



CITY CHAPEL

SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

MINISTRY SCHOOL Lesson 5 – The Church

INTRODUCTION

Following on from our previous four classes, where we have looked at the context of the Kingdom versus the World and True Ministry along with Ministry Gifts, we will now examine The Church.

WHAT IS CHURCH?

The word CHURCH appears in the Bible for the first time in the New Testament. It is a borrowed word from Roman culture of an assembly of recognised citizens in a free State.

This word is used technically for recognised Believers assembled together in a place. So when our Lord Jesus Christ first utters the word in Matthew 16:18, He declares “...upon this Rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” In other words, when my citizens of Heaven gather with me in their midst, no power can stop them! The Church is therefore:

1. Christians in one place (Matthew 18:20),
2. Christians assembled regularly; the local church Romans 16:5, 1Cor 16:19
3. the collective Believers in a region eg Jerusalem Acts 5:11, 8:1, Antioch Acts 13:1, 15;22
4. The matrix of all Believers which is the Body of Christ Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18,24

It is very apt and appropriate that our Lord is the first to utter this word in the context of His Kingdom. This places the Church where it rightfully belongs:

*Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not ^[a]prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth ^[b]will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

Matthew 16:17-19



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This ties in with the Vision of Jesus Christ as recorded in scripture:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go ^[e]therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.
Matthew 28:18-20

The Church is therefore the creation of God which is being built by Christ Himself and is the assembly of the citizens of the Kingdom in a place, region, in the Earth and across dimensions. Its sole purpose is to fulfil the agenda of the King for His Kingdom. The Church on Earth is therefore the platform through which people become converts and transformed into Disciples by virtue of the ministry gifts given to enable it to fulfil its mandate and purpose.

*¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And **He is the head of the body, the church**, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and **by Him to reconcile all things to Himself**, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*
Colossians 1:17-20

*¹⁸ Now **all things** are of God, who has **reconciled** us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the **ministry of reconciliation**, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ **reconciling** the world to Himself, not ^[d]imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the **word of reconciliation**.*
2 Corinthians 5:18-19

The Church is the Body of Christ in the Earth whose existence is to help Him in the ministry of reconciliation of humanity to God. Everything points first and foremost to the agenda of God which is reconciliation. The church has many parts and gifts which all work together towards this purpose of God. All our singing, sharing, and serving culminate in this one vision of Christ. The agenda of God is to build up His Church to be like Him as He reaches the world.

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the ^[e]edifying of the body of Christ
Ephesians 4



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The Church in One Place

¹⁸ "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ "Again^[d] I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:18-20

The Church Meeting Regularly (local church)

³ Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵ Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Romans 16:5

Collective Believers in a region

At that time a great persecution arose against **the church which was at Jerusalem**; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles

Acts 8:1

The Universal Church

²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the **general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven**, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Hebrews 12:22-23



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THE HOW OF CHURCH

⁴ Now as we have many parts in **one body**, and all the parts do not have the same function, ⁵ in the same way we who are many are **one body in Christ** and individually **members of one another**. ⁶ According to the grace given to us, we have **different gifts**: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's^[b] faith; ⁷ if **service**, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸ if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. **Detest evil; cling to what is good**. ¹⁰ Love one another **deeply** as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. ¹¹ Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent **in the Spirit**;^[c] serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in **hope**; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. ¹³ **Share with the saints in their needs**; pursue hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ **Live in harmony with one another**. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honourable in everyone's eyes. ¹⁸ If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, **Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay**,^[d] says the Lord.

Romans 12

HOMEWORK

Read this article below and discuss with your group what you agree with and what you do not agree with based on our learning and teaching so far on Ministry and Discipleship.

ARTICLE BY *Joseph Tkach*

Why do we meet together each week for worship and instruction? With a lot less bother, couldn't we worship at home, read the Bible and listen to a sermon on the radio or the internet?

In the first century, people gathered weekly to hear the Scriptures – but today we have our own copies of the Bible to read. Then why not stay at home to read the Bible on our own? It would be easier – cheaper, too. Through modern technology, everyone could listen to the



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best preachers in the world, every week! We could have a menu of options, and listen only to the sermons that apply to us, or only to subjects we like. Wouldn't it be lovely?

Well, not really. I believe that stay-at-home Christians are missing out on many important aspects of Christianity. I hope to address these in this article, both to encourage faithful attendees to get more out of our meetings, and to encourage others to return to weekly attendance.

To understand why we gather each week, it is helpful to ask, Why did God create the church? What purposes does it have? By learning the functions of the church, we can then see how our weekly meetings serve various purposes in God's desire for his children.

God's commands are not arbitrary things just to see if we will jump when he says *jump*. No, his commands are given for our own good. When we are young Christians, we may not understand *why* he commands certain things, and we need to obey even before we know all the reasons why. We simply trust God, that he knows best, and we do what he says.

A young Christian may attend church simply because that's what Christians are expected to do. A young Christian may attend simply because [Hebrews 10:25](#) says, "Let us not give up meeting together."

So far, so good. But as we mature in the faith, we should come to a deeper understanding of *why* God tells his people to meet together.

Many commands

Let's begin exploring this subject by noting that Hebrews is not the only book that commands Christians to assemble with one another. "Love one another," Jesus tells his disciples ([John 13:34](#)). When Jesus says "one another," he is not referring to our duty to love all human beings. Rather, he is referring to the need for disciples to love other disciples – it must be a mutual love. This love is an identifying characteristic of Jesus' disciples (verse 35).

Mutual love does not express itself in accidental meetings at the grocery store and sporting events. Jesus' command assumes that his disciples are meeting with one another on a regular basis. Christians should have regular fellowship with other Christians. "Do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers," Paul wrote ([Galatians 6:10](#)). To obey this command, it is essential that we know who the family of believers is. We need to see them, and we need to see their needs.



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“Serve one another,” Paul wrote to the church in Galatia ([Galatians 5:13](#)). Although we should serve unbelievers in certain ways, Paul is not using this verse to tell us that. He is not here commanding us to serve the world. Rather, he is commanding *mutual service among those who follow Jesus Christ*. “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” ([Galatians 6:2](#)). But how can we carry each other’s burdens unless we know what those burdens are – and how can we know unless we meet each other regularly?

“If we walk in the light...we have fellowship with one another,” John wrote ([1 John 1:7](#)). John is talking about spiritual fellowship, not casual acquaintances with unbelievers. If we walk in the light, we seek out other believers with whom to have fellowship. Similarly, Paul wrote, “Accept one another” ([Romans 15:7](#)). “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other” ([Ephesians 4:32](#)). Christians have special responsibilities *toward one another*.

Throughout the New Testament, the early Christians met with one another to worship together, to learn together, to share their lives with one another (for example, [Acts 2:41-47](#)). Everywhere Paul went, he raised up churches, rather than leaving scattered believers. They were eager to share their faith and zeal with one another. This is the biblical pattern.

But some people today complain that they don’t get anything out of the sermons. That may be true, but it’s not an excuse to stop attending the meetings. Such people need to change their perspective from “get” to “give.” We attend worship services not just to get, but also to *give* – to give worship to God with our whole heart and to give service to other members.

How can we serve others at worship services? By teaching children, helping clean the building, singing hymns and special music, arranging chairs, greeting people, etc. We provide an atmosphere in which others can get something out of the sermons. We talk with others, and find out needs to pray about and things to do to help others during the week. If you aren’t getting anything out of the sermons, then at least attend in order to give to others.

Paul wrote, “Encourage one another and build each other up” ([1 Thessalonians 4:18](#)). “Spur one another on toward love and good deeds” ([Hebrews 10:24](#)). This is the reason given in the context of the [Hebrews 10:25](#) command for regular assemblies. We are to encourage others, to be a source of positive words, whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report.



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Consider Jesus as an example. He regularly attended synagogue and regularly heard readings of Scripture that didn't add anything to his understanding, but he went anyway, to worship. Maybe it was boring to an educated man like Paul, but he didn't let that stop him, either.

Duty and desire

People who believe that Jesus has saved them from eternal death ought to be excited about it. They enjoy getting together with others to praise their Savior. Sometimes we have bad days and don't feel like attending. But even if it is not our desire at the moment, it is still our duty. We can't go through life doing only the things we *feel* like doing – not if we follow Jesus as our Lord. He did not seek to do his own will, but the Father's. Sometimes that's what it boils down to for us. When all else fails, the old saying goes, read the instructions – and the instructions tell us to attend.

But why? What is the church for? The church has many functions. To help bring out different aspects of the church's work, some Christians have used a four- or five-fold scheme. For this article, I will use six categories.

1) Worship

Our relationship with God is both private and public, and we need both. Let's begin with our public interaction with God – worship. It is possible to worship God when we are all alone, but the term *worship* usually suggests something we do in public. The English word *worship* is related to the word *worth*. We declare God's worth when we worship him.

This declaration of worth is made both privately, in our prayers, and publicly, in words and songs of praise. [1 Peter 2:9](#) says that we are called to declare God's praises. The implication is that this is a *public* declaration. Both Old and New Testaments show God's people worshipping *together*, as a community.

The biblical model, in both Old and New Testaments, is that songs are often a part of worship. Songs express some of the emotion we have with God. Songs can express fear, faith, love, joy, confidence, awe and a wide range of other emotions we have in our relationship with God. Not everyone in the congregation has the same emotion at the same time, but we nevertheless sing together. Some members would express the same emotion in different ways, with different songs and different styles. Nevertheless, we still sing



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together. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19).
We have to meet together to do this!

Music should be an expression of unity – yet often it is a cause for disagreement. Different cultures and different age groups express praise for God in different ways. Most churches have several cultures represented. Some members want to learn new songs; some want to use old songs. It seems that God likes both. He enjoys the psalms that are thousands of years old; he also enjoys new songs. Some of the old songs – the psalms – command new songs:

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him *a new song*; play skillfully, and shout for joy. (Psalm 33:1-3)

In our music, we need to consider the needs of people who may be attending our services for the first time. We need music that they will find meaningful, music that expresses joy in a way that they comprehend as joyful. If we sing only the songs that we like, it sends the message that we care about our own comfort more than we care about other people. We cannot wait until new people start attending before we start learning some contemporary-style songs. We need to learn them so we can sing them meaningfully.

Music is only one aspect of our worship services. Worship includes more than expressing emotion. Our relationship with God also involves our minds, our thought processes. Some of our interaction with God comes in the form of prayer. As a gathered people of God, we speak to God. We praise him not only in poetry and song, but also in ordinary words and normal speech. And the Scriptural example is that we pray together, as well as individually.

God is not only love, but also truth. There is an emotional component and a factual component. So we need truth in our worship services, and we find truth in the Word of God. The Bible is our ultimate authority, the basis for all that we do. Sermons must be based in that authority, and our songs should be truthful.

But truth is not some vague idea that we can discuss without emotion. God’s truth affects our lives and hearts. It demands a response from us. It requires all our heart, mind, soul and strength. That is why sermons need to be relevant to life. Sermons should convey concepts that affect how we live and how we think throughout the week, in the home and on the job.



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Sermons need to be true, based on Scripture. Sermons need to be practical, directed to real life. Sermons need to be emotive, calling for a heart-felt response. Our worship includes listening to God's Word, and responding to it with repentance and with joy for the salvation he gives.

We can listen to sermons at home. There are many good sermons available. But this is not the full church experience. As a form of worship, it is only partial involvement. It is missing the community aspect of worship, in which we sing praises together, in which we respond together to the Word of God, in which we exhort one another to put the truth into practice in our lives.

Some believers cannot attend services because of ill health. They are missing out – as most of them know quite well. We pray for them, and we also know that it is our duty to visit them to make mutual ministry possible for them ([James 1:27](#)). Although shut-in Christians may need to be served in physical ways, they are often able to serve others in emotional or spiritual ways. Even so, stay-at-home Christianity is an exception based on necessity. It is not what Jesus wants his able-bodied disciples to do.

2) Spiritual disciplines

Worship services are only *part* of our worship. The Word of God must enter our hearts and minds to affect what we do throughout the week. Worship can change its format, but it should never stop. Part of our worship response to God involves personal prayer and Bible study. People who are becoming more spiritually mature hunger to learn from God in his Word. They are eager to give him their requests, praise him, share their lives with him, and be aware of his constant presence in their lives.

Our dedication to God involves our heart, mind, soul and strength. Prayer and study should be our desire, but if they are not yet our desire, we need to do them anyway. This is the advice John Wesley was once given. At that time in his life, he said, he had an intellectual grasp of Christianity, but he did not *feel* faith in his heart. So he was advised: Preach faith until you have faith – and once you have it, you will certainly preach it! He knew he had a duty to preach faith, so he did his duty. And in time, God gave him what he lacked: heart-felt faith. What he had formerly done out of duty, he now did out of desire. God had given him the desire that he needed. God will do the same for us.

Prayer and study are sometimes called spiritual disciplines. "Discipline" may sound like a punishment, perhaps an unpleasant thing we force ourselves to do. But the real meaning of



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the term *discipline* is something that “disciples” us, that is, teaches us or helps us learn. Spiritual leaders throughout the ages have found that certain activities help us learn about God, love him and become more like him.

There are many practices that help us walk with God. We are familiar with prayer, study, meditation and fasting. There are other disciplines we can also learn from, such as simplicity, generosity, celebration, or visiting widows. Church attendance is also a spiritual discipline, giving benefits for the individual relationship with God. We may also learn more about prayer, study and other spiritual habits by attending small groups in which we see how other Christians worship.

Real faith leads to obedience – even when that obedience is not comfortable, even when it is boring, even when it requires us to change our behavior. We worship him in spirit and in truth, at church meetings, at home, on the job and everywhere we go. The church is composed of God’s people, and God’s people have private worship as well as public worship. Both are necessary functions of the church.

3) Discipleship

Throughout the New Testament, we see spiritual leaders teaching others. This is part of the Christian lifestyle; it is part of the Great Commission. “Go and make disciples of all nations...*teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you” ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). Everyone must be either a learner or a teacher, and we are usually both at the same time. “Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom” ([Colossians 3:16](#)). We must be learning from one another, from other Christians. The church is an educational institution as well as a place of worship and transformation.

Paul told Timothy, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” ([2 Timothy 2:2](#)). Every Christian should be able to teach the basics of the faith, to give an answer concerning our hope in Jesus Christ.

People who have already learned should become teachers, to pass the truth along to new generations. Teaching is often done by pastors. But Paul commands *every* Christian to teach.

Small groups provide one way in which this is done. Mature Christians can teach both in word and in example. They can tell others how Christ has helped them. When their faith is weak, they can seek the encouragement of others. When their faith is strong, they can help the weak.



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It is not good for a Christian to be alone.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. ([Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#))

By working together, we help one another grow. Discipleship is often a mutual process, one member helping another member. But some discipleship flows more purposefully, with more direction given to it. God has appointed some people in his church for that very reason:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ([Ephesians 4:11-13](#))

God provides leaders who have the role of preparing others for their roles. The result is growth, maturity, and unity, if we allow the process to work as God intended. Some Christian growth and learning come from peers; some comes from people in the church who have the specific assignment of teaching and modelling the Christian life. People who isolate themselves are missing out on this aspect of the faith.

We have much to learn – and much to apply. Local congregations need to offer Bible studies, classes for new believers, training in evangelism, etc. We need to encourage lay ministry by giving permission, giving training, giving tools, giving control and getting out of the way!

4) Fellowship

The church is sometimes called a fellowship; it is a network of relationships. We all need to give and to receive fellowship. We all need to give and receive love. Fellowship means a lot more than talking to each other about sports, gossip and news. It means sharing lives, sharing emotions, bearing one another's burdens, encouraging one another and helping people who have needs.



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Most people put a mask on to hide their needs from others. If we are really going to help one another, we need to get close enough to one another to see behind the masks. It means that we have to let our own mask fall down a bit so others can see our needs. Small groups are a good place in which to do this. We get to know people a little better and feel a little safer with them. Often, they are strong in the area in which we are weak, and we are strong where they are weak. So by supporting one another, we both become stronger. Even the apostle Paul, although he was a giant in the faith, felt that he could be strengthened in faith by other Christians ([Romans 1:12](#)).

In ancient times, people didn't move very often. Communities would develop in which people knew each other. But in industrialized societies today, people often do not know their neighbors. People are often cut off from families and friends. People wear masks all the time, never feeling safe enough to let people know who they really are inside.

Ancient churches did not need to emphasize small groups – they formed them naturally. The reason we find it necessary to emphasize them today is that society has changed so much. To form the interpersonal connections that ought to be part of Christian churches, we need to go out of our way to establish Christian friendship/ study/prayer circles.

This will take time. It takes time to fulfill our Christian responsibilities. It takes time to serve others. It even takes time to find out what kinds of service they need. But if we have accepted Jesus as our Lord, our time is not our own. Jesus Christ makes demands on our lives. He demands total commitment, not a pretend-Christianity.

5) Service

When I list “service” as a separate category here, I am emphasizing physical service, not the service of teaching or the service of encouraging others. A teacher is also a washer of feet, a person who illustrates the meaning of Christianity by *doing* what Jesus would do. Jesus took care of physical needs such as food and health. In a physical way, he gave his body and his life for us. The early church gave physical help, sharing their possessions with needy people, collecting offerings for hungry people.

Service should be done both inside and outside the church: “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” ([Galatians 6:10](#)). Folks who isolate themselves from other believers are falling short in this aspect of Christianity. The concept of spiritual gifts is important here. God has placed each of us in the body “for the common good” ([1 Corinthians 12:7](#)). Each of us has abilities that can help others.



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Which spiritual gifts do you have? You can take a questionnaire to find out, but much of the questionnaire is based on your experience. What have you done in the past that turned out well? What do other people say you are good at? How have you helped others in the past? The best test of spiritual gifts is serving within the Christian community. Try a variety of roles in the church, and ask others what you do best. Volunteer. Every member should have at least one role in the church. Small groups provide many opportunities for involvement, and many opportunities for feedback on what you do well and what you enjoy doing.

The Christian community also serves the world around us, not only in word, but also in deeds that go with those words. God did not just speak – he also took action. Actions can demonstrate the love of God working in our hearts, as we help the poor, as we offer comfort to the discouraged, as we help victims make sense of their lives. It is those who need practical help who are often the most responsive to the gospel message.

Physical service may be seen as supporting the gospel. It is a method of supporting evangelism. But service should be done with no strings attached, no attempt to get something in return. We serve simply because God has given us some resources and has opened our eyes to see a need. Jesus fed and healed many people without any direct request for them to become his disciples. He did it because it needed to be done, and he saw a need that he could fill.

6) Evangelism

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel,” Jesus commands us. Many of us need a lot of improvement in this area. We have been too conditioned to keep our faith to ourselves. People cannot be converted unless the Father is calling them, but that does not mean that we shouldn’t preach the gospel! Jesus told us that we should.

To be effective stewards of the gospel message, we cannot just let other people do it. We cannot be content to hire other people to do it. Those forms of evangelism are not wrong, but they are not enough. Evangelism needs a personal face. When God wanted to send a message to people, he used people to do it. He sent his own Son, God in the flesh, to preach. Today he sends his children, humans in whom the Spirit is living, to preach the message and give it appropriate shape in each culture.

We need to be active, willing and *eager* to share the faith. We need enthusiasm about the gospel, an enthusiasm that communicates *at least something* about Christianity to our neighbors. (Do they know that we *are* Christians? Does it look like we are *happy* to be Christians?) We are growing and improving in this, but we need more growth.



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I encourage all of us to give thought to how we might be Christian witnesses to people around us. I encourage every member to obey the command to be prepared to give an answer. I encourage every member to read about evangelism, and to apply what they read. We can all learn together and spur one another on to good works. Small groups can provide some training for evangelism, and small groups can often become places of evangelism.

In some cases, members may learn faster than their pastors. That's OK. The pastor can then learn from the member. God has given them different spiritual gifts. To some of our members, he has given a gift for evangelism that needs to be awakened and directed. If the pastor cannot equip this person for this form of ministry, the pastor at least ought to encourage the person to learn, and implement, and provide examples for others, so that the whole church might grow.

Conclusion

I have commented on the purposes of the church, and I have highlighted areas in which we need growth. I hope that people find it helpful to see the bigger picture of what we are doing.

Most people who read this article are faithful and supportive. However, I would like to add a few words for people who don't attend anymore. I cannot know your heart. I do not know all your hurts and questions. But I do know that you are missing out on a significant percentage of the Christian life. The biblical picture throughout is that Christians meet together regularly. If you are not, please consider attending again. There is so much God wants to do in your life. Christianity works best when we work together.

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