



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 6 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

LESSON 121 – MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH – PART 12

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Summary of the Purposes of a Healthy Church

- ▶ 1 Corinthians 10:31 – Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
- ▶ The purpose(s) of the church can be understood as the immediate, intermediate, and ultimate purposes that follow:
 - ▶ 1. The immediate purpose of the church is to evangelize the lost.
 - ▶ 2. The intermediate purpose of the church is to teach and rouse one another to love and obey God.
 - ▶ 3. The ultimate purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Summary of the Purposes of a Healthy Church

- ▶ The immediate purpose of the church is to evangelize the lost.
- ▶ Evangelism is not inviting someone to Mainstream Fellowship Church in order to get them into an environment where the talented pastor may elicit from them an emotional response for Christ. Telling people the truth about themselves (Rom. 3:20,23; 5:12), the truth about God (Isa. 53:4; 1Tim. 1:15; Heb. 2:2-3; 12:29; 1Pet. 3:18), and the reason for the hope that is evident within you with gentleness and reverence (1Pet. 3:15, Heb. 6:17-20; Titus 2:13-14) is evangelism. Living your life in a manner that evidences the power of God in obedience to Christ is evangelism (Mat. 5:14-16; 1Cor. 2:3-5; 1Pet. 3:1-2,16). Communicating God's message of mercy to sinners by virtue of the atonement of Christ is evangelism (1Cor. 2:1-2). Secondly, the verse that often gets left out of the great commission is verse 20; after baptizing them, we are to be "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:20).

Summary of the Purposes of a Healthy Church

- ▶ The intermediate purpose of the church is to teach and rouse one another to love and obey God.
- ▶ This involves teaching, learning, sharing, and fellowship. The early church was “continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship” (Acts 2:42). Hebrews exhorts us to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:23-25). We are to meet not only the spiritual needs but also the physical needs of the church (1 John 3:17; 2Cor. 8:3-4, 13-15; 9:12; 1Cor. 16:1-3; Acts 11:29-30; Rom. 15:25-26). We are to use our spiritual gifts to equip one another and build up the church (Eph. 4:12), and we are to admonish and teach every man with all wisdom “that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28). We are to nurture one another to maturity. One day, there will be no more lost people to evangelize and no more immature Christians to teach, admonish, disciple, and nurture. We will all be glorified; “we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

Summary of the Purposes of a Healthy Church

- ▶ The ultimate purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- ▶ This purpose of the church began at creation and will never end. We are to live “to the praise of His glory” (Eph.1:12). We are always to be rendering a proper opinion of God. Our worship is to be reverential, sincere, and pure. Jesus taught that “the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). We assemble together to worship Him, praise Him, sing to Him, and pray to Him. The church is commanded to “let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16). Similarly, the church is commanded to “be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18-19). We are to meet with God in corporate prayer. The early church was continually devoting themselves “to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Summary of the Purposes of a Healthy Church

- ▶ “The immediate, intermediate, and ultimate purposes of the church are all commanded by the Lord in Scripture; no church should stress one to the neglect of another.”
- ▶ Finally, allow me to finish by saying that in order to carry out its purpose, a church must have the Seven Marks of a Healthy Church as laid forth in these lessons. Without these Seven Marks, a group may call itself a church, but it is not recognized as a sound and healthy church by the Word of God or by God Himself.
- ▶ Likewise, if we find these marks missing or neglected in the church we attend, we should sound forth the call for reformation and repentance. If that call is not followed by a spirit of revival and renewal, where these Marks are once again present and active in the church, then we should obey the command to flee such an unholy place. Come out from among them and find a church where Jesus is obeyed as Lord.

Summary of the Purposes of a Healthy Church

- ▶ No matter the size, location, demographics, budget, building, or activities, the only requirements given for a Biblical church are that:
- ▶ 1. God is worshipped in spirit and truth
- ▶ 2. Prayer is central
- ▶ 3. Love for Christ and the brethren is demonstrated
- ▶ 4. The Word of God is faithfully preached, taught, and heard
- ▶ 5. The ordinances of Baptism and Communion are administered
- ▶ 6. Discipline of the membership is Biblically administered and
- ▶ 7. Church government and leadership as instituted by the Apostles is established.

When Should You Leave a Church?

- ▶ John MacArthur says -
- ▶ Leaving a church is not something that should be done lightly. Too many people abandon churches for petty reasons. Disagreements over simple matters of preference are never a good reason to withdraw from a sound, Bible-believing church. Christians are commanded to respect, honor, and obey those whom God has placed in positions of leadership in the church (Heb. 13:7, 17). However, there are times when it becomes necessary to leave a church for the sake of one's own conscience, or out of a duty to obey God rather than men. Such circumstances would include:

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- ▶ If heresy on some fundamental truth is being taught from the pulpit (Gal. 1:7-9).
- ▶ If the leaders of the church tolerate seriously errant doctrine from any who are given teaching authority in the fellowship (Rom. 16:17).
- ▶ If the church is characterized by a wanton disregard for Scripture, such as a refusal to discipline members who are sinning blatantly (1 Cor. 5:1-7).
- ▶ If unholy living is tolerated in the church (1 Cor. 5:9-11).
- ▶ If the church is seriously out of step with the biblical pattern for the church (2 Thess. 3:6, 14).
- ▶ If the church is marked by gross hypocrisy, giving lip service to biblical Christianity but refusing to acknowledge its true power (2 Tim. 3:5).

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- ▶ This is not to suggest that these are the only circumstances under which people are permitted to leave a church. There is certainly nothing wrong with moving one's membership just because another church offers better teaching or more opportunities for growth and service. But those who transfer their membership for such reasons ought to take extreme care not to sow discord or division in the church they are leaving. And such moves ought to be made sparingly. Membership in a church is a commitment that ought to be taken seriously.
- ▶ See here for more on what to look for in a church:
<https://www.gty.org/library/Questions/QA121>