak (Rom. 15:1) and discipling young believers.
5. Coming together for prayer for one another, as well as the lost. “*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*” (Jas. 5:16). And showing hospitality to one another.

These might be called the fellowship of gathering (see Acts 2:42). There is also the fellowship of the gospel (Phil. 1:5), of grief (Phil. 3:10), and of giving (2 Cor. 8:4).

Rival fellowships

One important reason to seek the regular fellowship of believers is the strong pull (especially for new Christians) in another direction. The world we knew before salvation calls us to come back. But the Lord says, “*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*” (Eph. 5:11). Unfruitful, they have no lasting benefit to me, others, or for God’s glory. More ominously, they are “*works of darkness.*” When we go back to the old way of living, we are actually taking up weapons against Christ. But the Spirit will produce goodness, righteousness, and truth (Eph. 5:9). Concerning a doubtful pleasure, ask: Will it bring goodness, righteousness, and truth into my life? If not, leave it alone.

Of course it’s good to be like our Lord who offered genuine and wholesome friendship to sinners (Mt. 11:19) in order to bring them to salvation. But this is different from befriending the old world where we once were at home, a world that rejects our Lord Jesus. James talks straight about the matter: “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*” (Jas. 4:4). If I am enjoying fellowship with the Lord, nothing will be important enough to come between us.

The importance of discipline

The word “discipline” generally means a careful training of the individual to produce wise living and mental and moral health. The English word’s root means to instruct, teach, tutor. Note two important words in Hebrews 12:6, “*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*” To chasten means all that is involved in child training. Scourging is more intense, referring to the Lord’s harsher treatment (still done in love) when we refuse to listen to His tutoring. The Lord uses both the rod and staff, to correct us and direct us. The local church, as His earthly agent, must first use all methods of child training to help us learn the ways of God. But if we fail to learn this way, they are required to exercise a more intense form of discipline. This, of course, when necessary, is grievous to the persons involved, to the assembly, and to our heavenly Father. But note, it is an evidence of the Lord’s true love for His children.

Local church discipline

There are times when sterner forms of discipline must be administered in love not only for the individual(s) directly involved but because unjudged sin will jeopardize the life of the entire assembly, as the Corinthians discovered. Sadly, the grief of such occasions is often made worse by the fact that people misunderstand the purpose of discipline and the necessity for it. There are several reasons given in the Word of God:

1. **Restoration:** All discipline has restoration as its prime objective. When Paul deals with the serious matter of fornication in the assembly at Corinth, he instructs them, “*Put away from among yourselves that wicked person*” (1 Cor. 5:13). But when he writes his second epistle, after repentance has done its good work in the offender’s heart, he writes, “*Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore...confirm your love toward him*” (2 Cor. 2:6-8). The discipline has worked; repentance has resulted; restoration is now happily possible.

2. **Protection:** Leaven (yeast) in the Bible is used as a picture of the spread of evil. So sin (or false teaching) allowed to work in an assembly will eventually hurt the whole assembly. Paul says the presence of the unjudged sin of fornication in Corinth is like leaven and commands: “*Purge out therefore the old leaven*” (1 Cor. 5:7; see also Gal. 5:9).

For what reason?

The New Testament epistles give at least six types of offense that require the more intense forms of discipline. These can be divided into two categories: those which can be remedied without removing the person from the fellowship and those where it is prescribed. First note those which can stop short of excommunication.

1. **When an offense is unpremeditated:** “*If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted*” (Gal. 6:1). This is not a person unrepentantly practicing an evil habit, but someone ambushed in a moment of weakness. In such cases, restoration by spiritual shepherds is warranted, rather than sterner discipline. Peter demonstrates this type of offense and its remedy. He “*denied the Lord with oaths and curses*” when caught off-guard the night of the Lord’s trial. Peter “*went out and wept bitterly*” in remorse. Three days later the Lord sought him out, restored and recommissioned him. Note that those doing the work of recovery must be men of discernment who balance firmness with tenderness, and sin’s seriousness with heaven’s grace.

2. **Nuisance offenses** (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 1:10-11): These plague assemblies, causing unnecessary distress: the unruly, the disorderly, vain talkers, and deceivers. The main characteristic of these people is that they “*speak unadvisedly with their lips.*” Paul says that such people have to be warned; we should not keep company with them (that is, go along with their unprofitable talk, criticism, and gossip), and they have to be rebuked sharply. In this case, the offense has not yet reached the point where excommunication is prescribed, however we can see that this offense, if persisted in after being admonished, could deteriorate to “*railing,*” which merits removal.

3. **Offenses between two believers—initial stage** (Mt. 18:15-17): In this case, the offense is of a personal nature

between two parties. This type of offense is perhaps the most prevalent in assemblies. Most assembly troubles do not involve important doctrinal or moral issues, but petty personality clashes. In such cases, the technique is to keep the matter to as small a circle as possible. The offended party is told: *“Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”* (Mt. 18:15). Unfortunately, the natural tendency is to immediately tell the matter to others, with a view to gathering support. When this is done, the assembly aligns itself with either of the parties and the unity of the assembly is destroyed. No, says the Lord, *“between thee and him alone.”* If, however, this approach is unsuccessful, the offended brother is advised to take one or two more with him as witnesses, and to make a second attempt at reconciliation. Note that in both of these instances, if repentance occurs, no further action is needed.

Sad cases requiring removal from the fellowship

1. *Personal offenses—advanced stage* (Mt. 18:15-17): If matters go beyond the second attempt at reconciliation, it is brought to the assembly. If the offender hears the assembly, he can be restored on the basis of his repentance. If he refuses to hear, he is put out. The Lord says: *“Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”* (v. 17).

2. *Home neglect*: In this case, a brother fails to provide the necessities of life for his family. Clearly this is not addressing conditions of hardship where a brother lacks the resources or the opportunity to support himself or his family. In such a case, the assembly would surely assist. In this instance, a brother has the ability and opportunity to provide for his family, but lacks the will to do so. He prefers a life of indolence and ease. This is viewed as one of the serious offenses, demanding excommunication. *“He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Tim. 5:8).

3. *False Doctrine* (Titus 3:10-11; Gal. 1:7-9; 5:10-11): The difficulty here is to determine when the label “doctrinal error” should be applied. It must be recognized that there are certain areas where differences of opinion are permissible and allowable, and areas where they are not. For example, if a brother holds a different view on eschatology than is popularly accepted, we might not wish to have him teach it in our assemblies, but we cannot label divergencies on prophetic interpretation as “doctrinal error.” Also, it is important to understand whether the error is the result of ignorance, which should be remedied by corrective teaching, or if it is being used to purposely divide God’s people. The issue demands caution; even a heretic is to be warned twice before extreme action is taken.

2. *Moral Offenses* (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:4-11): The passages referred to give a listing of offenses which are to be considered serious enough for excommunication to be exercised. These are fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, and extortion. This list is clearly not intended to be exhaustive because other items which would require excommunication are not listed. For example, murder is not included but would clearly qualify for excommunication. The listing is intended therefore to be typical, and elders are required to exercise great discernment when identifying moral issues. In the case of public moral offense, known in the community, the action is clear—putting away and denial of social contact until the discipline has run its course and has brought repentance.

How discipline is applied

Should an offense merit the public discipline of the church, who should do it? Paul writes, *“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus...”* (1 Cor. 5:4). He anticipates that the exercise of discipline will be an action of the church, not only of the elders. He refers to the disciplinary action in Corinth as having been *“inflicted of many”* (2 Cor. 2:6). It was a corporate action of the whole church. It is the church who receives into the local fellowship, and it is the church that puts away. The overseers would typically present the case to the church with the prescribed discipline, for the agreement of local believers. Similarly, when repentance and reconciliation have resulted, the offender should be publicly received back into fellowship.

Whatever low standards might be in the world, God’s standards must be upheld in His house. And blessed is the local church that longs for the full recovery of every wayward sheep.

Lesson 9

UNIQUE ROLES—The Great Love Story: Women & Men in the Church

1 Cor. 11–14; Eph. 5; 1 Tim. 2; Titus 2

Introduction: Few subjects generate such heat as this one—men/women roles in the church. Although we may disagree on some points of Scripture where this issue is discussed, it is my prayer that these differences will not keep us from thrilling to the Great Love Story of which the woman-man relationship speaks: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31-32). Everywhere we look in the Bible, we see this theme from the first marriage in Eden to the last marriage, of the Bridegroom and His wife (Rev. 19). To that reception the whole universe will be invited. So if all men and women in the church have such key roles to play in history’s greatest love drama, then there must be a lot more at stake than we at first imagined.

A God who requires order and accountability

It should be helpful to begin by understanding what God thinks about the ordering of His universe. Wherever we look in the world He created, it is obvious that the Lord likes order. From super novas to sub-atomic particles, this careful design and amazing structure is a visible display of the nature of the invisible God (Rom. 1:20). This is just as true in God’s desire for order in the moral universe. For example, we read concerning human government: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). Regarding the churches the Scripture says:

- “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26)
- “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40)
- “Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Cor 16:14)

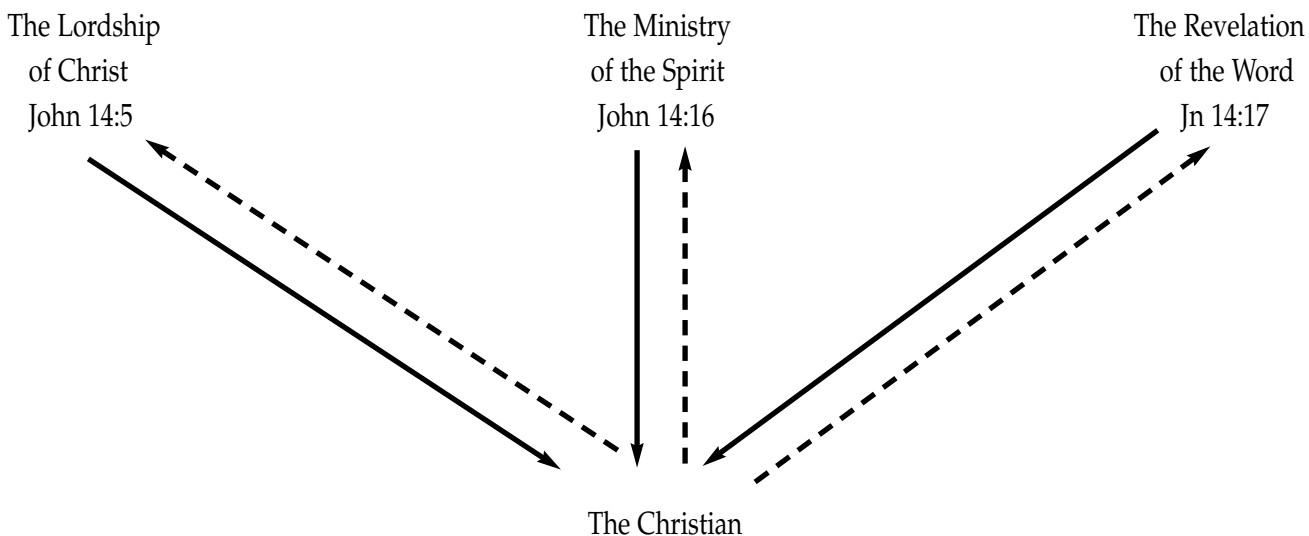
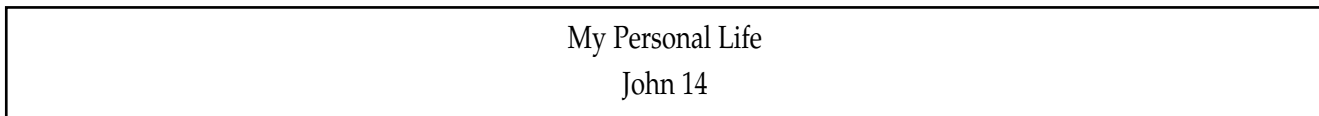
Obviously God cares about how things are done, and He expects us to take seriously the way He has ordered the universe. In this universe, God alone is sovereign. Yet in maintaining His universe, God has vested certain limited authority in His creatures at various levels. Concerning our first parents, Adam and Eve, we read, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

Distinguishing biblical spheres—world order, home order, church order

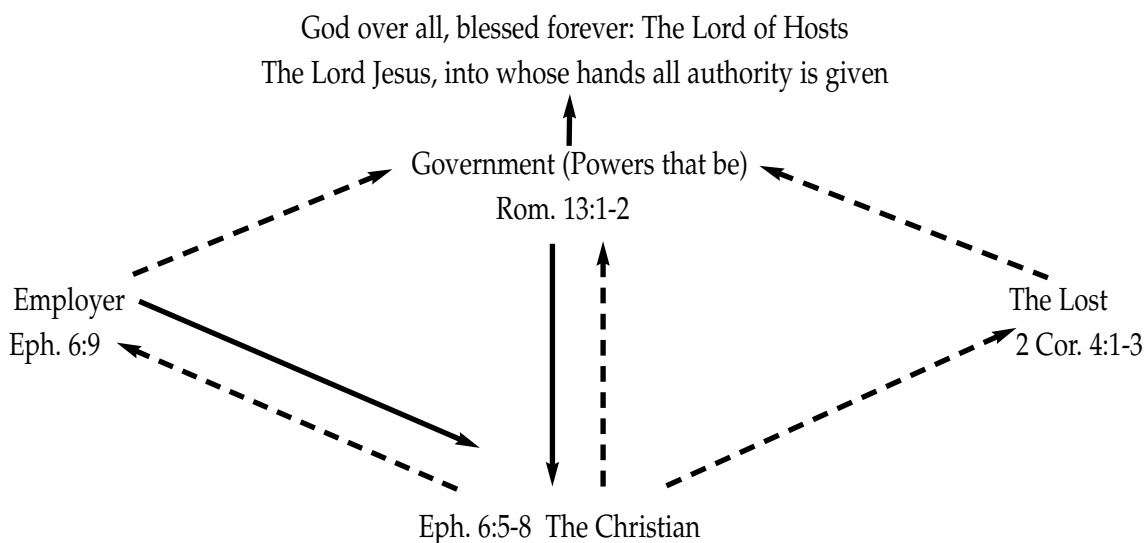
When Paul writes, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40) he doesn’t mean things should be done one thing after another. The verse means that things should be done according to the arrangements that had been set in place for the church, as opposed to doing things any way a person might like. The same word is used of the way the priesthood was set in order, so that the way things were done were not in chaos, or left to personal whim.

God has laid down three distinct spheres of delegated authority and accountability. There may seem to be some overlap, but God feels He has made matters sufficiently clear that we should know in any given situation what sphere of accountability/responsibility we are operating under, and therefore what distinct order, or way of doing things,

should be in place. Here is a schematic to show these chains of responsibility and accountability to help us see the orderly way the Lord has designed the way our lives should function for the maximum blessing.



In this case the individual believer is accountable to the Lord, the Spirit and the Word
The Father's gifts to the believer—the Son, the Spirit, and the Scriptures—provide all that the believer needs
In this case, the Lord's authority through the Spirit and the Word is absolute



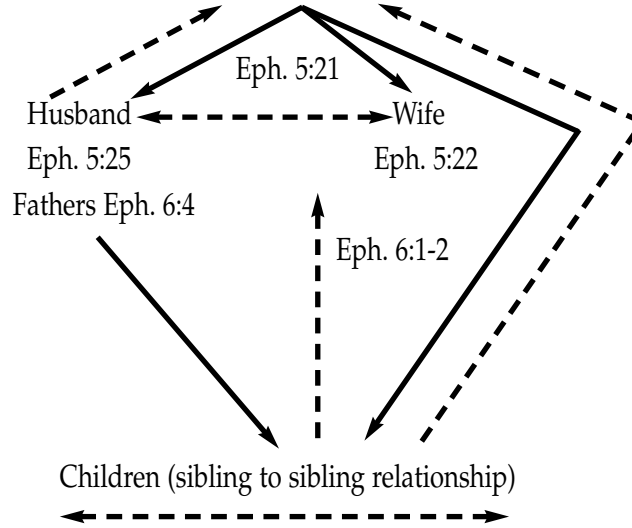
In this case the individual believer is accountable to the Lord by way of government and employer
He also has an obligation to the lost, to serve them that he might make friends for the Lord

The Christian's responsibility to government: pay, pray, obey.

All are accountable to the Lord: submission to government and employer is evidence of my desire to glorify God

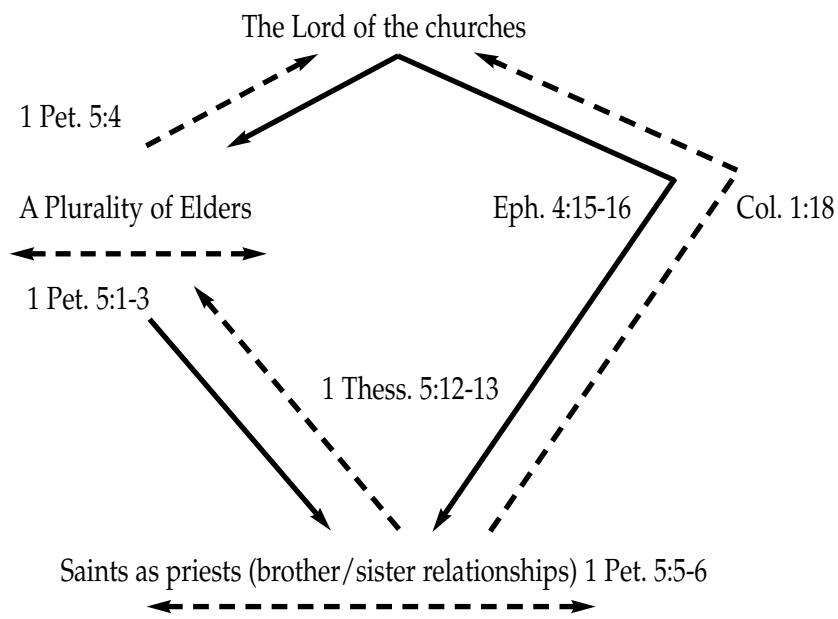
My Family Life
Ephesians 5 & 6

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit model the only perfect Family



The husband and wife are to have an attitude of mutual submission out of reverence to the Lord
 Husbands are said to be primarily responsible both for their wives and for the children, but children obey parents
 Unbelieving family members are sanctified—set apart for special attention from heaven (1 Cor. 7:14)
 The husband-wife relationship mirrors the Christ-Universal Church relationship

My Local Church Life
1 Peter 5



The flock follow the shepherds as they follow Christ
 The Lord cares directly for His people, giving them what the elders cannot; but works through elders in leading
 The elders lay down their lives for the people of God and the Chief Shepherd will reward them some day

How does understanding order help us?

Imagine that you see two men sitting in a restaurant, one older and one younger. You see the younger speak to the older. If you could hear, you would discover that they are father and son, but the father, semi-retired, works in his son's business. The son has just asked his father to make some business calls. After a mouthful or two, the father speaks. He asks the son to visit his mother, who is not feeling well. What has happened?

Although nothing visible has changed—same people, setting, meal—there has been a complete change of order. The first request was based on an employer–employee relationship (world order) and the second request was based on their father–son relationship (home order).

This is what clarifies the many confusions in people's minds about the propriety of women's participation in certain settings (and when head coverings are proper, for those who take that seriously). Let me explain.

We must not think that the setting (like the restaurant in our illustration) is the determining factor in establishing order. You may have world order in a church building—providing a shelter for the community after a natural disaster, for example. When the building is used for a funeral or a wedding, that is home order. Or you may have church order in a house as the early churches did. In persecuted countries, it is church order in fields and barns and concentration camps. No, the setting is not the determining factor.

The issue is order. Who would God hold responsible if something went wrong? If the answer is your employer or the government, it is world order. If the answer is the husband or father, it is home order. But if the answer is the elders, it is church order. Sometimes elders take too much upon themselves. They may provide spiritual counsel in personal or family matters, but should not meddle in the Christians' private affairs. It is quite the association that Peter makes when he says: *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters"* (1 Pet. 4:15). The elders should not act like *"lords over God's heritage, but be examples to the flock."*

A matter of much concern is the tendency for the elders to control the gospel efforts of a local assembly. You will notice that "gospel meetings" are not listed in Acts 2:42, or anywhere else for that matter. While no complaint should be raised for having an effective gospel work in a building owned by the Christians, it seems we need more personal exercise in the gospel and more "going" into the world with this glorious message. Woe betides the men who actively discourage others from fulfilling their personal responsibility in sharing the gospel, understanding, of course, that such efforts are done in God-honoring ways.

Two important lessons from I Corinthians 11: Headship and Glory

The setting of 1 Cor. 11 should be noted. The second half of the chapter is so important; what about the first half?

1. First, the Corinthian epistle is the only one of Paul's letters which is addressed not only to the believers to whom it is sent but he adds, *"with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."* Did the Spirit of God anticipate present-day arguments that limit significant portions of this epistle to Corinth and its culture?

2. As well, the section dealing with the proper order for the saints' gatherings (chs. 11–14) ends with the words: *"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."* Paul certainly wants us to take this section seriously!

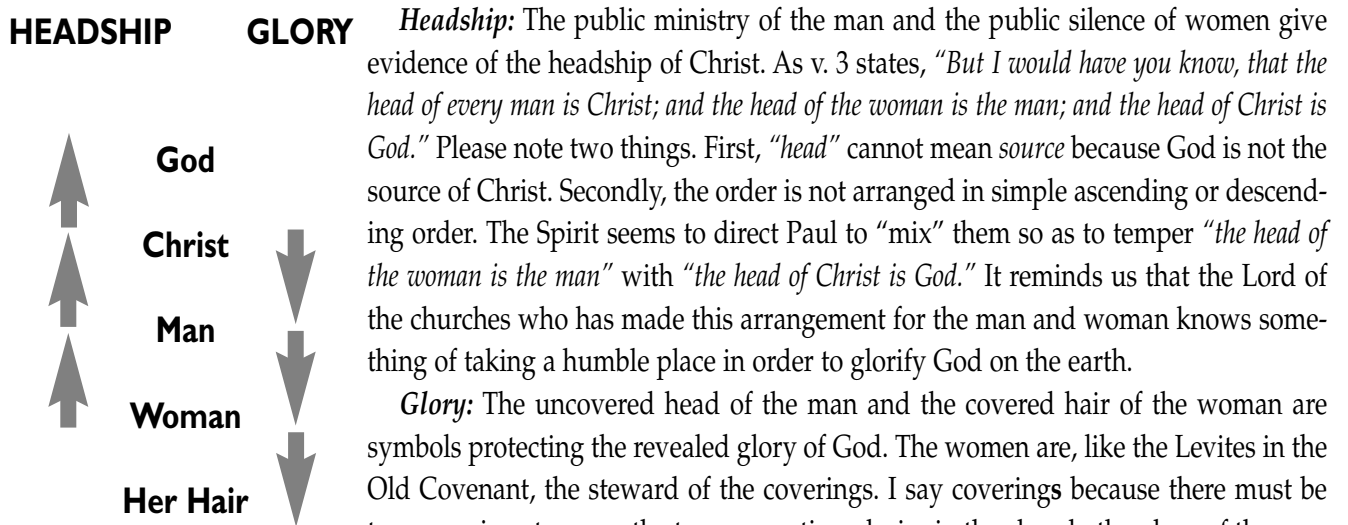
3. At the end of the first subsection (11:1-16) we read: *"But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God."* This does not seem to be simply a local issue in Corinth, does it?

4. Even a cursory reading of this chapter shows the shaky ground under the feet of those who reject this teaching for cultural reasons. The overall subjects of Christ's headship and God's glory are hardly local issues. Whatever you may think of the veiling of women in the church, surely these verses mean something important to the churches.

5. To make matters worse for the culture argument, Paul reaches up to heaven to bring in the angels as witnesses

then reaches back to Eden to show the creative order of Adam and Eve, and finally argues from “nature itself.” Are these not timeless principles that must directly affect the very throne room of the Deity?

Perhaps one more schematic will give a general layout of these two major subjects—headship and glory.



Headship: The public ministry of the man and the public silence of women give evidence of the headship of Christ. As v. 3 states, “*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*” Please note two things. First, “head” cannot mean *source* because God is not the source of Christ. Secondly, the order is not arranged in simple ascending or descending order. The Spirit seems to direct Paul to “mix” them so as to temper “*the head of the woman is the man*” with “*the head of Christ is God.*” It reminds us that the Lord of the churches who has made this arrangement for the man and woman knows something of taking a humble place in order to glorify God on the earth.

Glory: The uncovered head of the man and the covered hair of the woman are symbols protecting the revealed glory of God. The women are, like the Levites in the Old Covenant, the steward of the coverings. I say coverings because there must be two coverings to cover the two competing glories in the church: the glory of the man

is covered by the woman’s hair “*which is given her for a covering*” (v. 15). Under this covering symbolically is the glory of man, for “*the woman is the glory of the man*” (v. 7). But a second covering (a different Gk. word is used to help us see this distinction), a veil, is necessary to also cover the glory of the woman, which, we are told, is her hair (v. 15).

Thus when the men see the coverings they are reminded that their public participation is to be for the Lord’s glory—since their glory is veiled. The angels see the veiled glory and are encouraged in their submission to God. Remember there was a rebellion in heaven once. Is it not more than coincidence that the angel who led that rebellion (and who may seem, at times to be winning on earth), had for a title “*the anointed cherub that covereth*” (Ezek. 28:14)? And you will remember the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16) who was dissatisfied with his ministry—he wanted a more prominent part. Moses responded: “*Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord?*” (v. 9). What exactly did the Kohathites do? “*And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging (that’s the veil)...*” (3:31). In any case, those who practice the veil as a sincere act to guard God’s glory by covering the competing glories—they didn’t step forward on this; everyone else stepped back. It wasn’t many years ago that every Christian woman wore a head covering in church services.

The reasons for the man-woman order in the church

There are two reasons given for the divine order between the man and the woman in 1 Cor. 11:8-9. They may at first sound harsh in the light of today’s politically correct climate. But remember the first paragraph of this chapter. The man has been given to play the role of Christ, the eternal Lover, and the woman has the part of His bride, the object of His love. Now through that filter listen to these reasons: “*The man is not of (out of) the woman, but the woman (out) of the man.*” And “*Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man*” (1 Cor. 11:8-9). Do we not see the beauty of the picture? It is a picture! “*Christ is not of out of the bride, but the bride out of Christ.*” We too, like Eve, are the bride of the wounded side! How out of character, then, for the church (in symbol) to teach Christ. This is the reason the man is to take the public lead. It has nothing to do with importance or capability. It is a role in the divine love story, with all the unseen world watching us play our parts. Did Sarah and Hagar know we would be looking at them today, symbolizing the two covenants? Or David playing the part of the true King of Judah? They might have been more careful with their lines if they had, don’t you think? Again I say, there are much bigger things at stake here than our personal feelings or our desires to occasionally rewrite the script to our liking.

The woman's role and many opportunities for service

Here is one of the great ironies of Christianity: no other movement has, at the same time, been so credited with the enrichment of women and with their impoverishment, with their liberation and enslavement; with their ennobling and debasing. One need only travel to cultures dominated by other religious systems to see the truth. While the Bible portrays woman as holding a unique role—different from the man's—both in the home and the church, that role displays all that is uplifting about the Christian faith. The apostle Paul and his travelling companion, Luke, sometimes charged with chauvinism for delineating these distinctive roles, cannot say enough about the pivotal ministries and influence of the First Century women in the success of the Church's early expansion. Those who charge the Bible with demeaning women either have confused the divine revelation with man's distortions of it in Christendom, or else they have not done their homework. Notice how the woman is portrayed in the New Testament:

1. AS A ROLE MODEL TO YOUNGER WOMEN: The more mature women are to *"teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed"* (Titus 2:4-5). That is, the older women, having learned from the Lord the secret of happy submission (see 1 Pet. 2:21-3:7), pass this miraculous, life-changing truth on to the next generation of women who follow Christ into death to self and win over another generation of stubborn hearts.

2. AS THE DOER OF GOOD WORKS: It is not that men are not to do good works, but women are often more strategically placed to do them. See the distinction in 1 Tim. 2:8 with v. 10. Note the qualification of the *"widow indeed"*: *"Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work"* (1 Tim. 5:10; Rom. 16:1-2; Acts 18:1-3).

3. AS SAVED THROUGH CHILD-BEARING: *"Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety"* (1 Tim. 2:15). Eve is spoken of here, and linked with all believing women in God's plan of salvation for the human race. As one mother put it: "I raise men for God." Even without physical children, many women have risen above their circumstance and become spiritual mothers to thousands.

4. AS THE KEEPER OF THE HOME: The "keep" was the drawbridge; the keeper guarded what went out and came in. The elders are the keepers of the church; the women are keepers of the home (Titus 2:5).

5. AS THE PURVEYOR OF PRIVATE INSTRUCTION: See the beautiful ministry of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). Thank God for such "mothers in Israel"!

6. AS SERVANTS OF THE LORD: Many were the women both in the Old and New Testaments with strategic roles in the purposes of God (often recovering for the failures of men). Some were prophetesses: Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jud. 4:4), Huldah (2 Chron. 34:22), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and Anna (Lk. 2:36). Others showed hospitality to the Lord's servants: to Elijah (1 Ki. 17), and to Elisha (2 Ki. 4:10), to the Lord Jesus (Jn. 12:2) and to Paul (Rom. 16:6). Some were actually used to change the course of history: Ruth in maintaining the Messianic line, Esther in saving the Jewish race, Jehoshabeath in preserving the royal seed (2 Chron. 22:11), to name a few.

7. AS GOSPEL WITNESSES: In Philippians 4:3, Paul speaks of *"...those women which labored with me in the gospel."* It was true then as it is today in the Middle East and many other lands: women can only be reached by women. How many of those in the choir of the redeemed in heaven first heard the sweet strains of the gospel from a mother or grandmother, from a woman missionary or Sunday School teacher, from a female personal soul winner or neighbor? Paul wrote to Timothy his own testimony (one that could be shared by millions): *"I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice"* (2 Tim. 1:5).

8. AS EXAMPLES OF HOLY LIVING: The New Testament utilizes men and women alike in showing us

Christianity in 3-D. In living the life of Christ, there is no advantage of male over female. In many cases, women in their faithfulness stand out in stark relief to the unfaithfulness of men. For example, when all Christ's male disciples forsook Him and fled, the women were the last at the Cross and the first at the tomb.

9. AS SUFFERERS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: The enemy has made no distinction between male and female when it comes to persecuting the faithful. Rachel "*weeping for her children*" has mingled her tears with multitudes of faithful women and young girls who have paid the ultimate price for their fidelity to their Lord.

10. AS WORSHIPPERS: Some of the richest expressions in Scripture of personal worship come from the hearts of women. For Old and New Testament egs., see Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:1-10); Mary's Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55).

The solemn privileges and responsibilities of men in the local church

1. Every MAN DESCRIBED AS THE IMAGE AND GLORY OF GOD (1 Cor. 11:7): Of course women were made in God's image (see Gen. 1:27); both the man and the woman are created with the very imprint of God upon their souls. For this reason, they are the only creatures on earth who can fellowship with God. But notice two words.

a) image, *eikon*, representation, means that God has called the men to represent Him in this relationship just as the woman represents the Church.

b) glory, *doxa*, manifestation. Man, by the way he gently serves women in the church and his wife in marriage, shows the gentlemanly heart of God. Oh, what a responsibility, men! Your children's view of the Father will be greatly formed by the way you act as their father. How it should keep us on our knees.

2. Every MAN IS A HOLY AND A ROYAL PRIEST (1 Pet. 2:5, 9): As holy priests, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices; b) as royal priests, we are to show forth God's virtues. In Peter's discussion of New Testament priesthood, however, there is no mention of male/female distinction. We should remember that the Lord doesn't listen for our voices. He hears our hearts. When we say the women are silent, we only mean as far as we are concerned. The Lord hears them perfectly! But it is the man's solemn responsibility to come to public worship prepared to be called upon by the Holy Spirit to lead the collective praises of the saints. Preparation at home through the week is a must!

3. Every MAN GIFTED BY THE SPIRIT (Eph. 4:7, 16; 1 Cor. 12:4-7) "*Gift*" emphasizes that this supernatural ability is not of me; "*grace*" emphasizes that this ability is of God, *charismata*. Men have especially solemn responsibility to not only develop and use their gift but to encourage their wife and children in the development of theirs as well.

4. Every MAN a SUPPLIANT and an INTERCESSOR (1 Tim. 2:1-8): Here the word is not "mankind" in general, but, referring to public prayers, is the specific word for "males." See the 4-fold objective: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, Notice too the 4-fold character: everywhere, holy, not wrathful, not doubting. Come, brothers, make your prayers "as large as are the promises." Have you ever prayed "*for all men everywhere*"?

5. While only SOME MEN ARE ELDERS, ALL ARE TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE (see Titus 1:5). Men, if you look behind, you will see someone is following YOU. We read that "*Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah*" (Gen. 5:22). Was it the burden of having a son following him that led him to seek out his Father? I know the feeling.

6. Only some MEN ARE EVANGELISTS but ALL ARE TO BE WITNESSES (Eph. 4; 1 Pet. 3:15). Why are so many Sunday School teachers, missionaries, and personal witnesses women? Where are the men? It's as if we have said, "Here am I. Send—my sister." It is time for every Christian man to step forward in the great cause of soul winning.

7. Again, some MEN ARE GIFTED TEACHERS but ALL ARE TO BE STUDENTS OF THE WORD. Many places I go, it is the women with the good Bible questions. As never before, with every wind of doctrine blowing, we need men who will invest the time to get to know God and His Word in the sanctuary, then "*the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (2 Tim. 2:2). See also Jas. 3:1; Eph. 4; Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 3:16

Lesson 10

THE CHURCH'S FUTURE: *What God has Waiting for His People*

"...Good things to come" (Heb. 9:11)

A brief summary of events ahead for the Church

1. **READYING:** The Church is presently preparing herself as a bride for her heavenly Bridegroom. We are to be waiting (1 Cor. 1:7) watching (Eph. 6:18) and working (2 Tim. 2:15). Who are these overcomers that triumph in every period of church history? One thing is certain. These victors have not overcome in their own strength: every true believer is in this number, for they overcome by *"the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony."* a picture of the Christian's victory in Christ Himself, the true Victor. The Lord still looks for the overcomers in the ruins of Christendom, calling out words of encouragement to them in what often seems to be a discouraging scene. But Christ is not discouraged, and He shall not fail (see Isa. 42:4). Now see what He offers those who trust in Him:

a. **EPHESUS:** *to eat of the tree of life* (2:7) This speaks of eternal GROWTH and BLESSING, forbidden in Eden, now we are bidden to enjoy this life eternal to the full because our Saviour *"has brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel"* (2 Tim. 1:10).

b. **SMYRNA:** *not hurt of the second death* (2:11) This speaks of our eternal SECURITY and TRIUMPH over the Last Enemy because our Lord Jesus *"taste[d] death for every one"* (Heb. 2:9).

c. **PERGAMOS:** *to eat of the hidden manna and to be given a white stone and a new name* (2:17). This speaks of eternal ENJOYMENT and INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP with our Eternal Lover.

d. **THYATIRA:** *given power over the nations and the morning star* (2:26, 28). This speaks of eternal VICTORY and the END OF THE LONG NIGHT OF PERSECUTION for the people of God.

e. **SARDIS:** *to be clothed in white raiment and have one's name confessed in heaven* (3:5). This speaks of eternal RIGHTEOUSNESS and the fact that Jehovah will NOT BE ASHAMED to be called our God (Heb. 11:16).

f. **PHILADELPHIA:** *to be made a pillar in the temple and identified with Christ* (3:12) Speaks of eternal SERVICE and RECOGNITION at last. Many no-name saints down here will wear new names up there.

g. **LAODICEA:** *to sit with Him on the throne* (3:21). What more could we hope for? This speaks of eternal RULE and, better still, BEING WITH HIM, beholding the King in His beauty (Isa. 33:17).

2. **RESURRECTION:** The blessed hope of the Church includes the final defeat of death. And then we shall truly sing: *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

This resurrection involves first, for those who *"sleep in Jesus,"* the reconstitution of the believer's body, soul and spirit (to be immortal) and the change of the bodies of those still living (1 Cor. 15:51, 57). The Lord put this two-part process in these words: *"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"—* that is resurrection for those whose bodies that have been *"sown"* (see 1 Cor. 15:42-44). Then He speaks about those on the earth at the time of His return to the air: *"And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* (Jn. 11:25-26). We do indeed!

3. **RAPTURE:** What a glorious long-expected day! The word *"rapture"* is certainly a biblical idea, from the words *"caught up"* (1 Thess. 4:17). There we read of two very different but exceedingly joyful reunions: *"We which are alive*

and remain shall be caught up together *with them* in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be *with the Lord*." It has been called "the only ecumenical movement that will ever work," a coming together of all who have accepted God's way to heaven. This earth will finally lose its hold on us and we will rise with that eternal attraction to our Saviour and Friend. This event is accompanied by a shout, the voice of the archangel, and a trumpet blast (1 Thess. 4:16, 18). Yet we might ask: "Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?" (2 Sam. 19:10).

4. REWARDS: The scriptural view of rewards bears out the fact that they are for the eternal glory of the Giver, not the recipient! We are to be rewarded for FRUITFULNESS and FAITHFULNESS, but He shall bear the glory. See Matthew 25:21. There shall be recompence for whatever His servants have covered at their own expense: "I will repay," says the true "Good Samaritan" who is no man's debtor. There will be responsibilities given in the kingdom. Faithful with a coin? He will give you a city! And O what rejoicing when the stories are completed and "the sowers and the reapers rejoice together." Here is an overview of some verses having to do with the generous heart of our God in that day:

a. The WORKER'S reward: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). This verse indicates that the work will get done; someone will get that crown. God won't fail because I may. "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

b. The ELDER'S reward: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Yes, embattled elder, it will be worth it all when we see Him!

c. The WARRIOR'S reward: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:5-8).

d. The SUFFERER'S reward: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (Jas. 1:12; see also Heb. 11:25-26).

e. The SOUL-WINNER'S reward: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19; see also 1 Cor. 3:8). "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved" (Phil. 4:1). Anne Ross Cousin, taking the words from the letters of Samuel Rutherford, wrote:

Oh, if one soul from Anwoth meets me at God's right hand
My heaven will be two heavens in Emmanuel's land.

f. The GOOD STEWARD'S reward: "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Mt. 25:23). "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Lk. 16:10). "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Lk. 16:11-12). "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2; see also Mt. 6:4; 10:41-42).

g. The BIBLE STUDENT'S reward: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also...Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth...And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men,

apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:2, 15, 24-25).

NOTE: We will not revert to law at the Judgment Seat of Christ! The fire that is there is for our good—anything done for self-glory, we will be glad to see it burn! God is looking for ways to give rewards: *"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward"* (Mt. 10:41-42).

5. REJOICING: Who can imagine the joy of the marriage day! All the Hallelujahs in the New Testament are reserved for that blessed occasion (Rev. 19). Not one seat empty, not one heart sad, not one desire left unfulfilled. He shall be satisfied (Jude 24) and so will we (Ps. 17:15).

6. RETURN: Because the Lord is just, He must set this world in order. When He returns, it will be with ten thousands of His saints to judge the world and Satan and to bring both His earthly and heavenly people into their sphere of eternal blessing. He will provide a new, curse-free heaven and earth and we shall see Him in His rightful place at last. It would seem that while the marriage occurs in heaven, the reception will be on earth, when our Lord is vindicated for having "done all things well." And in the scene of His rejection He shall reign with the bride who, Rebekah-like, journeyed to meet Him across the desert landscape. *"Whom having not seen, we love."*

7. REIGNING: At that time the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). We shall share His throne as His bride and His servants shall serve Him (Rev. 22:3). *"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this"* (Isa. 9:7). That is such good news! *"Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus!"*

The end of the Church's enemies, the triumvirate of evil

1. The FLESH: when we are extracted from the presence of sin at the Rapture. Never another blush or tear of regret. Never to bring Him shame or fail in the cause of Christ. All new, not a vestige left of the old life.

2. The WORLD: defeated at Armageddon at the beginning of the millennial reign. But not destroyed until the end of the thousand years at which time the lost are judged at the Great White Throne (see Rev. 20:11-15). This judgment is preceded by a short uprising which again proves the heart to be deceitful and desperately wicked.

3. The DEVIL: The deceiver will be bound for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2) after the seven years' Tribulation in which he has virtually had his way on earth. Upon his release, he captivates the hearts of those not redeemed. But at this point he will be cast out into the lake of fire for eternal judgment (Rev. 20:10). Then will begin the great eternal era that will never know a sunset.

In the time left, what can disciples do to advance the cause?

"In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness" (Titus 2:7)

Much needs to be done; exploratory surgery is insightful but does not cure the problem. After Nehemiah became aware of the condition in Jerusalem, he wept. But he did not only weep. The work that needed doing (encouraging God's people; opposing God's enemies; building God's habitation on earth) would require deep-cutting sacrifice on the cup-bearer's part. And if we will see New Testament assemblies flourish in our day, it will not be by accident. You cannot have a New Testament assembly as a hobby. If you look carefully, you will see in the foundation of every

healthy assembly today, the blood of elders who gave their lives for God and His work. It will cost the same for us.

Here are some suggestions regarding our part in the work:

1. GET INTO THE BOOK REGULARLY: Go through the Bible methodically. Accuracy is the prime rule when studying doctrine. Keep careful notes so you consolidate your gains. Don't be discouraged at a slow start. It is the same with anything until the basic principles are mastered.

2. DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURES WITH OTHERS: It has been said that if you merely hold on to what you have learned, you will lose it. But if you give it away to others, you will get to keep it. Such sharing of the Word accomplishes at least four things. Already mentioned is remembering. Then, it solidifies your own thinking and forces you to be articulate. Third, it is a safeguard from error. Your "*multitude of counselors*" will keep you from false conclusions (if you encourage their response). It also passes the blessing on. God's riches are meant to be shared.

3. BUILD A LIBRARY & BUY GOOD BOOKS FOR OTHERS: Be selective in the books you read. Ask Bible students whom you appreciate for their suggestions (See *Books to Help You Grow*). Look in used book stores. Building a library takes a lifetime, but a good, basic library is within reach of most fairly readily.

4. MEMORIZE & MEDITATE THE BIBLE INTO YOUR LIFE: Redeem the bits of time during the day—waiting for a traffic light, or a phone call. Use commuting time or a coffee break. But don't just memorize; meditate. Run the verse back and forth through your mind, squeezing the good out of it. Meditation is becoming a lost art.

5. LOOK FOR PRACTICAL WAYS TO LIVE OUT WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED: Nothing is more odious than know-it-alls who don't live the truth. Ask the Lord daily for opportunities to practice what you have discovered in His Word. Convictions are doctrines plugged into life. The two key phrases in the Pastoral Epistles are "*sound doctrine*" and "*good works*."

6. IF YOU HAVE SOME WRITING OR SPEAKING ABILITY, USE IT: You don't have to begin by being published in a major magazine. Write to missionaries, shut-ins, letters of encouragement to your elders, parents, or to college students away from home. Write out your testimony for witnessing purposes. Try a little poetry to praise the Lord. Keep writing; be ruthless with yourself; read good writers and watch how they use technique—and sometimes purposely break the rules. Speak to children, at retirement homes, etc. Use what talents you have for your Saviour.

7. AS MUCH AS IN YOU IS—BE AN ENCOURAGER: The "ministry" of discouragement can be very effective—like the spies that discouraged two million with one sentence. Careful! We all have *influenza*. Instead speak positive. Talk Christ. Live on the sunny side. Keep looking for the Day. Tell the saints you love them—and mean it. Keep short accounts. Don't hold grudges. Live with no regrets. And people will thank God you ever came their way.

As Amy Carmichael wrote: "We have forever to celebrate our victories, but only a few short years to win them."

Appendix 1

THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH AGE

1. The COMPLETE CANON: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be...throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:15-17). We have: OT prophecies, NT fulfillments • OT shadows, NT substance • OT examples, NT applications

2. The FULL REVELATION of GOD in CHRIST: *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory”* (1 Tim. 3:15-16). We preach CHRIST and Him crucified. Utilizing the full-length portraits of Christ: *“But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus”* (Eph. 4:20-21).

- the incarnate Christ: Christ in every circumstance: to walk even as He walked—His example
- the indwelling Christ: Christ for every circumstance—His enablement
- the preeminent Christ: Christ over every circumstance—His intercession as Great High Priest

3. The MYSTERY of the CHURCH: *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”* (Eph. 1:18).

- The BRIDE and the devotedness of the Church
- the TEMPLE and the holiness of the Church
- the BODY and the giftedness of the Church
- the FAMILY and the loyalty of the Church

4. The INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT:

- SECURITY: *“Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”* (Eph. 1:13).
- ACCESS: *“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father”* (Eph. 2:18).
- PURPOSE: *“Ye...are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph. 2:22).
- POWER FOR LIVING: *“...strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man”* (Eph. 3:16).
- UNITY: *“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:3, see also v. 4).
- SENSITIVITY TO SIN: *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God...”* (Eph. 4:30).
- FRUITFULNESS: *“For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth”* (Eph. 5:9).
- CONTROL: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph. 5:18).
- OFFENSIVE WEAPONRY: *“And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”* (Eph. 6:17).
- PRAYER SUPPORT: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”* (Eph. 6:18).

5. A REAL MAN on the THRONE of GOD: *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15).

6. UNLIMITED ACCESS into the SANCTUARY: *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb. 4:16).

7. The HOPE of the IMMINENT RETURN of CHRIST and HEAVEN as our HOME: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure”* (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

Appendix 2

THE SPIRIT'S MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22)

- A. His Role in the *unity* of the Church: the Holy Spirit COMING DOWN upon the Church (Acts 2)
1. The historic once-for-all baptism (1 Cor. 12:13)—organic, common life
 2. The bond of peace (Eph. 4:3)—seven-fold unity, a practical, common Source
 3. Comfort, fellowship, spontaneous compassion (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:14)—common need
 4. The Spirit of adoption (Gal. 4:6-7; Rom. 8:15-17)—common relationship:
 - a) joint witness
 - b) joint suffering
 - c) joint glorification
 5. The River & the Oil (Ps. 133:1-3; Jn. 4:14; 7:38-39; Col. 1:8)—common blessings
 6. Corporate indwelling (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:10-16; Rom. 15:29-31)—common task
- B. His Role in the *direction* of the Church: the Holy Spirit MOVING THROUGH the Church
1. His provision of the Guidebook, the Bible (Eph. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:21)—one plan
 2. His provision of elders (Acts 20:28)—one form of church government
 3. Guidance of the oversight (Acts 13:2, 4)—the Word, prayer, gift of discernment, experience
 4. Identifying true believers (2 Cor. 3:3); discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Jn. 4:1-6)
 5. Superintending the meetings of the church (Acts 15:28; 1 Cor. 14; 2 Cor. 3:17)—one President
- C. His Role in the *growth* of the Church: the Holy Spirit BUILDING UP the Church
1. Evangelism:
 - a) motivating (Acts 17:16; 18:5, 25; 19:21; Rom. 15:16)
 - b) directing (Acts 8:29-30; 10:19; 16:6-7; 20:22; see also 21:4)
 - c) empowering & filling (Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 6:10; Rom. 15:13, 19; Eph. 3:16; 1 Thess. 1:5)
 - d) preaching, inviting & convicting (1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 22:17; Eph. 6:17)
 - e) imparting life (Jn. 3:6)
 2. Enrichment:
 - a) the earnest of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14)
 - b) wind (moving); fire (testing); oil (empowering) water (refreshing/cleansing) (2 Cor. 6:6)
 - c) instruction in the Word (1 Cor. 2:4, 9-13; Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, etc.)
 3. Equipping for service:
 - a) the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)
 - i) starting gifts: apostles, prophets
 - ii) sign gifts: tongues, miracles
 - iii) speaking gifts
 - iv) serving gifts
 - b) maturation (Gal. 3:3, 14)
 - c) transformation (2 Cor. 3:18)
 4. Encouragement:
 - a) to pray (Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 2:18; 6:18; Jude 1:20)
 - b) in times of difficulty (Jn. 14:16-18; Acts 9:31; Rom. 5:5; 1 Thess. 1:6; see also Acts 11:28)
 - c) for obedience & holy living (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Cor. 6:11, 19-20; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:30; Titus 3:5)
 - d) to praise and worship (Eph. 5:18)
 - e) to anticipate the Lord's return (Eph. 1:13; Gal. 5:5)

Appendix 3

AN OUTLINE OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

Introduction: Although there are hundreds of distinctive truths in the Word, we may place them in six major groupings: Theology, Angelology, Bibliology, Anthropology, Soteriology, and Eschatology. The following list is intended to help elders in seeing how balanced the ministry is in their assembly. While it is true that not all doctrines are given equal proportion in the Word, if we want to be able to say with Paul, “*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27), we should be able to track which areas have and have not been taught. Hopefully all of these truths should be addressed over each five-year period (the approximate time between our young people becoming serious about the Word in their young teens and when they often leave for schooling or employment).

1. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

i. THEOLOGY:

The Trinity and Unity of God	The Names and Attributes of God
The Decrees and Works of God	Creation by God <i>Ex Nihilo</i>
Divine Preservation	Providence in the Affairs of Men
God’s Self-Revelation	The Father, His Names, Works, Character

ii. CHRISTOLOGY:

The Son, in pre-incarnate Appearances	Types, Prophecies, Messianic Passages
His Advent, Two Natures, Ministry	His Words & Miracles
His Death, Resurrection, Exaltation and Present Ministry	Names, Titles and Offices

iii. PNEUMATOLOGY:

The Spirit, His Personality & Attributes	His Titles, Symbols
His Work in the Believer’s Life	His Ministries and Gifts

2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT WORLD (ANGELOLOGY & DEMONOLOGY):

Their Origin and the Fall of one-third	Their Nature and Classification
Their Work and Destiny	Satan, Demons, and the Root of Sin

3. THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION

i. THE WORD OF GOD (BIBLIOLOGY):

Revelation—its Supernatural Origin	Inspiration—Verbal, Plenary
Canonicity & Authority	Illumination & Interpretation

ii. PRAYER:

Its Aspects, Helps, Purposes, and Examples
Worship, Praise, Intercession, Thanksgiving Supplication, Advocacy, etc.

4. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HUMAN RACE (ANTHROPOLOGY):

Man’s Origin and Constitution (spirit, soul, body)	The Fall and its Consequences
The Covenants & Dispensations	Responsibilities and Relationships
Man’s Enemies: World, Flesh, Devil	Christian Ethics

i. ISRAEL & HER REMNANT:

Call, Covenants & Blessings	Setting Aside & Future Restoration
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ii. THE KINGDOM:

Prophetically Described & Illustrated
In its Spiritual Mystery Form Today

Offered to Israel & Rejected
In Manifestation When the King Returns

iii. THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY):

Her Foundation and 7-fold Unity
The Church's Order and Ordinances
Ten Pictures of the Church

The Church Universal and Local
The Church's Ministries and Mission
The Church's Destiny

5. THE DOCTRINES OF THE BELIEVER'S BLESSEDNESS (SOTERIOLOGY):

Election and Predestination
Repentance and Regeneration
Redemption and Justification
Union with Christ and Adoption
Sanctification and Righteousness

Grace and Faith
Substitution and Imputation
Reconciliation and Peace
Assurance, Salvation & the Blessed Results
The Roles of the Trinity in Salvation

6. THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY):

The 2-part Coming of Christ
The Restoration of Israel
The Millennial Kingdom

The Rapture of the Church
The Resurrections and the Judgments
The Final State

Appendix 4

SOME COMMON AND RECURRING DOCTRINAL ISSUES

"...That [elders] may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9)

Doctrinal controversy is not new. The Church was only in its infancy when error began to make inroads. Some heresies move in and out of vogue—the *"winds of doctrine"* Paul warned about. Other heterodox notions seem always to be nearby, although not always in the same disguise. Every heresy has already been answered by worthies of the past. Here are some issues that are presently affecting the Church at large and New Testament assemblies to some extent. Please note: the list that follows refers to ISSUES; not all in the list are false doctrines!

1. REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF GOD:

Theistic Evolution	The So-called "Motherhood" of God
Eternal Sonship	Kenosis Theories & the Impeccability Issue
Rejection of Typology as fair hermeneutic	The "Openness" of God

2. REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

Charismatic Sign Gifts: Tongues, Healing	"Deliverance" Ministry of exorcism
Power Evangelism Worldview/Third Wave	Second Blessing

3. REGARDING DIVINE COMMUNICATION

Which Versions; Manuscript base	Cultural Relativity/Latitudinarianism
Neo-Orthodoxy	Extra-Biblical Revelation/Prophetic Gift
Inerrancy Debate	Post-Modernism

4. REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Eradication of the Flesh	False Holiness Ideas/Perfectionism
Dualistic Views	Situation Ethics
Pop Psychology/Selfism	Positive Confession/Prosperity Gospel

5. REGARDING THE DOCTRINES OF SALVATION

Lordship Salvation	Neo-Galatianism & Messianic Judaism
Neo-Evangelicalism	Calvinism/Arminianism
Covenant Theology/Dispensationalism	

6. REGARDING THE CHURCH

Ultradispensationalism	Feminism & Women's Role
Centralism/Ecumenism	Professionalism/Clergy-Laity Distinction
Church Practices are Modeled but not Prescriptive	Biblical Authority
Reception/Circles of Fellowship	Independency/Autonomy
Pietism/Political Involvement	Sectarian Views on Baptism
Liturgy/High Church Sacraments	Authoritarianism/modern-day Apostleship

7. REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE THINGS

Amillennialism	Pre-Trib./Pre-Wrath Rapture
Partial Rapturism	Universalism & the Wider Hope
Kingdom-Dominion Theology/Reconstructionism	Date-setting/Prophetic Sensationalism

Appendix 5

BIBLICAL PORTRAITS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1. AMBASSADORS: *presbeuo*, a bearer of a message, a representative of another. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). See also Eph. 6:20. The Gk. word suggests the maturity necessary to well represent God in this all-important mission.
2. BABES: i) *brephos*, a newborn. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). The word “as” clarifies the point that we are not all newborns, but in this way should resemble them—an insistent longing for milk, in this case the Word. It is used of the child Timothy being taught the Bible by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 3:15). ii) *nepios*, always used in the NT in a negative way, immaturity (eg., 1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13). But the corresponding verb *nepiazō* turns the negative to advantage (1 Cor. 14:20)—be undeveloped in malice.
3. BELIEVERS: “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). Here the word “believers” means to be persuaded, to place confidence in, to trust. “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (2 Cor. 6:15). This is a favorite word of John (Mt., 10 times; Mk., 10 times; Lk., 9 times; Jn., 99 times!)
4. BRETHREN: *adelphos*, a “community based on identity of origin or life” (Vine). But it is also based on a common bond which may unduly isolate us from others: “If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?” (Mt. 5:47; see also Lk.14:12). Note Mt. 25:40; 28:10; Lk. 8:21; Jn. 20:17; Acts 11:29; 15:36; 16:40; 18:27.
5. CHILDREN: i) *teknon* emphasizes birth; *tikto* means to beget, to bear. The word is linked to the means of birth (2 Tim. 2:1; Philem. 1:10), the source of birth (Jn. 1:12), the realm into which we have been brought by birth (Eph. 5:8), and the new privilege that attends our birth (Rom. 9:8; Gal. 4:28): ii) *teknion*, “little children” is the diminutive of i. It is used only in the figurative sense and always in the plural (1 Jn. 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; once in Paul’s epistles, Gal. 4:19). “A term of affection by a teacher to his disciples under circumstances requiring a tender appeal” (Vine).
6. CHRISTIANS: *christianos* was first used at Antioch and was probably used in a pejorative way. Tacitus, writing near the end of the 1st Century, wrote: “The vulgar call them Christians. The author or origin of this denomination, Christus, had, in the reign of Tiberius, been executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate” (Annals xv. 44).
7. CITIZENS: i) *polites* and ii) fellow-citizens, *sumpolites*. Apart from Heb. 8:11, i is used only in the writings of Luke. Paul uses fellow-citizens (Eph. 2:19; Phil. 1:27; 3:20; etc.). The rights and dignity linked with our heavenly citizenship.
8. DEBTORS: *opheiletes*, used metaphorically of i) a person under obligation to another, eg., Paul to preach the gospel (Rom. 1:14); to mortify the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:12); and the Gentile’s need to help Jewish believers (Rom. 15:27).
9. DISCIPLES: *mathetes*, a learner, from *manthano*, “to learn,” “indicating thought accompanied by endeavor” (Vine). For a full list of requirements laid down in Scripture, see Wm. MacDonald’s *True Discipleship*. Includes: abiding in His Word (Jn. 8:31; 13:35; 15:8); confessing Him before men (Acts 6:12, 7; 14:20, 22, 28); and imitating the Teacher (Jn. 8:31).
10. EXAMPLES: *tupos*, a pattern (1 Cor. 10:6; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; see also Jn. 13:15; Jas. 5:10). Note the first time the Gk. word occurs in the NT. Older believers are to be examples to the believers: “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil. 3:17). Younger believers—as the “front line” in the conflict—should be examples of believers to the watching world: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).
11. GOD’S HUSBANDRY: *georgion* (see 1 Cor. 3:9) meaning “tilled land” (RV). It suggests possession by God, His

investment and labor in our lives, and the potential He sees in us—diligent toil with a view to a fruitful return. Note two difficult passages: Heb. 6:7 *georgeomai*, “to till the ground,” and John 15 where the Father is the *georgos*. The words all come from *ge*, land and *ergo*, to do.

12. IMITATORS: *mimeomai*, a mimic (mime). It is always translated in the RV as “imitate” for the KJV “to follow.” It is always used in a good sense—of those who led us to Christ (2 Thess. 3:7, 9), of what is good (3 Jn. 11). The word is always used in exhortations and is always in the continuous tense (one exception, Heb. 6:12, but it calls for “a decisive act with permanent results.” Habit, practice. A cognate word, *sumमितetes* is translated “fellow imitator” (Phil. 3:17). A related picture but in the negative sense is “gazingstock” (Heb. 10:33), *theatrizo*, “a spectacle, a theatrical show.”

13. KINGS: *basileus*: “...Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father...” (Rev. 1:5-6); “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10). Some argue these references should be translated “a kingdom of priests” but who can deny the conclusion of v. 10, “and we shall reign on the earth”? At present we are “training for reigning.”

14. LABORERS: i) *ergates*, see 1 Tim. 5:18 and 2 Tim. 2:15. ii) fellow workers, *sunergos* (Phil. 4:3; 1 Cor. 3:9; and 3 Jn. 8 where it may be rendered “fellow workers with the truth.” ii) is also translated fellow helper (Rom. 16:3, 9; 2 Cor. 1:24; 8:23). The Lord’s work, strange as it may seem, is work! But we are not only helping one another, “the Lord is my helper” (Heb. 13:6; see also Mk. 16:20).

15. LIGHTS: *phos*, akin to *phao*, “to give light.” We are “sons of light” (see subject of illumination in 1 Cor. 2:1-16), having been made “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). See Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 11:14-15.

16. MEMBERS: *melos*, seen in the first part of 1 Cor. 6:15 where we are members of Christ. Seen in Rom. 12:5 where we are members one of another. Includes thoughts of unity, harmony, diversity and interdependence. (See also 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:25.) 1 Corinthians 6:15 in the second part shows the damage done to the whole by our link with that one.

17. MINISTERS (SERVANTS): there are four main words: *diakonos* emphasizes the servant in relation to his stewardship (Mk. 10:43; Rom. 14:3; 15:8; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15; Gal. 2:17; Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6); *doulos*, where the servant is seen in relation to his Master; *huperetes*, under-rower, where the servant is seen in relation to a superior; and *leitourgos*, which originally meant “one who discharges public office at his own expense” (Vine), see Rom. 15:16; Phil. 2:25.

18. PARTAKERS: i) (*sun*) *keinonos*, “having in common, companion, partner” See 1 Cor. 10:18; 2 Cor. 1:7; Heb. 10:33; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:4). We are partakers with the gospel, in grace, in tribulation, etc. ii) *summetochos*, also describes a fellow partaker (see Eph. 3:6; 5:7). The difference between the two words: *sunkoinonos* emphasizes having something in common, while *summetochos* speaks more of the act of sharing itself.

19. PILLAR, *stulos*, and BULWARK, *hedraion*: The word “pillar” meaning “a column supporting the weight of a building” is used metaphorically in the NT of elders who bear responsibility in the assembly (Gal. 2:9); of the local church as responsible to hold up the truth (1 Tim. 3:15); and as the promise extended by the Lord Jesus to the overcomer (Rev. 3:12). “Ground” or bulwark is from the word for “steadfast” or “firm.” There should be no shifting when it comes to the truth committed to the assembly.

20. PRIESTS: *hiereus*, “one who offers sacrifices,” is a term which refers to all true believers in the present Church age. The Bible knows nothing of the clergy-laity distinction so prevalent in Christendom today. We are both a “holy priesthood” built up to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5) and a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9) called upon to go forth and

show forth the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Thus both worship and witness, both vertical and horizontal, both to God and for God, both in the sanctuary and in the world. Some of the offerings: Rom. 12:1; Phil. 2:17; 4:18; Heb. 13:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:5. We are “*a kingdom of priests*” (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; see Ex. 19:6).

21. SAINTS: *hagios*, not a term applying to a particular group of believers but for every child of God. See especially 2 Thess. 1:9-10, “...*the Lord...shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...in that day.*” Also 1 Cor. 1:2. The word *hagios* shares a common root with *hagiasmos*, holiness, It first speaks of being different, then of separatedness—both from sin and to God. Essentially to be holy is to be wholly for God (Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 16:2).

22. SHEEP: *probaton*, interestingly from *probaino*, meaning “to go forward.” It was used primarily of the lost ones of the house of Israel, untended by their pastors (Jer. 23:2). So the Good Shepherd came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10). However He disclosed a secret about “*other sheep*” in John 10. Those also He must bring, producing one flock (not “fold”) and one Shepherd. See Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:25 with Jn. 21:17.

23. SOLDIERS: *stratiotes* is used metaphorically of one who fights and suffers in the battle for righteousness (2 Tim. 2:3). Of course “*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph. 6:12). The Lord Jesus said to Pilate: “*My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight...*” (Jn. 18:36). Thus “*the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds*” (2 Cor. 10:4). See Phil. 2:25.

24. SONS: *huios*, the distinction between sons and children (*teknon/teknion*) is brought out in Rom. 8:14-21. Child is a generative change—born into the family; son is a legal change—placed in a position of responsibility. We become children and sons at the moment of conversion, but son-placing, or “adoption” awaits the final stage of redemption, the redemption of our bodies. We are called sons of the light (Jn. 12:36) and of the day (1 Thess. 5:5). See 2 Cor. 6:17-18.

25. STEWARDS: *oikonomos*, from *oikos*, “a house” and *nemo*, “to arrange.” Thus someone entrusted with the responsibility of caring for another person’s estate, to whom he shall give an account. “*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful...judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God*” (1 Cor. 4:2-5).

26. STRANGERS, *xenos*, and PILGRIMS, *parepidemos*: Strangers do not belong where they are; pilgrims belong where they are heading. “...*I beseech you as strangers (paroikos, aliens) and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (1 Pet. 2:11). See Eph. 2:12, 19; Heb. 11:13; 3 Jn. 5.

27. TEMPLE and LIVING STONES: *naos*, shrine or sanctuary, is used not only of the physical temple, but of i) the universal Church (Eph. 2:21), the local church (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16), and of the present bodies of each individual believer (1 Cor. 6:19). It is Peter (renamed “a stone”) who writes: “*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 2:5).

28. VINTAGE; BRANCHES on the True Vine: *ampelos*. This picture is painted in detail only once (John 15) by the Lord Jesus. There are many OT connections: Isa. 5; Jer. 12:10. The emphasis is on abiding as the secret of abounding. Note: “*no fruit,*” “*fruit,*” “*more fruit,*” “*much fruit,*” and “*fruit that abides (remains).*”

29. VIRGIN, *parthenos*, is used figuratively of the local church in its relationship to Christ: “*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Cor. 11:2). Also associated with the Bride of Christ. Notice the festal scene in Rev. 21:9, “*And there came unto me one of the seven angels...saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.*”

30. WORSHIPPERS, *proskunetes*, akin to *proskuneo*, to kiss towards, to worship. Worshippers are the desire of the Father’s heart, “*for the Father seeketh such to worship Him*” (Jn. 4:23). Here is the highest calling of the believer, to come into the “*holiest by the blood of Jesus.*” Obviously linked with priesthood.

Appendix 6

PAUL'S FINAL CHARGE

Read Acts 20:17-38

1. The two ALLS: *"...I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind"* (vv. 18-19). The two-fold necessity of keeping on and keeping down; don't ever give up, and don't ever get up—keep humble.
2. The two Ts: *"...with many tears, and temptations"* (v. 19). The difficult balance of being soft and being tough. We must be gracious with our brethren and ruthless with our enemy.
3. The two METHODS: *"I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you..."* (20:20). It's always Show and Tell time. Like the Lord Jesus: *"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach"* (Acts 1:1). That's the order for effective ministry
4. The two SPHERES: *"publicly, and from house to house"* (20:20). This is the 20/20 vision we need; to use both comprehensive methods for fulfilling the Commission. We will not be able to accomplish it without using both methods.
5. The two AUDIENCES: *"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks..."* (Acts 20:21). Having a heart as big as the call, and deliverance from any innate biases.
6. The two ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS: *"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Acts 20:21). Some use the 1 Corinthians 15 passage to give the essentials of the gospel. Those are the historical essentials, but the theological essentials are here.
7. The two FINISHED PRODUCTS: *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"* (20:24). Both the work and the worker need to be finished well.
8. The two SPHERES of RESPONSIBILITY: *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"* {20:2). If the shepherd goes wrong, unfortunately the sheep will likely follow.
9. The two TASKS at HAND: *"Take heed...to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood"* (20:28). The verse reminds us how expensive the church is, and therefore how careful we need to be (heed) and how diligent to find the best grass for our charges (feed).
10. The two DANGERS: *"After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (20:29-30). Wolves love sheep too, but for a different reason. The shepherd feeds the sheep; the wolf feeds on the sheep. And while the wolf devours the flock, these men who speak "truth with a twist" divert the flock to follow them rather than HIM.
11. The two WARNINGS: *"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears"* (20:31). Look around and look back; see what you need to do, and see what I did, says Paul.
12. The two PROVISIONS and their BENEFITS: *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"* (20:32).
13. The two PERSONAL NOTES: *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me"* (20:33-34). O for such examples today!
14. The two OUGHTS: *"I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).

Appendix 7

HOW HARD SHOULD HARD-WORKING ELDERS WORK?

There is always time enough to do the will of God

1. Obviously the qualifications of an elder must include the TIME to do the work. Young men in selecting a career should keep this in mind. We should even think about how far our home is from the assembly building.

2. The time necessary to do this work must include time for family and legitimate business interests since the qualifications require that an elder be *“one that ruleth well his own house”* and *“he must have a good report of them which are without”* (1 Tim. 3:4, 7). God does not give us two families so we can abandon one or the other!

3. It is no part-time avocation to be a shepherd of God’s people, if Paul is to be taken as an example. He writes: *“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears”* (Acts 20:31); *“For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God”* (1 Thess. 2:9); *“I thank God...that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day”* (2 Tim. 1:3).

4. God has designed the church so it requires maximum sacrifice for EVERYONE since token commitment means token blessing, and total commitment means total blessing. Remember the other John 3:16! *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”* (1 Jn. 3:16).

5. The Lord is not a hard Master; His burden is *“light”*; His commandments are not grievous. He is not unreasonable in His demands but expects elders to be ready to *“very gladly spend and be spent”* (2 Cor. 12:15) for God’s people.

6. When the burden seems to overload our capacity, we need to check the following list:

- a) Am I doing only what the Lord wants or have I encumbered myself with tasks that are others’? Perhaps I need to encourage others in some areas. *“For every man shall bear HIS OWN burden”* (Gal. 6:5).
- b) Do I need *“spring cleaning”* in some areas of life? Could I simplify my life and diminish other obligations that weigh me down? Planned neglect. *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”* (1 Thess. 5:21).
- c) Can I do some *“multi-tasking”*? How did the Lord fulfill His whole public ministry in 3.5 years? At the same time He was fulfilling Scripture, preaching the Word, training His disciples, doing the Father’s will, etc.
- d) Are there ways to work *“smarter”*? For example, having a place ready to study, receiving several people one after the other, discipling en route to appointments, giving people a memo of purpose beforehand, etc.

7. What about deacons? Obviously one of the reasons for them was to give those who labored in the Word more time to do that. (See Acts 6.) Of course any Christian can do practical tasks for an elder to free him up for ministry.

8. Perhaps the assembly is too dependent on the elders and the saints need to get working; elders, after all, are to be examples—not do all the work themselves. Perhaps the assembly is too large and is now attracting lazy Christians. Perhaps the brethren need to be exercised about more elders to help with the load. Perhaps the assembly has too many activities and each one needs to be reassessed. What about putting several activities on one evening?

9. Sometimes the elders are spending far too much time with sick saints because they have not been practicing preventive medicine. If the saints are well fed, have enough exercise, and are being protected as much as possible from hurtful influences, it will greatly diminish the emergency ward visits.

Appendix 8

PERSONAL ISSUES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Mt. 5:9).

Some basic facts

1. Conflict is unavoidable when people seek to work together. The more “moving parts,” the more friction. This is due to the following: a) it is rare that someone has all the facts; b) we have differing personalities and ways of responding even to the same set of facts; c) many are averse to change (even good change) because it may involve work and/or risk; d) there are enemies at work—the flesh with prideful thoughts and the devil, sowing discord.

2. Personal conflicts are the # 1 group of problems among believers, the # 1 reason for missionaries leaving the field. Often problems between believers will: a) carry on unresolved, weakening the testimony and stifling blessing; b) disguise themselves as doctrinal matters; c) be complicated by other issues, making them more complex to solve.

3. It is the will of the God of reconciliation to have all such matters amicably resolved. He states, *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Mt. 18:20). If two or three want to resolve a matter between them, the Lord is eager to see it happen. Our God is slow to anger but ready to pardon (Neh. 9:17).

4. The basis of all reconciliation is the cross. There is no peace to be found apart from the Prince of peace. We who meet every week around the symbols of a broken body and outpoured blood have a vivid reminder of the way God set about to end hostilities when we were *“at enmity”* with Him. Love never fails. We need to try His tactics

Preventative medicine: better to keep out of trouble than have to get out

1. Being busy in evangelism, exercising my gift, and otherwise being occupied in positive work will keep me from noting, harboring grudges. Bringing every thought into captivity to Christ will take slights immediately to Calvary.

2. Finding ways to keep communication lines open between the Christians, especially by encouraging fellowship and hospitality in the homes of God’s people. The more I have a “vested interest” the less likely I will be to fuss.

3. Remembering that I am a sinner in need of daily grace and mercy, I will remember to be gracious with others.

Steps to peace

1. The pattern set in Matthew 18:15-22 is to deal with personal matters personally. Only when the issue is not resolved (*“if he will not hear thee”*) does it call for bringing witnesses (v. 16). If he will not hear witnesses, it may have to go before the whole church. But far better to do everything in your power to *“win your brother.”*

2. Obviously prayer is essential in linking ourselves with the Lord; to neglect it would be folly. Hopefully it will help defuse anger, bitterness, selfish motives, etc. The parties involved should be informed at the beginning that any evidence of such ill will (e.g., resorting to sarcasm or ridicule) calls for an immediate return to prayer.

3. Try to have the offending/offended parties state the issue as they see it, but seek to state it as if they were telling the Lord Jesus (I think the point of Mt. 18:20). If anything is to be fixed, we must deal with one another in good faith.

4. Note that forgiveness has two parts: immediately in the heart, and then *“if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him”* (Lk. 17:3-4). This is grace!

Appendix 9

THE ELDER'S REJOICING

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

Yes, there's joy in serving Jesus!

1. JOY in OUR PERSONAL SALVATION: *"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20)*

2. JOY in HEARING of the GOSPEL ADVANCE: *"Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:18; see also Mk. 13:44; Lk. 15:6; Jn. 4:36; Acts 15:3).*

3. JOY in GROUND-BREAKING VISIONARY WORK FOR THE LORD: *"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:4).*

4. JOY in OUR PRAYER LIVES: *"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy..." (Phil. 1:4).*

5. JOY in SEEING the SAINTS UNITED: *"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2).*

6. JOY in SACRIFICING for CHRIST: *"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17; see also 2 Cor. 6:10).*

7. JOY in seeing THE SAINTS BENEFIT from another believer: *"For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother" (Phm. 1:7).*

8. JOY when THE LORD IS WORKING ON US: *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (Jas. 1:2; see also 2 Cor. 7:9; Heb. 12:11).*

9. JOY in THINKING ABOUT THE LORD JESUS: *"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8; see also Phil. 3:1).*

10. JOY in SUFFERING for the LORD: *"Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13; see also Mt. 5:11-12; Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:2-3; Col. 1:24).*

11. JOY in HEARING of the SPIRITUAL SUCCESS of our CHILDREN (physical or spiritual): *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 Jn. 1:4; see also Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Phil. 4:1).*

12. JOY in FINISHING the RACE WELL: *"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" (Phil. 2:16; see also Acts 20:24).*

NOTES