

A Church with Purpose

Lesson 3- Pictures of the Church

INTRODUCTION

As we study the purpose of the church, it is important to understand what God intended the church to be. One very powerful way to learn about His purposes for the church is to examine pictures and metaphors for the church in scripture.

In our lesson today, we will examine the church as an organization and an organism. As you go through this study, ask yourself: how does our church measure up to what it should be and what can I do to help?

BIBLE STUDY

I. First, the church is an organization. As Paul the Apostle built churches around the known world, he saw to it that leaders were appointed in each church.

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13. What two different types of positions did Paul establish in the church? Why do you think he had so many requirements for them?

Paul had one leader, or overseer, appointed as head of the church. They are also referred to as elders in other parts of scripture. Read Titus 1:5-9. What was Titus' purpose in Crete? _____

The title elder was used by the Jewish community to describe a religious leader, while overseer was a gentile term for a leader. Both refer to the head of an individual church who was called into ministry with the gift of pasturing, or shepherding, God's people.

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25. What titles were used to describe Jesus in verse 25? What does this imply about the relationship of a Pastor and his congregation?

Of course, we should not ignore the role of the deacon in the church. This is another important part of the church organization. In Acts 6:1-6, we read about the appointment of the first deacons. From this scripture, what can we learn about the scriptural role of deacons in the church then and today?

Finally, we see evidence of a structure of leadership existing that joined church bodies together in responsibility and accountability. Read Acts chapter 15. What seemed to be

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the role of the twelve apostles in regard to the churches? How did the church leaders respond when a dispute arose that divided the church?

God cared enough about the church to give it the structure it needed to establish a lasting organization. But the church is more than an organization. It is also an organism.

II. The church is an organism. Throughout the New Testament, it is described as the body of Christ. Read 1 Corinthians 12:27. Who is a part of the body of Christ?

Read verses 13-26. What is the significance of being the body of Christ?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. What is the most important thing we can do as we try to fulfill our purpose as Christ's body and use our gifts for his glory?

Part of the importance of the church as an organism is that it is, in a very real sense, alive. A healthy church will do what a healthy organism does. Read Ephesians 4:16. What "organic" g-word refers to the nature of a healthy church? What does this mean the church should do?

Read Acts 9:31. How did the church in the book of Acts grow?

Read Ephesians 4:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 3:1-6. How did Paul desire the church to grow? _____

As you can see, the church is not just an organization, it is also an organism that God wants to grow and mature to into a powerful tool for the gospel of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. As a church, we are called to submit to our leadership, grow in number and maturity, and keep our eyes on Jesus. He has laid out his purpose for us as individuals and as the body of Christ. As we examine the purpose of the church, we must continue to run the race set before us and follow God with all our hearts.