



BALTIMORE
BIBLE CHURCH

A BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY:
WHAT ARE THE BIBLICAL PRIORITIES THAT DETERMINE
HOW A CHURCH IS TO FUNCTION?

George L. Lawson Jr., Pastor-Teacher, Baltimore Bible Church
March 2013

CONTENTS

What Is a Biblical Philosophy of Ministry?.....	3
Why Should Baltimore Bible Church Have A Biblical Philosophy of Ministry?	3
It Promotes a Biblical Ministry	3
It Promotes an Efficient Ministry	3
It Promotes an Evaluated Ministry	3
It Promotes a Protected Ministry	4
What does a Biblical Philosophy of Ministry Look Like?	4
Exalting God.....	4
Worshipping God Reverently.....	4
Observing the Ordinances Faithfully	5
Participating in Stewardship Generously	7
Praying Fervently & Expectantly	7
Edifying Believers	8
Proclaiming Truth Passionately.....	8
Providing Godly Leadership Carefully	10
Serving Others Compassionately	11
Expecting Genuine Participation Unashamedly	12
Participating in Fellowship Regularly	12
Practicing Discipline Lovingly.....	12
Evangelizing Unbelievers	13
Encouraging Evangelism Locally	13
Extending Missions Globally	13

What Is a Biblical Philosophy of Ministry?

Every successful organization has some sort of purpose statement – an overarching definition of who they are and what they do. It is a basic declaration of why they exist and how they plan on accomplishing their task. A clearly defined purpose statement ensures that an organization is focused on its goal, undistracted by what is not essential, and able to measure their progress. This is what is meant by “philosophy” in this context. We are not referring to “the study of theories of knowledge” but rather what are “the general principles that undergird our conduct and actions.” Simply stated, your philosophy of ministry describes why you do what you do.

Why Should Baltimore Bible Church Have A Biblical Philosophy of Ministry?

It Promotes a Biblical Ministry

The principles that govern our decisions in ministry are to be drawn from our understanding of Scripture. If it is our aim to do God’s work in God’s way, our guidelines should come from God’s word. Our biblical convictions are not to be set aside for practical or pragmatic reasons. Christ is the head of the church (Col. 1:18) and all ministry is to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). The scriptures are sufficient, not only for our doctrine but for practice as well. Paul reminded Timothy “*I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). A philosophy of ministry should be based on a careful investigation of both the explicit teachings and implicit principles drawn from Scripture.

It Promotes an Efficient Ministry

As the old adage goes “if you aim at nothing you will hit it every time.” The same is true for ministry. A church which approaches ministry without a definite aim and direction, that can be clearly defined and communicated, sets itself up for failure in the long run. Valuable time, resources, and energy can be spent in many directions without ever having the sense that anything in particular was ever accomplished. “A hit-and-miss philosophy will have little to show for it after a lifetime of faithful service”¹ and the effect of such a church will be certainly reduced (1 Cor. 9:26).

A clearly defined and communicated philosophy will mobilize a greater proportion of its congregation. It narrows a church’s focus and broadens its impact by ensuring that the leaders as well as their congregation are “pulling in the same direction.” It encourages a consistent approach to ministry and harnesses the church’s energy in a way that maximizes their efforts towards the priorities of the church.

It Promotes an Evaluated Ministry

Sometimes programs that have little or nothing to do with the church’s overall purpose can consume the pastor’s and the church’s resources (Acts 6:1-7). A philosophy of ministry allows decisions to be made with an overall biblical understanding firmly in mind. It helps determine

what a church should participate in and what churches or parachurch ministries they should participate with.

It Promotes a Protected Ministry

Apostasy occurs not only in doctrine but in practice as well (Gal. 2:14). It has been said that “Ministers can apostatize by degrees, hardly noticing the slippage.” A properly used philosophy of ministry will provide a needed check on the direction of a church. “A shallow and flippant understanding of the divine purposes for the church will lead to pragmatic, carnal, and even sinful approaches to accomplishment of these ends. The winds of social change, the currents of liberal theology, and the influence of carnal stowaways will surely take the ship off course unless its captain stays faithful to the divine course.”

What Does a Biblical Philosophy of Ministry Look Like?

A biblical philosophy of ministry must be rooted in the biblical purposes for the church. The Founder of the church and Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ, predicted the church’s establishment (Matt 16:18) and provided its mandate (Matt. 28:18-20). The foundation stones, the apostles and prophets, clearly explain the church’s function in the world and announce its end goal (Col. 1:28; Eph 1:16; 4:11-16). An approach to ministry that accurately reflects what Scripture teaches concerning the church can be summarized by three categories. There is an upward focus towards God, an inward focus on believers, and an outward focus toward unbelievers. Our responsibilities in the world are to exalt God, edify believers, and evangelize the lost.

Exalting God

Worshipping God Reverently

The ultimate purpose of the church is essentially no different than the primary purpose of man. It has been well stated that “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” Mankind has been created for God’s glory (Isa. 43:7) as was the whole of creation (Col 1:16; Rev. 4:11). The church has been established for the glory of God (Eph 1:12-14) and should do all it does for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17).

The term worship should not be limited to worship music or a worship service only but is rather the description of the whole of Christian life. Our entire being including our bodies is to be presented as “a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* our spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1). The English word worship was originally “worthship” meaning to attribute worth to an object. John MacArthur defines worship as “the honor and adoration directed to God.”²

The primary New Testament terms translated as worship are: *proskune,w* which denotes the act of bowing down or prostrating oneself in submissive lowliness and deep reverence; *latreu,w* ; which signifies the rendering of service; and *se,bomai* from a root meaning to “fear” it involves a reverence which stresses the feeling of awe (Psa 96:9).³ As Psalm 2:11 states, “Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling.”

Worship is not an isolated function of the believer but rather a way of life. Our thoughts, attitudes, words and conduct should demonstrate that we ascribe to God supreme worth, of which He alone is worthy. “Every believer is given the mandate and privilege to worship God by proclaiming His infinite worth (Deut 6:13; Matt 4:10). In fact, the apostle Paul lists worship as one of three characteristics of a believer (Phil 3:3), and Jesus declares that true worshippers worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). True worship involves sincere and genuine affection rooted in biblical truth, as the believer’s whole being joins in joyful praise of God.”⁴

One expression of worship to God is through song (Psalm 66:4; 100:2). No form of music is prescribed in Scripture and there were a wide variety of instruments that were acceptable to God (Psalm 150). There are also different types of songs that give expression to a heart that is filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16). However, the focus of worship is to be on the exaltation of the Lord not on the entertainment of the believer. The content of the lyrics should direct the worshipper’s attention to God not to the individual, and the concepts must be clearly biblical (Col 3:16-17). Songs should be carefully evaluated prior to their use in a worship service to ensure their biblical accuracy.

Music must be played with excellence as an offering to God, and distractions should be minimized, which music can sometimes contribute to. We prefer a blended service utilizing both traditional and contemporary music. We respect the depth of the time honored hymns but we also appreciate the contributions of contemporary composers. “Worship must offer outlets for the heart to respond to the beauty of biblical truth. Thus, our services must provide the opportunity to express these affections with biblical passion.”⁵

Observing the Ordinances Faithfully

Another way that God is honored is through the observance of the ordinances or sacraments of the church, which are Baptism and the Lord’s Table. The term “sacrament” is derived from the Latin “sacramentum,” which applied to anything sacred or consecrated. In the Latin Vulgate it was used to translate the Greek word for mystery *mysterion* and came to be used for anything that had a secret of mysterious significance. It was incorrectly applied to 5 additional rites besides baptism and the Lord’s Supper.⁶

Because the term “sacrament” has been perverted by Roman Catholicism and given almost magical properties, the Protestant Church has preferred to use the term ordinance. This term emphasizes the fact that these rites were ordained by the Lord as symbols, with no thought of them conveying saving grace to the participants.⁷ This does not rob the ordinances of their significance but guards them from encroaching on the gospel of grace.

The Lord’s Table

This ordinance has been referred to by several terms. Eucharist comes from the Greek *eucharisteia*, meaning to give thanks, emphasizing the Lord’s giving of thanks as he distributed the elements (Matt. 26:27; 1 Cor. 11:24). Communion calls to mind the Scripture’s reference to the cup and bread as “sharing in”, “participation in”, or “communion of” the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). The term mass is not derived from the Bible but is rather from the Latin “missa” meaning to dismiss, and is part of the closing benediction of Catholic Priests.⁸

The ordinance of the Lord's Table is commanded by the Lord (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25) and bears four important significances. **1)** It is a cause for reflection on the death of Christ "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). **2)** It is a cause for proclamation "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). **3)** It is a cause for anticipation "you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). **4)** It is a cause for examination "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup." (1 Cor. 11:28).

Those that do not have a saving relationship with the Lord or are involved in unrepentant sin should not partake. The warnings attached to this ordinance should also caution parents who might allow a child to participate without a proper understanding of its significance (1 Cor. 11:30). There is no prescribed frequency to observe this command, however once a month is personally preferred.

Believer's Baptism

The command to baptize is also rooted in the Lord's command (Matt. 28:18-20). It was universally practiced in the early church and associated so closely with salvation that it is assumed that if you were a Christian you were also baptized (1 Cor. 1:13). It was the normal initiatory rite. "The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament."⁹

The word baptize is a transliteration carried over from the Greek words baptizō and its root baptō, which means to dip, immerse, sink or even drown. The meaning of this term is further strengthened by the presence of much water where baptism took place (Matt. 3:6; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-38). This would not be necessary if sprinkling was all that was required.¹⁰

Baptism like the Lord's Table also bears important symbolic significance. **1)** It signifies identification with Jesus Christ. Physical immersion in water accurately symbolizes the believer's spiritual immersion or union with Christ. Spiritually the believer is united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Gal. 3:27; Col 2:12; Rom. 6:3) through water this death to the old life and resurrection in the new is pictured. **2)** It signifies identification with Christ's body, the church. We being many are part of one body (1 Cor. 12:12; Rom 12:4-5; Eph 2:15) and acceptance into this body was indicated by baptism (Acts 10:47). Baptism was the Church's affirmation of an individual's profession of faith. Because of its significance, the baptismal candidate should be properly instructed and approved before it is administered.

Since baptism indicates a relationship with Christ and his church, believers should be the only candidates considered for baptism. Only those who are capable of making a rational, voluntary choice are able to obey this command. The command to be baptized is coupled with the command to believe and follow all that Christ commands (Matt, 28:18-20; Acts 8:37). Infants are not able to fully meet these requirements. Each reference to a household baptism either states explicitly or implies that the household also believed (Acts 16:34; 18:8). Parents should be careful to encourage signs of faith in their children but not rush at the first indication as a full expression of faith.

The Scriptures unequivocally teach that salvation is through faith and faith alone (Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 3:11, 24). Baptism under the New Covenant does not save a person any more than circumcision did under the Old Covenant (Gal. 2:1-21). Every passage that mentions baptism in relation to salvation explicitly mentions or implies faith. Even Peter's statement that "baptism now saves you" (1 Pet 3:21) is qualified in the context when he says "not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience." He in no way contradicts what he earlier stated in this same epistle "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet 1:23).¹¹

Participating in Stewardship Generously

Money is not a concept that is avoided in Scripture. It is argued that Jesus spoke more about money than he did about hell, and more than any other figure in the Bible. Our worship to God includes the use of our finances, and God should not be honored not only with ten percent but with how we use the other ninety as well.

From 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 several principles emerge about giving that should govern the church. Giving is to be done **1) as a response to God's grace**, "we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1) **2) in difficult circumstances**, "in a great ordeal of affliction" (2 Cor. 8:2) **3) with joy** "their abundance of joy" **4) with generosity** "overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2) **5) proportionately** "I testify that according to their ability" (2 Cor. 8:3) **6) sacrificially** "I testify that according to their ability" (2 Cor. 8:3) **7) voluntarily** "*they gave of their own accord*" (2 Cor. 8:3) **8) with worship** "they first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5) **9) in submission**, "and to us by the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:5) **10) in love**, "just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, *see that you abound in this gracious work also*" (2 Cor. 8:7).¹²

It should also be added that giving should be done regularly (1 Cor. 16:2), but there is no amount or percentage prescribed in the New Testament. The term tithe, which means tenth, appears three times in the gospels. Christ acknowledged that the Pharisees paid the tithe as a requirement under the Mosaic Law (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12). It is also mentioned twice in Hebrews 7:8, 9 in a historical account of the tithe paid to Melchizedek by Abraham. Nowhere in the New Testament is the believer ever commanded to pay a tithe.

The believer's attitude toward giving is summarized in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 "Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."¹³ This passage should in no way be construed to support popular "Faith Teaching" but is rather an evidence of God's benevolence.

Praying Fervently & Expectantly

Prayer is not an optional feature tacked on to the Christian life. We do not have the choice to "take it or leave it." It is rather the air we breathe and another expression of a life that recognizes the value and worth of its Creator and Redeemer.

Individually

“What a man is alone before God, that he is and no more,” said the great theologian John Owen. Our private prayers are a barometer of our spiritual state and the primary kind of prayer commanded in scripture (Matt. 6:6). We are to be devoted in prayer (Rom. 12:12); strive in prayer (Rom 15:30); be fervent in prayer (Jam. 5:15); pray at all times (Eph. 6:18); and without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we are to let our requests be made known to God (Phi. 4:6). The elements of prayer are summarized well by the acronym A.C.T.S. (adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication).

It’s been well stated, “Prayer is not just a part of the ministry... prayer is the ministry.” The apostles in Acts 6:4 recognized that they could not be distracted from the essential ministries of prayer and the word. To minister without praying is like swimming with one arm tied behind your back. The prayer-less minister will be found either turning in circles or drowning. The Scripture assumes that certain times will be devoted to private prayer (1 Cor. 7:5) and a congregation should allow its pastor not only a time to rest but to dedicate himself to prayer as well.

Corporately

Prayer is not to be limited to private devotion only but is also to be the corporate experience of the church. The book of Acts describes the disciples as being continually devoted to prayers (Acts 2:42), which was most certainly corporate. We are also given several examples of corporate prayer in Acts (1:14; 4:31; 12:12).

Public prayers are to be God-centered (Matt. 6:5-15); in faith (Jam. 1:6); submitted to his will not claiming or demanding (Matt. 26:39; 1 John 5:14); concerned with spiritual matters (Col. 1:3-12); not for show (Matt. 6:5); and thoughtful and meaningful not simply wordy (Matt. 6:7). In the context of public worship the responsibility to pray is specifically given to the men (1 Tim. 2:1).

Edifying Believers**Proclaiming Truth Passionately**

In ministering the Word, the leadership must follow in the footsteps of the apostle Paul and minister the Word both publicly and privately (Acts 20:20), always seeking to impart spiritual truth (“teaching”), expose sin and error (“reproof”), restore those who have fallen spiritually (“correction”), and cultivate righteous living (“training in righteousness”) (2 Tim 3:16).¹⁴

This includes but is not limited to the Sunday morning service. A church should actively pursue various ways to instruct their flock. Sermons, Bible classes, Sunday school classes, discipleship groups, seminars, retreats, men/women/youth fellowships, and social events are all opportunities for proclaiming truth.

Preaching Scripture Expositionally

By expositionally, we mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented *entirely* and *exactly* as it was intended by God. If we believe that “all Scripture is inspired by God” and inerrant, must we not be equally committed to the reality that it is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)? The only logical response to inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it expositionally. Any form of preaching that ignores that intended purpose and design of God falls short of the divine plan.¹⁵

“Expositional preaching is far and away the most important mark of a healthy church.”¹⁶ **1)** It allows God to speak, not man. **2)** It brings the preacher into direct and continual contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit. **3)** It frees the preacher to proclaim all the revelation of God, producing a ministry of wholeness and integrity. **4)** It promotes biblical literacy, yielding rich knowledge of redemptive truths. **5)** It carries ultimate divine authority, rendering the very voice of God. **6)** It transforms the preacher, leading to transformed congregations.¹⁷

Teaching Doctrine Systematically

“The gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.”¹⁸ “We are concerned to know what God is really like, not simply about our own desires.”¹⁹ By extension, we are also concerned about what this God has communicated concerning the Bible, man, sin, salvation, the church, angels, and end times.

The Greek terms *didaskali*,^a and *didach*, translated “doctrine” basically mean “teaching or instruction,” and a simple theological definition recommended by Wayne Grudem is “any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today about any given topic?’”²⁰

Systematically working through the whole counsel of God guarantees that we declare everything that is profitable (Acts 20:20). Pastors are commanded to teach doctrine (2 Tim 4:2) and convict those who contradict it (Tit. 1:9). The early church was committed to the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42), commended for being obedient to apostolic doctrine from the heart (Rom. 6:17), and urged to avoid those that teach contrary to it (Rom. 16:17).

Discipling Others Actively & Personally

The work of the ministry was never intended to be accomplished by a handful of leaders. The leaders are to be the primary examples of what they teach, but are clearly instructed to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13). Therefore, the tendency to leave the ministry up to those paid to do it must be resisted. Instead, the expectation that all believers be engaged in the work of the ministry must be constantly communicated.²¹ Participation in discipleship is the obligation of every follower of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20).

Informal Discipleship

The ideal process for discipleship is within the context of personal relationships. Those who are mature in the faith are commanded to be examples for those younger in the faith (Tit. 2:2-8). Discipleship is more caught than it is taught. Jesus trained his disciples in the classroom of life, which is the best environment for learning (Deut. 6:6-9).

Formal Discipleship

While informal discipleship is the normal method, formal discipleship can be very useful and is at times preferred. New believers can benefit greatly from a more structured relationship, and counseling situations often require concentrated attention. The problems that men face are not outside of the sufficiency of Scripture. Biblical or Nouthetic counseling emphasizes the sufficiency of the word in helping people change.²²

Eclecticism or integrationist counseling has several problems. **1)** It has a faulty understanding of general revelation—which was never meant to give unbelievers a method to deal with specific psychological problems outside of Christ. **2)** Secular theories in a large measure contradict the very scriptures which the biblical counselor is meant to uphold. **3)** It also betrays a belief that God’s Word is insufficient to deal with the deeper problems of man and that we are left to fend for ourselves when it comes to these issues.

A biblically informed congregation is “competent to counsel”²³ and is commanded by scripture to comfort (1 Thess. 4:18), admonish, encourage, help, and be patient with everyone (1 Thess. 5:14-15). Training in Biblical Counseling is offered through NANC and other organizations to assist local churches.²⁴

Providing Godly Leadership Carefully

The terms elder, pastor and bishop are used synonymously in Scripture (1 Pet. 5:1-2; Act 20:28-29). The responsibility of the man who fills this office is to feed, lead, comfort, encourage, guard, and provide an example to the flock (1 Pet. 5:2; Ac. 20:28-29; Jo. 21:15-17; 1 Thess. 5:14).

Demanding Godly Leaders

Godly leaders must possess the following traits: **1)** They must be men of Christ. Love for Christ is the preeminent quality of a pastor (John 21:15- 19). **2)** They must be men of the canon. The premier function and responsibility of the pastor is to fulfill the solemn charge of preaching the Word (2 Tim. 4:2). This is his singular distinguishing function (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24). **3)** They must be men of the church. Their chief focus in ministry is to tend to the flock of God under their care (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2). He is not called not called primarily to minister to the culture or the community but to the church. **4)** They must be men of character. The dominant focus of the pastoral qualifications is the character of the man of God (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Tit. 1:7-9).

Jethro understood that if Moses was to survive, he needed to surround himself with godly men that could help him shoulder the weight of ministry (Deut. 1:12-13). The principle of shared leadership is carried throughout the New Testament as well and speaks of “elders” in the plural and “church” in the singular (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Jam. 5:17).²⁵ A church should seek to appoint more than one qualified man to oversee its ministry (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). This does not eliminate structure in leadership since there must inevitably be a leader among leaders (1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 14:12) but there is an equality in authority that should not be disregarded.

Developing Future Leaders

In order to prevent ministry from being buried with the present generation, a church must always be searching for faithful men to pass the baton of ministry to (2 Tim. 2:2). The minister should be able to identify “sons in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4) in whom they can pour their lives.

Serving Others Compassionately

In considering the kinds of relationships that God calls us to have with other believers in the church, it is essential to realize that every member of the body of Christ is called to full-time Christian ministry. Not all have been called to pastor in the church, but all possess God-given ministry responsibilities in the body of Christ, and these ministerial mandates are chiefly concerned with the relationships between believers. Specifically, these take the form of living out the “one-anothers” and exercising spiritual gifts.²⁶

- contribute to one another’s needs (Rom 12:13)
- spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)
- love one another (John 13:34-35; Rom 13:8; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:9; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7-12; 2 John 1:5)
- be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Rom 12:10; 1 Pet 3:8)
- give preference to one another in honor (Rom 12:10)
- accept one another (Rom 15:17)
- admonish one another (Rom 15:14; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:14)
- be united with one another (Rom 12:16; 1 Cor 1:10; 1 Pet 3:8)
- serve one another through love (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
- show forbearance to one another in love (Eph 4:2)
- be kind to one another (Eph 4:32; 1 Pet 3:8)
- be tender-hearted to one another (Eph 4:32)
- forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13)
- speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19)
- teach one another (Col 3:16)
- encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11, 14; Heb 3:13; 10:25)
- build one another up (1 Thess 5:11)
- help one another (1 Thess 5:14)
- be patient with one another (1 Thess 5:14)
- be hospitable to one another (Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9)
- be sympathetic toward one another (Rom 12:15; 1 Pet 3:8)
- restore one another (Gal 6:1)
- bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)

- be humble toward one another (Phil 2:3; 1 Pet 3:8; 5:5)
- look out for one another's interests (Phil 2:4)

Expecting Genuine Participation Unashamedly

“Any idea of enjoying salvation or being a Christian in isolation is foreign to the New Testament writings.”²⁷ It is clear that the early church maintained records of its membership (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 1 Cor. 14:23). More than attendance was required for admittance into a church (1 Cor. 14:23). Candidates had to be received into fellowship (Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1; Col 4:1; 2 Cor. 3:1-2), and baptism was practiced as an initiatory rite (Acts 10:47).

Participating in Fellowship Regularly

The early church was devoted not only to doctrine, prayers, and the breaking of bread but also to fellowship. The church received others into their fellowship formally (Gal. 2:9). There were regular occasions of assembly for the early church on Sunday, the first day of the week, to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; John 20:1; John 20:19). This day of corporate gathering was later referred to as the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). The church is commanded not to forsake assembling themselves together (Heb. 10:25). Sunday does not replace the Sabbath, and there is no explicit command to assemble on Sunday. However, assembling on Sunday is consistent with the example of the New Testament and honors the resurrection of our Lord.

The members of the church body of Christ share a common life, and each member benefits from the others (1 Cor. 12:20-25). “The whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). The “one-anothers” cannot be expressed in isolation. Corporate gatherings should make room not only for teaching, prayer, and communion but also for meaningful inter-personal ministry between members.

Practicing Discipline Lovingly

The church as an autonomous organization governs itself (1 Cor. 5:12). We are to seek to restore those who are overtaken in a fault (Gal 6:2) graciously, gently, and lovingly. Sadly there are times when a member who has departed from sound doctrine or practice will refuse to repent (1 Cor. 5:1-13). In these situations the church has the right and responsibility to follow our Lord's command outlined in Matthew 18. This is a means to protect the purity of the church (Acts 5:1-14) and by God's grace restore the sinning party (2 Cor. 2:6-11).

Those that are heretical and factious are to be rejected after their second warning (Tit. 3:10). This prevents false teaching from spreading and doing further harm to the Lord's Church (2 Tim 2:17).

Evangelizing Unbelievers

Encouraging Evangelism Locally

“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14; cf. 1 Cor 1:20-25; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). “The church has a mission to reach the world with the Gospel, to announce to every creature that Christ has made redemption through his blood and that by repentance and faith each can receive the remission of sins and entrance into the kingdom of God.”²⁸ It is an authoritative, all inclusive, active commission that is repeated numerous times in scripture (Matt. 28:13-20; Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; John 17:17-18; 20:21; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16-17). “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17).

Encouraging Evangelism Individually

The spreading of the gospel message was not given to a few talented and gifted leaders. The church must promote evangelism among its members and help them realize that every member must be active in it. It is not a matter of preference but obedience to a command.

The way this is lived out in individual lives will be different (ie. we would not expect everyone to go door to door). However, the church should actively create and facilitate various opportunities for evangelism as well as train and support its members in it (Eph. 4:11).

Understanding Conversion Biblically

In Matthew’s account we discern the following components of the Great Commission: 1) The Objective- to make disciples of the nations, 2) The Goal- to proclaim the gospel to every “nation” (ethnic group), 3) The Means- the followers of Jesus Christ a) preaching the Gospel of Christ b) baptizing believers c) teaching the believers.

Securing decisions for Christ is not the goal, making disciples is. Many evangelistic efforts stop short of what our Lord instructs. A biblical understanding of what it means to be converted should accompany the church’s efforts.

Extending Missions Globally

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”²⁹ The extent of the great commission was for disciples to be made in every nation until the end of the age. The ministry of missions is a repeated theme in Scripture (Acts 13:1-3; 14:27; 15:36-40), and the epistles to a large extent are missionary letters (cf. Romans).

Since the goal of evangelism is not to merely to secure decisions but to make disciples it is only logical that church planting would be the primary objective of missions (Acts 14:21-27). Disciples must be taught to obey all that the Lord commanded and that occurs within the context of a local church.

Missionaries are to establish churches which are: 1) *Self-governing*- have their own elected leaders (pastors or elders) and are fully able to govern their own affairs without the direction of the missionary or supporting church/organization 2) *Self-propagating*- have their own means of growth, whether it be spiritual or numerical and are not dependent upon outside agencies to maintain their spirituality or to add numbers to their assembly 3) *Self-supporting*- have their own means of sustaining the financial and material costs associated with their ministry. Their life and growth does not depend upon the assistance from an outside agency.

-
- ¹ The Faculty of the Master's Seminary, Montoya, 49
- ² MacArthur quoted in syllabus
- ³ Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, 166-167.
- ⁴ Philosophy of Student Ministries, Crossroads Grace Community Church
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, 191.
- ⁷ Ibid., 191
- ⁸ Ibid., 213.
- ⁹ Bruce quoted in Saucy, 193.
- ¹⁰ Baptism, Grace Community Church unpublished Document.
- ¹¹ Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, 197.
- ¹² MacArthur, *Whose Money Is It Anyway?* 81-93
- ¹³ See John MacArthur's, *Whose Money is it Anyway?* for a fuller explanation.
- ¹⁴ Student Philosophy of Ministry, (Crossroads- Grace Community Church) unpublished document.
- ¹⁵ Mayhue, Expository Preaching Class Notes (The Master's Seminary) unpublished document.
- ¹⁶ Dever, Mark. *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*. 39
- ¹⁷ MacArthur, John, *Expository Preaching*, xv.
- ¹⁸ Tozer, A.W., *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p.1
- ¹⁹ Dever, Mark, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, p.57
- ²⁰ Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.
- ²¹ Crossroads, *The Philosophy of Ministry*
- ²² The Master's Faculty, *Counseling*
- ²³ The Master's Faculty, *Counseling*
- ²⁴ National Association of Nouthetic Counseling
- ²⁵ Strauch, *Biblical Leadership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*
- ²⁶ Crossroads Grace Community Church, *Philosophy of Student Ministry*
- ²⁷ Alan Stibbs quoted in *The Church in God's program*
- ²⁸ Montoya, Syllabus unpublished
- ²⁹ Piper, John. (John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, p. 43).