

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

THE CHURCH: ***Its Purposes***

- 1--God's Gifts: To Help the Church**
- 2--Purposes of the Church**
- 3--Signs of an Immature Church**
- 4--Signs of a Mature Church**
- 5--Getting the Job Done**
- 6--The Value of Purpose**

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Lesson One

**"God's Gifts:
To Help the Church"**

The first three chapters of Ephesians remind God's people of some very important concepts:

Ch. 1—Of the glorious plan of God to redeem a chosen people.

Ch. 2—That this Redemption is by God's grace through the death of Christ; and that we accept this Redemption by an obedient faith in Him.

Ch. 3—That this Redemption is made known to the world by the Redeemed (The Church). Ch. 3 ends with this great statement: ***"To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."***

Ch. 4 begins with an emphasis upon how we should act in view of our Redemption:

- a) ***"to walk worthy of the calling" (v. 1)***
- b) ***"With all lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love." (V. 2)***
- c) ***"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."***

He next gives the foundation beliefs that unify God's people: (Vs. 4-6)

- a) ***"one body"*** (To which we have been added)
- b) ***"one Spirit"*** (That gives life to our souls)
- c) ***"one hope"*** (That serves as an anchor to our souls)
- d) ***"one Lord"*** (That we adore and listen to)
- e) ***"one faith"*** (That we have strong convictions of)
- f) ***"one baptism"*** (That brought us into the one body)
- g) ***"one God and Father of all"*** (To whom we give the ultimate praise)

He now reminds them of God's gifts that He has given to His people and the reasons for these gifts. In this lesson, we will look at the gifts. In future lessons, we will look at the reasons for these gifts. These gifts were a fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy. Among the many gifts that He gave, He specifies 5 special gifts. In verse 11 it says: ***"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."*** ***God gives good gifts:*** James 1:17—***"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...."*** He did not ascend back to the Father & forget us! He gave special gifts for the good of mankind—and the church! His gifts are for man's benefit....if we will allow it!

Kinds of Gifts

These gifts may be supernatural or natural in nature. Salvation itself is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Eternal Life is a gift of God through Christ (Rom. 6:23). The Holy Spirit gave miraculous gifts unto men (Acts 10:45). There were diversity of gifts given (1 Cor. 12:4). These gifts were to be exercised in the assemblies of God's people for edification (1 Cor. 12:26). But there were also "gifted" people in the church as well (Rom. 12:6-8). If they misused their natural gifts or failed to use them properly, they were rebuked (1 Cor. 4:6-7; 13:1-3). What about these gifts mentioned here in Eph. 4:11; were they natural or supernatural? Let's look at them closely to find our answer.

Apostles. Jesus called 12 men to follow Him in His public ministry. He taught them and trained them for about 3 years. He then endowed them with supernatural powers that set them apart from other disciples.

Acts 1:8 _____
1 Cor. 12:12 _____

These gifts enabled them to set up the church as God had planned. Their special work was finished in the first Century. We no longer have living Apostles today; but, we have the work of the Apostles to help us even today. We have the inspired revelation of God written down and confirmed by miracles, wonders, and signs.

Heb. 2:4 _____
Eph. 3:3-5 _____

Prophets. These were "inspired" spokesmen for God. They were given a message from God that was to be given to mankind. The Apostles could not be at every place as the church grew and spread. Prophets were indispensable until the New Testament was written down and completed. Their special gifted work would end when the New Testament was completely revealed.

1 Cor. 13:8-13 _____
Eph. 2:19-22 _____

Evangelists. These gifted people were proclaimers of God's good news to mankind. Their work was both to reach the lost with the message of the gospel, but to also build up the church.

2 Tim. 4:1-5 _____

These men could take the revealed message of God from the Apostles and Prophets and proclaim it far and wide, as well as in the assemblies of God's people. Such gifted people are still needed today.

Pastors (Shepherds). Various terms are used to identify these men and their work in the church—Pastors or Shepherds, Bishops or Overseers, Elders or Presbyters.

1 Pet. 5:1-4 _____

These men were to be spiritually mature, knowledgeable, and qualified to guide the local church. They taught, led, guided, and watched over the early churches to keep them stable and growing. They also served as godly examples to the church. They also would take the "revealed message" of God from the Apostles and Prophets and teach it.

Heb. 13:7, 17 _____

1 Tim. 5:17 _____

It is obvious that their work is also still needed today.

Teachers. While Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherds all taught, yet there was a need for many more "teachers!" But such teachers had to be taught and grounded first before they could assist in the teaching in the church.

Jas. 3:1 _____

Heb. 5:12 _____

Women were allowed to be teachers of other women (and probably children).

Tit. 2:4 _____

And, it is obvious that all who strive to teach others the Will of God are teachers in a general sense.

Concluding Thoughts

Christianity is a taught religion. It is important that we understand and believe correctly. A primary function of the church would obviously be to teach (Matt. 28:18-20). God has given both natural and supernatural gifts to help establish the church in the beginning and sustain it through the ages.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. The Letter to the Ephesians begins with discussing the Plan of God to redeem a "peculiar" people unto Himself.
- _____ 2. God is only glorified in the Church.
- _____ 3. The seven "ones" in Ch. 4 of Ephesians serve as a foundation for the unity of the church.
- _____ 4. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers are gifts from God.
- _____ 5. God has given both natural and supernatural gifts for His church.
- _____ 6. Supernatural gifts were only given by the Holy Spirit.
- _____ 7. "Gifted people" are those people who have natural gifts that can be used for the good of the church.
- _____ 8. There were special signs to prove who was a true Apostle.
- _____ 9. The Apostles do not seem to have been limited in the number of miraculous gifts they were given.
- _____ 10. Apostles and Prophets can still be useful in the church today.
- _____ 11. A Prophet was a person with an "inspired message."
- _____ 12. Evangelists were the only ones who traveled around the world to preach the Gospel.
- _____ 13. Teachers in the early church were not necessarily "inspired by God" to speak His message.
- _____ 14. Women were allowed to be teachers in the early church.
- _____ 15. God gave both natural and supernatural gifts to help establish the church and sustain it through the ages.

Lesson Two

"Purposes of the Church"

God gave gifts for the benefit of His people! These gifts raised the church to a place of honor and glory among men. The church is Christ's bride upon whom He has poured every adornment. He not only died to purchase the church, but gave gifts to prepare it for its great task among men. These gifts were in the form of natural and supernatural gifted men. They were leaders and "feeders!"

"They fill the empty soul with spiritual food."

"They encouraged the weary soul."

"They gave guidance to the perplexed."

"They were able to reclaim the erring."

"They could give strength to the weak."

"They could support those who were faint-hearted."

It is generally agreed that the **Apostles** and **Prophets** were special, but temporary. They laid the foundation, and we still have the benefits of their work in what we know as "The New Testament Scriptures." However, **Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers** were ordinary, but permanent.

Eph. 2:20 _____

Reasons for These Gifts

We have generalized about the reasons why God gave these gifts to men; but let's go a little deeper in our study to see the stated reasons and goals of such gifts.

1. **"For the perfecting of the saints"** (Eph. 4:11-12). Other versions state it this way: *"For the equipping of the saints," or "Completely furnishing the saints."* It is a work of starting, but also of completing toward a goal. The gifts were preparing them for the great work that was given to the church.
2. **"For the work of ministry"** (Eph. 4:12). Other versions state it this way: *"For the work of service," or "To serve as workers."* Jesus stated that He came, not to be served, but to serve (Matt. 20:28). It is to prepare the saints for works of service (2 Tim. 2:21; Tit. 3:14). It is ministering to the souls, bodies, and needs of mankind. The church is a training school to equip servants!
3. **"For the edifying of the body of Christ"** (Eph. 4:12). Other versions state it this way: *"For the building up of the body of Christ."* Once the foundation is laid, you build a beautiful structure upon it. After people are converted, they must be seen after, built up, stabilized and

grounded in the faith and knowledge of Christ Jesus.

The End Results

If these gifts are properly used, what can be expected to be the outcome or end results of their use? Such is plainly stated in Eph. 4:13!

1. **"All come to the unity of the faith."** Our original faith, as new Christians, must be maintained, and strengthen, and brought to completeness. It is designed to bring all of God's people to maturity in the One Faith given by Christ. All must be grounded in this "One Faith;" but also hold to it in common with all other members of the body of Christ.
2. **"All come to the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God."** There is a beginning of knowledge from hearing the Gospel. When obeyed, this is not the end of our learning (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). It is to fully come to know Jesus—His person, His work, His spirit, His relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is to come to know Him in the ultimate—He is the ideal person and our standard. We should want to know all about Him.
3. **"All come unto a perfect man."** Another way to express it—"to come to a full-grown, mature, and complete man in Christ. We begin in a state of infancy in Christ and develop towards a full-grown person in Christ. This growth can be rapid, deep, wide, beautiful, and productive.
4. **"Unto the measure of the fullness of Christ."** Christ is the true standard to which we are to conform (Matt. 5:48). His fullness and perfection is our goal. He is our standard of excellence for our lives. We grow up into Him in all things. The end results of constant teaching, encouraging, exhorting, etc., is to be like Christ!

The end result of these gifted leaders in the church is to make themselves "unnecessary!" That is, to work themselves out of a job! However, there are always new ones coming along, as well as greater numbers to be seen after in the church. It is like children growing up in a home and their parents are trying to prepare them to leave home to be on their own.

There is a very important factor in all of this—this end results cannot be forced or coerced! It must be desired, sought after by each individual. There must be a willing cooperation on the part of all.

2 Tim. 4:1-4 _____

Concluding Thoughts

These gifts that God has given to the church are sufficient to get the job done among His people. He has given ample spiritual provisions in order to complete the church's purposes for existence.

It is our job to be gravely concerned about how to best accomplish these great tasks. And there is a constant need to evaluate our efforts to see how well we are progressing. We need to make changes on our part, if needed, to improve on our efforts to fulfill our tasks. But most of all, we need to be sure that we are really concerned about God's Plan for His Church and not be side-tracked from our assigned work.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. The church is the bride of Christ that needs to be dressed upon for the great occasion.
- _____ 2. The work of Apostles and Prophets in the church was temporary, but special in nature.
- _____ 3. The work of Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers are still needed in the church today.
- _____ 4. To be perfected is to be made complete.

- _____ 5. The church should be looked upon as a training school to prepare its members to go out and serve.
- _____ 6. To edify someone is to build them up and strengthen them.
- _____ 7. If a person cannot be stabilized, he will never become mature.
- _____ 8. It is not the purpose of these gifts to bring people to the same beliefs in the church.
- _____ 9. The more knowledge we have about Christ, the more mature we can become.
- _____ 10. We should desire to learn all we can about Jesus as our standard.
- _____ 11. The goal to become full-grown spiritually is only possible to the person who really wants it.
- _____ 12. The job of teaching is to work one's self out of a job.

- _____ 13. People cannot be forced or coerced to learn.

- _____ 14. We are doing a good job in our own lives learning and growing up in Christ.
- _____ 15. It is possible to be side-tracked from God's plan for His Church.

Lesson Three

"Signs of an Immature Church"

The church is made up of the individuals who have obeyed the Gospel and meet to worship and serve together in a common location. We know that there are signs of immaturity of individuals, but can we say that a church is immature or mature? It is generally obvious that there are different levels of "maturity" in any congregation of the Lord's people. However, there may be those groups that just have not seen the proper development spiritually and could be looked upon as immature. One thing we believe we all can agree on—when a group has far more immature people in it than mature....it is not a mature congregation!

In the Apostles discussion about the end results of "gifted Leadership," he points out some of the signs of immaturity that needs to be overcome in the lives of God's people. The purpose of this lesson is to examine these signs of immaturity given in Eph. 4:11-14.

Indications of Immaturity

The physical realm helps us to better understand the spiritual realm by comparing the two. This is what the Apostle is doing here in Eph. 4:11-14; he is drawing a contrast between those who are like children and those who are like full-grown adults. Look at how he points out immaturity:

1. "Be no more children." Two concepts are brought into vivid contrast: "Teleios" and "Nepios." The first is translated "Perfect, Mature, Full-grown, Complete." the second is translated "Infantile, baby, immature, unlearned, untaught." In some ways, the Christian is to be like little children:

Matt. 18:3 _____

Matt. 19:13-14 _____

God wants us to be like them in the sense of being gentle, mild, teachable, etc. But children are also immature.

1 Pet. 2:2 _____

They were babes because they were new in the faith. But they were not to stay that way. So, there are babes that shouldn't be babes any longer.

Heb. 5:12

Possibly all of us range somewhere between these two extremes of immaturity and maturity. It is obvious that maturity should be the ultimate attainment of every child of God.

What are some of the immaturities that we notice in little children? They cry over the slightest thing or throw a temper tantrum to get attention or to get their way. Self-centeredness or selfishness is a key phrase to identify them. They receive life's blessings as a matter of course. They have no sense of gratitude (unless taught)...for what is done for them.

What about spiritual immaturity? People come to a church building they did not help to build. They made no sacrifice to help purchase it or maintain it. They expect everything to be for their comfort—just right. They complain if not happy or they will not return.

2. "Tossed to and fro." This expression is obviously a nautical term that refers to being tossed by the waves in the sea. A boat without power will move in whatever direction the waves take it.

The spiritual application is depicting the Christian as being pulled back and forth by various teachings of men. At one time he believes this; tomorrow he may change and believe another. It shows instability or the openness to be easily swayed. It also shows instability of character and purpose.

"Being tossed to and fro" may also indicate irresponsibility! Adam and Eve both showed this when faced with their disobedience. Adam blamed the woman that God gave him. Eve blamed the serpent. The immature blame the hypocrites, the church, the preacher, the elders, or others for his failure to faithfully hold to the truth. The immature do not reflect security nor stability in their thinking or actions. They are unable to make up their mind to accept God's truth. They are at the mercy of false ideas all around them. Such are detrimental to the unity of the church.

3. "Carried about by every wind of doctrine." They are like a ship driven by the wind. But it is more—it is an ill-wind carrying them in the wrong direction. The idea is.....they go with the prevailing wind!

The immature quickly pick up any new teaching and go with it. They are often gullible and naive, easily misled by smooth talkers. Their beliefs are not really theirs. They are not really convinced and convicted by God's Truth. They can easily be swayed by the crowd, friends, or family away from the Truth. They follow every new teacher!

Matt. 10:37 _____

4. "By the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

Two factors would seem to be obvious here: (1) Their lack of knowledge leaves them open to be deceived; and (2) Their openness to be deceived by false teachers.

Usually, the ignorant and inexperienced are at the mercy of false teachers. They are not skilled in the word of truth (Heb. 5:13). They are not even grounded in the fundamental truths of the Gospel:

1. Correct worship (Singing, Lord's Supper each week, Giving, etc.),
2. Salvation (Many problem areas),
3. One body (are all churches okay?),
4. Morals (Homosexual, divorce, adultery, fornication, honesty),
5. Women's role in the church,
6. Etc.

Heb. 5:12 _____

Col. 2:5-8 _____

Such people are often shallow in their thinking that makes them so susceptible. They are not sufficiently interested in deepening their roots in God's truth.

Now, look at the ways of false teachers also!

1. They use trickery to mislead the unlearned in Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16).
2. They change the truth just enough to deceive (Like the Serpent did mother Eve).
3. They turn Scriptures to suit their purposes.
4. Their purpose is to deceive and mislead people after their own ideas.
5. The immature are a constant target of these dishonest teachers.

Concluding Thoughts

How mature are we? Are we grounded, rooted, and stable in the faith...or unstable? God challenges us on to a mature state! How well are we progressing? How willing are we to be brought to this state by God's servants?

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. There is no such thing as an immature church.
- _____ 2. Maturity and immaturity deals with individuals, not the church.
- _____ 3. Children are considered to be immature!
- _____ 4. There is a world of difference between "Teleios" and "Nepios."
- _____ 5. God wants His people to be like children.
- _____ 6. The Scriptures call certain people "babes" because they were new in the church.
- _____ 7. Maturity should be the ultimate attainment of every child of God.
- _____ 8. Children should their immaturity by a temper tantrum.
- _____ 9. Immaturity is to receive life's blessings as a matter of course.
- _____ 10. The openness to be easily swayed is a good child-like characteristic.
- _____ 11. Immaturity is also shown by the inability to make up one's mind.
- _____ 12. The immature can be easily swayed by the crowd, friends, or family.
- _____ 13. To follow a new teaching is a sign of immaturity.
- _____ 14. Men can be deceived because of their openness to false teachers.
- _____ 15. False teachers change the truth just enough to deceive like Satan did to mother Eve.

Lesson Four

"Signs of a Mature Church"

A little boy at the dinner table was half-heartedly eating his spinach. He stopped and asked: "Mom, why do I have to eat this yukkie spinach?" She replied to him: "Because it is good for you. It has lots of vitamins and minerals. And besides, if you want your Ice Cream, you have to eat your spinach." He then asked his mother: "Mom, why are all the good things for you so yukkie and all the bad things for you so good?" A part of growing up and becoming an adult is:

1. A recognition that we need to eat things good for us;
2. The need to avoid the things bad for us;
3. And the strength to put into practice that knowledge!

The Christian life is much the same! It is through obedience to the Gospel that we come into Christ. We then must learn to put away things that are bad for us (Eph. 4:22) and learn to add in our lives those things that are good for us (Eph. 4:24). But also, we need to have the strength to put this knowledge into practice. The goal of the Christian is:

1. To grow up to maturity in Christ.
2. To learn all we can about Christ and put it into action.
3. To grow to the full measure of our ability in Him.

God's help to His People

In order to encourage this growth, the Apostle draws a contrast between the immature and the mature. He has also pointed out that God has placed gifted leaders in the church to help motivate us on our way to maturity. The Apostles and Prophets gave us the Word of God to help.

1 Pet. 2:2 _____
2 Tim. 3:16-17 _____

And still today, he has given us Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers to teach us the Word of Truth; to challenge us to live by it; and to ground us in the faith, once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

Col. 2:6-7 _____

Heb. 5:14 _____

God wants us to go on to strong meat (deeper truths in Christ).

One of the main values of these gifted leaders is their example lived before us to impact our lives.

- 1 Cor. 11:1 _____
- 1 Tim. 4:12 _____
- 1 Pet. 5:3 _____
- Heb. 13:7 _____

With gifted leaders and good examples, how can we fail not to grow up in Christ!

Signs of Maturity

One of the obvious values of good examples set before us is to be able to recognize the indications of a mature person in Christ. But this is not always infallible because we all are fallible people. However, the Apostle by inspiration gives us definite signs of the mature person in Eph. 4:12-16.

1. **Unity (oneness) of the faith.** *"Where there is unity, there is maturity. Where there is disunity, they is immaturity."* (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Maturity is to show that we not only hold to the "one faith," but that we are growing in the faith and are stable in the faith. Our faith does not continue to be shallow, but is becoming deeply rooted in Christ Jesus.
2. **Prepared unto every good work.** (Eph. 4:12) It is to be willing to be prepared to serve in the kingdom of God. Notice the words used to describe this concept in the following:

- 2 Tim. 3:17 _____
- Heb. 13:21 _____
- Matt. 5:16 _____

We have been redeemed to do good works (Phil. 2:13).

3. **Able to build self up.** (Eph. 4:16). Maturity is shown by the person who is becoming less and less dependant upon others. He, in turn, is now able to help those who are still dependent.
4. **Able to speak truth in love.** (Eph. 4:15). It is not only the ability to speak the truth, but do so in a loving way—not harsh, not with an air of superiority, or not in an offensive way. It is the ability to speak the truth out of love for souls. It is to have no interest in using trickery or cunning craftiness of men.

Phil. 2:14-16 _____

5. **Grow up in all things.** (Eph. 4:15). Good and desirable growth is not lop-sided, but balanced! It is to grow to our full potential in Christ.
6. **Every Member doing their part.** (Eph. 4:16). Each member functioning for the good of the whole. Each doing what they can to carry out God's plan. It becomes a well-organized, welded together, functioning unit. It will definitely bring growth to the body.
7. **Prepared to do the harder things.** (Matt. 19:21-22). Some things require more maturity to be able to do such effectively. Jesus illustrated this in the following two commands:

Matt. 5:43-45 _____

Rom. 12:19-21 _____

This usually requires discipline in one's life...and discipline can be a sign of maturity as well.

8. **Be able to make wise decisions.** (Heb. 5:14). Decisions are critical in both the physical realm as well as the spiritual. Wrong decisions can bring very undesirable results or consequences. The more mature we are, the better will be our decision making.

Concluding Thoughts

The desired perfection is to stand complete in all of the Will of God. How well are we doing? Where are we on that road to maturity? Have we lost sight of this goal? Are we eagerly working towards this goal, or have we even started? Perfection in Christ begins with submission to the Will of Christ!

The more mature people you have in a congregation, the more mature the church will be. A mature congregation can be generally measured by the things that we have just looked at above.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. It is always true that bad tasting things are good for you and good tasting things are bad for you.
- _____ 2. A real test of maturity is to have the strength to make the proper decision in my life.
- _____ 3. God has given the church gifted leaders to help us to mature in Christ.
- _____ 4. The Apostles and Prophets gave us the Word of God.
- _____ 5. To be grounded in the faith is to overcome our immaturity.
- _____ 6. "Strong meat" for the Christian indicates he needs to mature.
- _____ 7. Gifted leaders are ideal examples of maturity.
- _____ 8. Where there is disunity, there is also immaturity.
- _____ 9. A shallow faith is a sure sign of immaturity.
- _____ 10. Working Christians are maturing Christians.
- _____ 11. God wants His people's lives to be filled with good works.
- _____ 12. There is a difference in one's ability to speak the truth and to speak the truth in love.
- _____ 13. Maturity of a congregation is shown by the involvement of the members in the work of the church.
- _____ 14. The mature are capable of doing only the easy things.
- _____ 15. Wise decisions can be made by the immature.

Lesson Five

"Getting the Job Done"

Our study thus far has primarily dealt with the passage in Ephesians 4:11-16, where we have noticed the following things:

1. Christ has given the gift of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers to His church to get it started and stabilized!
2. These gifted men were to perfect the saints so they would be able to become equipped servants and able to edify itself.
3. The end goal of the work of these men was to bring about a unity or oneness of the faith and knowledge of Christ Jesus so that we can become complete in Him.
4. It shows the importance of putting away childish things and grow up to be mature in Christ.

Now, we want to turn to a broader view of the Purposes of the Church under the title, "*Getting the Job done!*" We want to deal with such questions as:

1. Why do we exist, meet, and engage in activities as a Church?
2. What are our purposes for existence as a Church?
3. What instructions has God given to His redeemed people?
4. Are we fulfilling these purposes?
5. Have we keyed in on these purposes?
6. Do we keep them uppermost in our minds?
7. Are we organized in order to be most effective?
8. Are we being taught, trained, and equipped to fulfill these purposes?

TERMS THAT DENOTE PURPOSE

We believe that there are five basic areas that could be called the purposes of the Church: Evangelism, Edification, Worship, Fellowship, and Serving. All that we do as a congregation should be built around these five purposes.

1. EVANGELISM. This purpose is stated clearly in what we call the "Great Commission."

Matt. 28:18-19 _____

Acts 2:36-38 _____

The commission is to go and make disciples of people all over the world! How was this to be done? _____

It is giving "lost" people an opportunity to hear the Gospel of Christ (the hope of everlasting life through Him).

Rom. 3:23 _____

Rom. 6:23 _____

Jn. 14:6 _____

Acts 2:41 _____

The Job is.....Get the Message of Christ to all nations of people! Each of us do what we can to get this done.

Acts 5:28 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

2. EDIFICATION. To edify is to build up, make strong, or bring to a mature and stable standing. This is also an equipping process—training of God's people!

Acts 2:42 _____

Matt. 28:20 _____

1 Cor. 14:26 _____

Edification is primarily dealing with teaching and training of God's people, so they can carry out the other purposes of the Church. This maturing process does not come without effort, sacrifice, learning, and application of the Scriptures through a training process. This process can take place in our Assemblies, Bible Classes, Studying with an individual, Small group home study groups, Printed materials, etc. The goal is to bring all of God's people to a mature, committed, and fruitful condition—so we can become a spiritually mature Church.

2 Tim. 3:17 _____

3. WORSHIP. An obvious purpose of the Church is to give glory to God and to His Son who has redeemed us. It is to offer adoration, praise, and to exalt and magnify God before all.

Acts 2:42 _____

John 4:24 _____

1 Cor. 10:31 _____

Phil. 4:6 _____

Matt. 22:37 _____

God is obviously the primary target of this activity of worship; but the church can also be edified in the process of engaging sincerely and reverently in this activity (1 Cor. 14:26). It is important that we recognize that God is the audience! The purpose of worship is not for our entertain-ment or amusement. It is directed primarily to God, but secondarily to us.

There are various situations in which we can express this worship to God:

1. When the whole church assembles (1 Cor. 11:18).
2. When we worship privately as an individual (Matt. 6:6).
3. When we worship as a family in our home.
4. When we worship in smaller groups in people's homes. (etc.)

God has given us the avenues of this worship:

Acts 2:42 _____

Matt. 6:6 _____

Acts 20:7 _____

1 Cor. 14:15 _____

The end goal of worship is to build a closer relationship with God and to deepen our appreciation of our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Friend!

4. FELLOWSHIP. This is shown when we hold things in common or do things together that God has commanded. It is being together, bonding together, communing together, and sharing with each other.

Acts 2:42 _____

Acts 2:44 _____

Acts 2:46 _____

Christianity is not an isolationist religion, but a religion of "one another." It is developing relationships with one another through worshipping together, eating together, serving together, and studying together. The end goal is build closer relationships with God and with one another in the Church. We truly become in truth and reality—**The Family of God!**

5. SERVING. We are to serve, minister to, or help one another—as well as those outside the church. We serve those who have spiritual needs, physical needs, emotional needs, or social needs—whether "saint" or "sinner."

Acts 2:45 _____

Matt. 22:39 _____

Matt. 25:35-36 _____

Tit. 3:8 _____

Gal. 6:2 _____

Gal. 6:10 _____

Showing concern for people often opens their hearts to the message of the Gospel. It is important to realize that the unmerciful will not see heaven (Matt. 25:41-43). The Goal is to show concern and compassion for others like Christ has done for us. We serve Christ by serving others.

Matt. 25:40 _____

Concluding Thoughts

To carry out these purposes effectively will require much prayer, thinking, planning, training, and working together. We will grow warmer through fellowship, grow deeper through discipleship, grow stronger through worship, grow broader through serving others, and grow larger through outreach. Would you like to be a part of such a fellowship?

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ **1. The commission to evangelize the world was given to the Apostles, not to us today.**
- _____ **2. As long as there are "lost people" there will be the need to evangelize.**
- _____ **3. Edification involves teaching, training, and equipping God's people for works of service.**
- _____ **4. God should be the primary audience of our worship.**
- _____ **5. Worship can only be expressed to God in an assembly of God's people.**
- _____ **6. We can choose the avenues of worship that we desire and are happy with.**
- _____ **7. The word "fellowship" carries with it the idea of being together ONLY with God's people.**
- _____ **8. To serve others is the same as ministering to them.**
- _____ **9. We serve Christ when we serve His people.**
- _____ **10. We cannot carry out of purposes without a lot of prayer, thinking, planning, and training.**

Lesson Six

"The Value of Purpose"

Jesus taught an important lesson in the Parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). It is obvious—the tree was not fulfilling its purpose! So, Jesus said to cut it down and plant a tree that will fulfill its purpose! Some questions about purpose:

1. Why does a marriage break-up? Is it because they see no longer any value in the relationship because it is not fulfilling its purpose?
2. Why does an employer fire or let an employee go? Is it because he sees no value in keeping him on the job because he is not fulfilling the purpose of his employment?
3. Why does a Christian not attend or stop attending the worship assemblies and Bible Classes of the Church? Is it because he sees no value in them because they are not fulfilling the purpose for which he is going.
4. Why do Christians never ask their friends or family to attend the worship assemblies with them? Is it because they see no purpose in doing so? Does this say something about the church or about his friends or family?

Purpose is Critical

Purpose is critical in our lives! This is especially true in the spiritual realm because so much is at stake! Think through these questions:

1. Why do we give liberally to the Lord? It is to obey God...YES! But it is also one of the ways we can effectively carry out our mission to evangelize.
2. Why do we strive to get the message into all the world? It is to obey God...YES! But it is also because we want all to hear the Gospel so they can believe and obey and be saved!
3. Why do we go to Bible Classes and Worship Assemblies? It is to obey God.....YES! But it is also because this is God's way of preparing us to be great servants of God and bring glory to His Name (1 Cor. 10:31).

4. Why do we do things together? It is to obey God....YES! But how else can we truly become of one mind, heart, and judgment in Christ as a family of God?

The Value of Purpose

1. It keeps the Church as God designed it. The church needs to remain the church that God created in Christ, not some man-made institution to accomplish purposes foreign to the Will of God. When men pervert the purpose of the church, they pervert the church!

2 John 9 _____

The church is not just a "Social Club," but it does offer great and profitable fellowship. It is not an "Entertainment Center," but it does offer great satisfaction to the soul. It is not a place that "Satisfies the False Pride and Egos of Men," but it offers opportunity to become great in the eyes of God! **Purpose gives direction so the church can stay on target and be the church as God designed it!**

2. It Satisfies Basic Human Needs! Man was created with basic needs to be satisfied—both physical and spiritual! God has designed the church to help fulfill these basic needs.

Matt. 4:4 _____

Ps. 42:1-2 _____

Illustrated:

1. *Evangelism* gives us a high purpose to live for;
2. *Edification* gives us principles to live by;
3. *Worship* gives us motivations to live on;
4. *Fellowship* gives us godly people to live and work with;
5. *Service* gives us opportunity to give of myself. **"It is more blessed to give than to receive."**(Acts 20:35)

The Blessed are those who are fulfilling God's purposes in their lives!

3. It Reduces Frustration. Frustration can come from a lack of accomplishment or not knowing what is expected of us. If we have no purpose, we have no accomplishments! If our mission is not clear, what are we trying to accomplish anyway?

Prov. 29:18 _____

Gal. 5:15 _____

A lack of mission or purpose brings frustration and uncertainty as well. Purpose helps to build our morale as a group because we know what really counts and we do not worry about the rest.

Isa. 49:4 _____

Fulfilling God's purposes is certainly not in vain!

4. It allows for Concentration. A focused light shows up better than a defused light. The Sun focused through a prism can start a fire, but not otherwise. A mission-focused church will be far more effective in its efforts to save souls and glorify God. Concentration allows us:

1. To not major in minors;
2. Not to try to do too many things—but stay focused;
3. Not wear people out;
4. Use our energies better;
5. Do a better job in those programs we have started.

5. It encourages Cooperation. People tend to want to be a part of a group that knows where it is going. Godly people should want to belong to a congregation that knows its purposes and are striving to fulfill them effectively. Nehemiah illustrates this concept. When he told the people how the hand of God was upon him to help him and how the King of Persia had encouraged him to fulfill his God-given purpose, the people reacted positively!

Neh. 2:18 _____

Nehemiah was a man with a purpose and the people could see that! And in the same way the Apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthian Church to help the poor saints.

2 Cor. 8:1-5 _____

2 Cor. 8:7 _____

When people become Christians they need to know why they have been called into the kingdom of God; know the purpose for the existence of the church; and to know and do their part in fulfilling those purposes.

6. It Assists Evaluation. If we don't have a standard by which to measure ourselves, how can we examine ourselves. God's Word is the standard by which we examine to see what the purposes of the church are and if we are successfully fulfilling them. Examination is a time to evaluate and a time to eliminate those activities that do not contribute to the fulfilling of God's

purposes for the church. It is also a time to strengthen those things that do fulfill God's purposes.

Concluding Thoughts

We need to learn what the purposes of the church are, keep them always before us, to be led on by these purposes, and to be involved directly in seeing they are fulfilled.

"Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God"
(1 Cor. 10:31)

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. There was no stated purpose given for the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree.
- _____ 2. Purpose is not all that critical in the work of the church.
- _____ 3. Purpose can keep the church on the right track if followed.
- _____ 4. Fulfilling the Purposes of the Church has no direct benefit to us.
- _____ 5. Having a purpose keeps down frustration most of the time.
- _____ 6. If our mission is not clear then we cannot know if we are accomplishing what we should be doing.
- _____ 7. A lack of knowing our purpose keeps us in the realm of uncertainty.
- _____ 8. Purposes are merely a means of giving us a focus.
- _____ 9. When you have purpose, people tend to want to work together more.
- _____ 10. A person cannot evaluate themselves properly if they do not know what they are suppose to be doing.
- _____ 11. God's glorification on the lips of men is the church's greatest purpose for existence.

