



The
FLOW
Adult CURRICULUM

#39

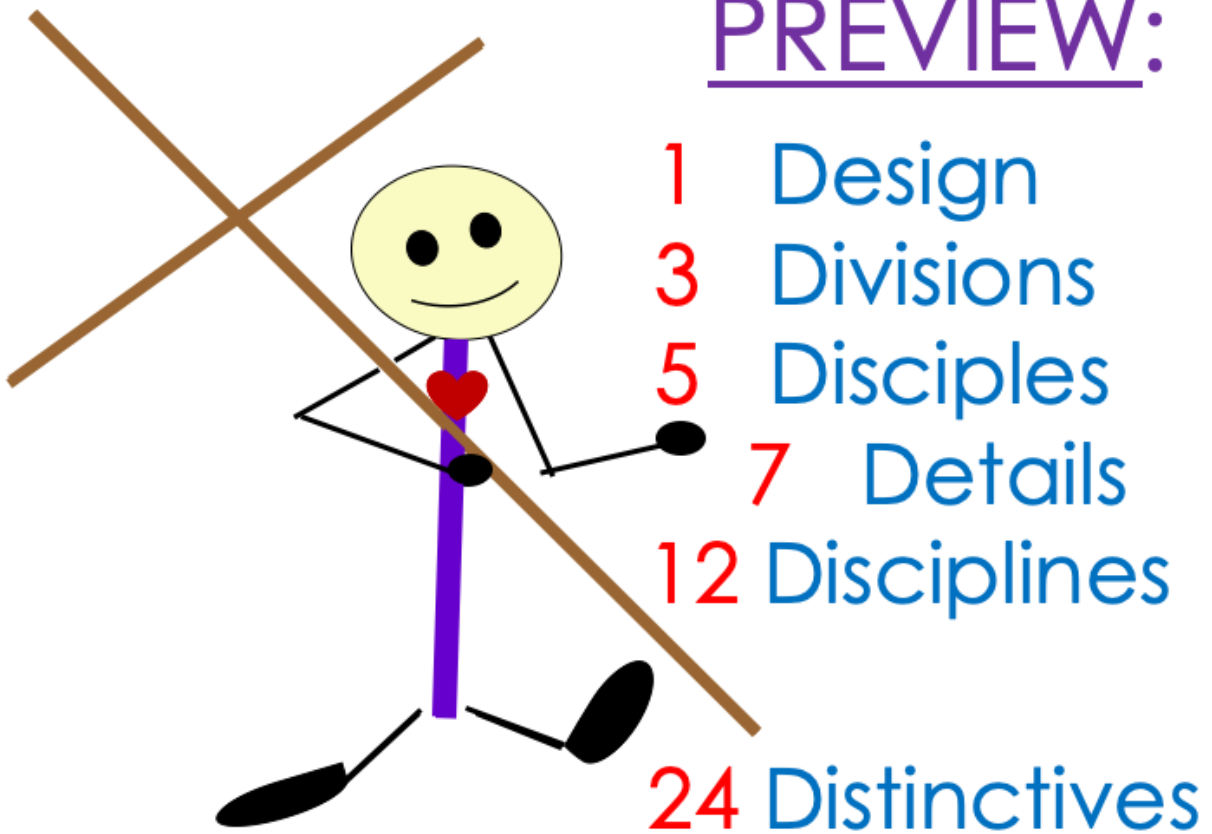
BEing The Church

1 John 3:10

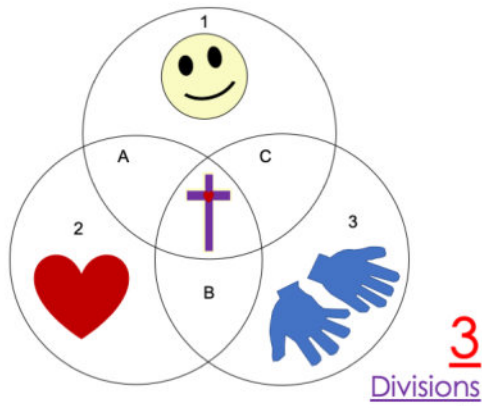
(Come And See Christianity book pages 102)

The FLOW

PREVIEW:

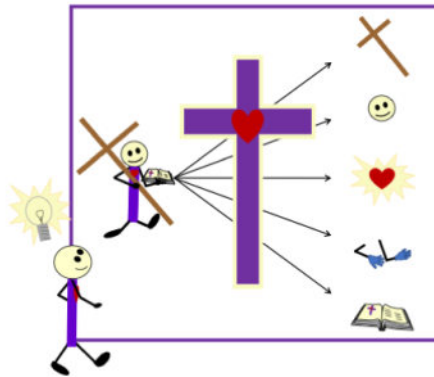


SECTION SIX: 12 Disciplines



The Disciple's "Hands" put into **action** the **truth** & **love** of God's Word, God's will, & God's ways. In short, when **each Christian's Head, Heart, & Hands** are united in purpose & power, the family of God is **living** as the **Body of Christ!**

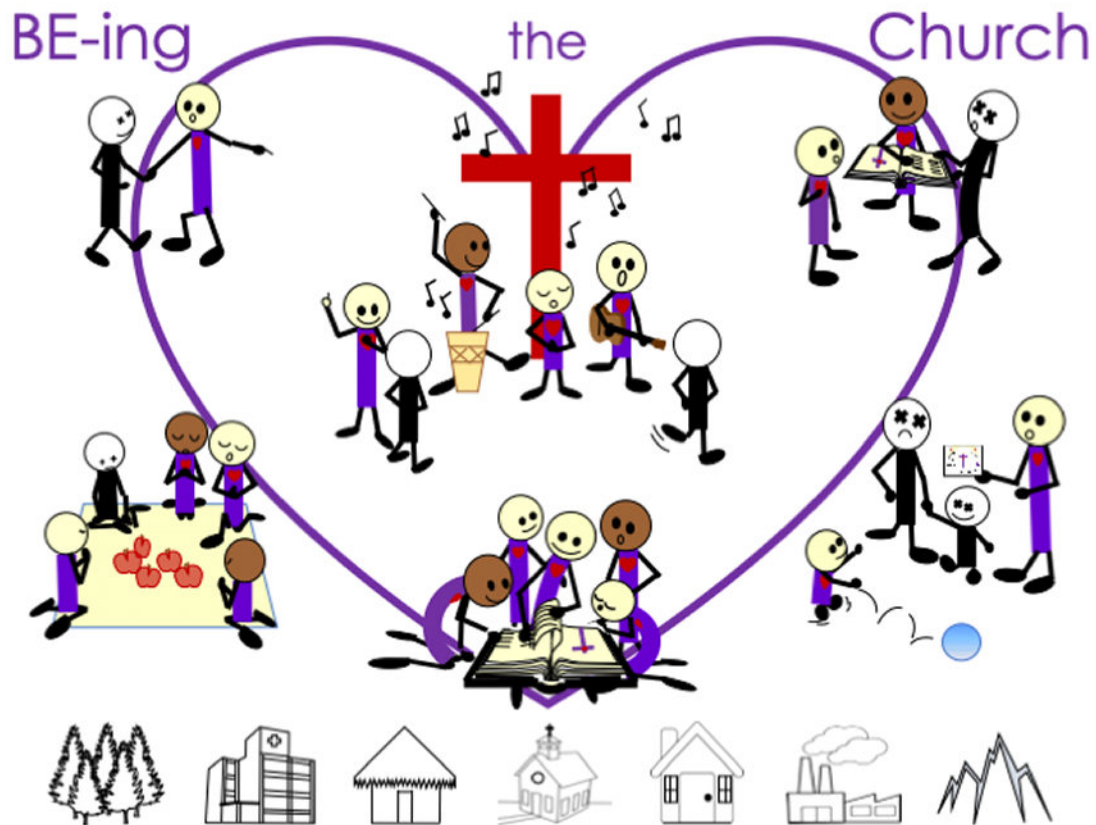
24 Family Distinctives:



24 DISTINCTIVES:

The “distinctives” are a family portrait... When you add God’s Word, God’s Spirit, God’s Truth, God’s love, and God’s people all together, the distinctives are what we look, love, & live like :-)

We are...



INTRO:

As we begin to **see the beautiful, biblical portrait of Christ's faith-filled family** defined and described by God's Word, will, and ways, it is critical to remember that the Holy Bible is to ALWAYS BE our ultimate source, authority, and interpreter in ALL things pertaining to one's understanding of reality and application of truth in love.

Remember,
The biblical Church is Christ's missional family...
Moreover, God's Word reveals our Father's will and His family's ways.

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17**so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Here are ***24 defining & describing HANDS-on DISTINCTIVES of Christianity:***

True Christians are biblically, miraculously, intentionally, missionally, and imperfectly...

1. *Responding to grace*
2. *Repenting of sin*
3. *Trusting the Bible*
4. *Obeying God's Word*
5. *Growing in Christ*
6. *Living Spirit-led*
7. *Praying for guidance*
8. *Following by faith*
9. *Dying to self*
10. *Carrying our cross*
11. *BE-ing The Church*
12. *Loving one another (truly loving one another)*
13. *Equipping the saints*
14. *Exemplifying supernatural unity*
15. *Ministering as ambassadors*
16. *Discerning matters shrewdly*
17. *Worshipping God vertically*
18. *Experiencing Him horizontally*
19. *Proclaiming the Gospel (no matter what)*
20. *Fishing for men*
21. *Making disciplined warriors*
22. *Winning spiritual warfare*
23. *Loving our King*
24. *Serving His kingdom*

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

CONTEXT:

Macro

This lesson marks another major transition point in our curriculum's eye-opening explanation of Christianity. By way of review, we began in Section One with the reality of Almighty God having 1 Divine DESIGN (also known as a biblical worldview and the eternal application of Jesus Christ's Gospel). In Section Two, we addressed the 3 DIVISIONS (Head, Heart, and Hands) that make up the "being" in every human being. Next, in Section Three, we demonstrated how Christianity accounts for, defines, and describes all of humanity, every person, past, present, and future. We noted that all people can be identified as one of the 5 DISCIPLES – Lost, Lover, Learner, Leader, or Lifer. Moving forward, Section Four revealed, engaged, and explained the 7 fundamental DETAILS of God's Divine DESIGN... because **we all need to know what we need to know**. To be more specific, those seven truths are: The Foundations, The Framework, The Facts, The Fight, The Faith, The Family, and the truth about Forever.

Then, in Section Five, which we just completed, our focus shifted from HEAD based truths to 12 HEART shaping exercises or disciplines - each having the potential to strengthen one's personal relationship with Christ, His Church, and their collective mission: bringing God glory by finding & growing more glorifiers.

We used the acronym **J.E.S.U.S.'S. P. S.W.O.R.D.** to outline and harmonize a biblical, missional, and intentional methodology for growing in God's love - & His loving witness. The 12 HEART DISCIPLINES are: **J**ournaling... **E**ating-nothing (fasting)... **S**cripture-intake... **U**nderstudy of Scripture... **S**tewardship... **S**olitude... **P**rayer... **S**erving... **W**orshipping... **O**utreach... **R**elationships... and **D**evelopment.

Now, our curriculum and study will transition to The HANDS. This is where **Christians demonstrate to the world that Christ is in their worship & witness**. Whereas our time spent in the HEAD sections (1-4) focused on the truths that Christians need and seek to LEARN, and our concentration on the 12 HEART DISCIPLINES of section 5 helped us to grow in God's LOVE, our sixth and final section will **walk through the 24 DISTINCTIVES, which explain & exemplify how Christians are to faithfully LIVE... and fully BE The Church... together** – all by God's grace & ALL for His glory!

God's Word puts it this way:

"Let us not love with word and tongue but in action and truth." – 1st John 3:18

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47](#)praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2:46-47

I. **DISTINCTIVES are FRUIT:**

It is important to realize that God’s miraculous and authentic **Christian DISTINCTIVES are the FRUIT of saving grace and faith** (Ephesians 2:1-10). As Jesus described in John 15, people can do nothing outside of their abiding in Him and obeying His Word, will and ways. In short, there will be no fruit unless one remains attached to and provided for by the true Vine and divine Root. With that said, a cautionary note is worth sharing here, beware the counterfeits that abound around the world. ***Plastic fruit is deceptive vs. DISTINCTIVE!***

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

II. **DISTINCTIVES are FAMILY:**



DISTINCTIVES, by definition, are those “distinguishing characteristics that are notable for having a special quality, style, and/or attractiveness” (Dictionary.com).

When it comes to God’s family, the true Church, each Christian and their individualistic DISTINCTIVES are as unique as their potential. At the same time, in the same way that a billion unique snowflakes can be combined to make a single snowstorm, or countless swatches of scrap fabric can be sewn together to make a single quilt, so it is with God’s family. The LORD creates His Christian family with a both/and combination of DISTINCTIVE uniqueness, as well as DISTINCTIVE love and defining unity.

Christianity’s DISTINCT family (ecclesia) has a DISTINCTIVE unity (koinonia).

“By this all people will know that you are My disciple, if you have love for one another.”
– John 13:35

“The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

III. **DISTINCTIVES are WITNESS:**

The most biblical and healthy understandings of Christianity will include an embrace of two overarching and DISTINCTIVE purposes. Namely, per God’s Word, will, and ways, every Christian has received miraculous, saving grace, as well as the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to:

1. Bring glory to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.*

2. BE Christ’s witness.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, **and you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem (locally), and in all Judea and Samaria (regionally), and to the end of the earth (globally).”*

God’s DISTINCTIVE people have been filled with His Holy Spirit for the express purpose of living DISTINCTIVE lives. When the world sees the LORD’s loving family living out their divinely empowered and God-honoring worship, work, and warfare, the resulting fruit will serve as a faithful witness, built with supernatural, grace-based, and missional DISTINCTIVES.

“God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life.”

- John Piper

The Christian Distinctive

What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that it is a *revealed* religion. Christianity is not about our search for God or our means of finding him. Christianity is not a religion that works its way upward. It is all about God coming to us — God in grace making himself known to us and making a way for us to enjoy fellowship with him.

And so, at the very heart of Christianity is, simply, a message — a message from God to us about what he has done to bring us to himself.

If Christianity is distinctively revealed religion, then it is also uniquely *authoritative*. It does not offer itself as the best and highest of human thinking about God or even the best or most successful of human efforts to know God. It professes to be nothing less than the unique word from God, his very own self-disclosure and the record of the actions he has taken in Jesus Christ to bring us into fellowship with himself.

One of Rudyard Kipling's characters declares, "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone; He don't obey no orders unless they is his own." That is to say, human religions lack authority — they form their own ideas and "discover" their own beliefs.

By contrast the Christian is "under orders," because unlike human religions, Christianity is a revealed religion — divinely revealed. We Christians are not our own touchstone of truth, and we do not confuse our ideas about God with His own self-revelation. We learn truth about God not from "inner lights" within ourselves but from God's own objective Word.

And apart from this external authority, there is no Christianity. This, at bottom, is Christianity's leading distinctive.

And so, we **Christians prize Scripture as God's Word. We joyfully submit to it. And we enthusiastically proclaim its message of grace in Jesus Christ to the world.**

- Dr. Fred Zaspel

Micro

God's purpose is to glorify Himself through His church. He is glorified as the church is true to Him and His Word, as the church mirrors His purity and holiness.

Failure to keep the church pure brings discredit to God... and brings to His name great shame in the failure of those who profess to know Him.

- Richard Belcher

Ephesians 2:20-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20](#)built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21](#)in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

[22](#)In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Message

*We desperately need the church for love, for maturity and preparedness, for spiritual care. It is arrogant, rebellious, self-reliant, God-indicting pride to conclude that the church is an optional extra to the Christian life. We need everything God designs for us. Everything. **To reject what God designs for His glory and our good is spiritual suicide. To reject the church is to take your own spiritual life.***

- Thabiti Anyabwile

The True Church can never fail. For it is based upon a rock.

- T.S. Eliot

BIG IDEA: **BEING THE CHURCH is an all-inclusive display & description of missional & biblical Christ-likeness; it explains every witnessing believer's blood-bought, miraculous privilege AND responsibility.**

PREVIEW:

1. BEING
2. THE
3. CHURCH

TEXT:

1 John 3:10

*By this the children of God and the children of the devil are **obvious**: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.*

1. BEING

Illustration:

The word "BE-ING" is like an isolated dot drawn on a blank sheet of paper... Its presence on the page can be easily spotted and defined, so long as it is there to serve a single purpose. However, often times, there is more to a dot (and BEING) than meets the eye... When we put a dot in a defining relationship with another dot or dots, the line which is created, complete with its new and clarifying dimensions, offers a revealing and visual portrait of that dot's broader purpose, as well as its positional direction, length, and relationship to all the other dots that combine to make up the new line...

In the same way, by adding purpose and precision to our description of BEING, a greater understanding of a particular form of BEING can have its power & potential illuminated. ***Just as a line explains its collection of dots, so it is that one's targeted bullseye explains their strategic BEING.***

For example, if we contrast the purposes of BEING a cook with those of BEING a Church, the practices, power, and potential of each quickly stand out and separate from one another. Think about it, while both cooks and churches recognize their need for active BEING (to accomplish their goals), the BEING (and priorities) each one embraces are functionally, and for all practical purposes, faithfully, very different.

Motive, means, & methods matter... when it comes to BEING!

“I believe there are too many practitioners in the church who are not believers.”
- **C. S. Lewis**

Explanation:

“BEING” is a foundational & defining word in God’s family of faith.
At its core, BEING expresses, explains, and exemplifies three comprehensive components of genuine, biblical Christianity.

BEING = Authenticity (...BEING the real deal!)

BEING = Action (...BEING in missional motion!)

BEING = Accuracy (...BEING truth in love!)

Consequently, to understand Christianity, given God’s defining Word, will, and ways, one needs to rightly & righteously understand what it means to BE THE CHURCH, which will include Gospel authenticity, active Christ-likeness, and one’s *‘no matter what’* commitment to biblical truth in love.

The typical church is an activity trap. Having lost sight of the higher purposes for which it was originated, it now attempts to make up for this loss by an increased range of activities.
- **George Odiorne**

Given the insights above, let us always remember... Biblical BEING will always, by definition, include God’s appointed and anointed proportion of “DO-ing.” In short, **BE-ING requires & guarantees DO-ing.** At the same time, ***no amount of mechanical DO-ing will ever ensure missional BE-ING.***

Without theological vision, a vision that wrestles with what it means to be God’s people, in God’s world, under God’s rule, the church inevitably loses both its identity as God’s possession and its purpose as the people and place where God’s glory is displayed in the gospel and God’s praise is declared.
- **Michael Lawrence**

Application:

BEING THE CHURCH is a vertical AND horizontal expression of God's grace, displayed & distributed by God's obedient faith family – THE CHURCH!

From a heart overflowing with gratitude, we will want to honor and glorify God by gratefully offering back to Him the many good gifts He has bestowed on us. We will not go to church to be entertained, to see "what we can get out of it" for our own private gratification, but rather to praise & worship the triune God of grace & glory.

– Anonymous

"We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God... The Christian must bear the burden of a brother. He must suffer and endure the brother. It is only when he is a burden that another person is really a brother and not merely an object to be manipulated. The burden of men was so heavy for God Himself that He had to endure the Cross. God verily bore the burden of men in the body of Jesus Christ. But He bore them as a mother carries her child, as a shepherd enfolds the lost lamb that has been found. God took men upon Himself and they weighted Him to the ground, but God remained with them and they with God. In bearing with men God maintained fellowship with them. It was the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2) that was fulfilled in the Cross. And Christians must share in this law. The brother is a burden to the Christian, precisely because he is a Christian. For the pagan the other person never becomes a burden at all. He simply sidesteps every burden that others may impose upon him."

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

2. THE

Illustration:

"Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, there a church of God exists, even if it swarms with many faults."

- John Calvin

When it comes to speaking English, our words & language can get messy & confusing at times. There can be BOTH subtle AND stark differences between some words that are often used interchangeably. Case in point, we frequently identify and specify things using both “a” and “the” to distinguish.

By way of example, imagine seeing a large bowl of fresh fruit sitting on your friend’s kitchen table. When asked if you would like some fruit... you would be right to say: “Thank you! I’d love to have **a** banana” (assuming there was a banana in the bowl). Under the same conditions, if asked again, you would be just as right and grammatically correct to respond saying, again: “Thank you! I’d love to have **the** banana.” What’s the point?

The point is, while there are times when such interchangeability of words is appropriate, there are other times when it is wise, even necessary to use greater specificity... **Sometimes little words have BIG differences.**

Here is another example. Imagine, rather than asking your friend for fruit, you are in a hospital’s maternity ward, having just been blessed with a new child. Thankfully, your baby is healthy and being well cared for by the hospital staff. Then, it happens... Try to imagine how you would feel and respond if/when the attending nurse told you that he/she is going to go and get you “a” baby from the nursery. “A” baby? “**A**” baby??? Not only would that lack of specificity imply that you would not be getting your own baby, but rather, “a” baby that likely belonged to another family; even worse, such lackadaisical generalities would imply that your baby was most likely being taken by another, unrelated,, disconnected family of complete strangers... Again, **sometimes... little words, in full context, make BIG differences!**

Explanation:

Using “the” as “THE,” a specific, definite article, is never more needed and appropriate than when addressing THE One true, living God and THE CHURCH who is His authentic & active faith family.

*God is great, and worship is our response to His greatness! The church’s primary purpose is to insure that God receives the glory He desires and deserves. That is why the saints gather together to corporately rehearse the greatness of God through worship. The focus of the church should be the worth-ship of God. **Evangelism’s main goal is first and foremost to recruit worshippers for God.** When Christ is embraced as offered in the Gospel, the believer is brought into a personal worshipping relationship with God...*

– **Mike Chastain**

The church isn't just a particular building or congregation but the spiritual fellowship of all who belong to Jesus Christ. If we belong to Christ, we also belong to each other.

- Billy Graham

Application:

The Church is not a gallery for the exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones.

- Henry Ward Beecher

*The Word of God tells us that Christ's church is glorious... [But] today the glory of the church is thickly veiled. It is no exaggeration to assert that in the main it presents a picture of advanced decadence and extreme feebleness... Let it be said emphatically, **the church is where the truth is.** Sound doctrine always has been, is today, and ever will be the foremost mark of the true church... [Tragically,] by and large people do not go to church to learn about God from His infallible Word, but to be tranquilized. And, that the glory of God is both the beginning and the end of common worship does not seem to occur to them.*

- R.B. Kuiper

*The church's unique, God-given purpose does not lie in political activism. **Nowhere in Scripture do we have the directive to spend our energy, our time, or our money in governmental affairs. Our mission lies not in changing the nation through political reform, but in changing hearts through the Word of God. When believers think the growth and influence of Christ can somehow be allied with government policy, they corrupt the mission of the church. Our Christian mandate is to spread the gospel of Christ and to preach against the sins of our time.***

Only as the hearts of individuals in a culture are changed by Christ will the culture begin to reflect that change.

- Anonymous

3. Church

Illustration:

The Church of God, apart from the Person of Christ, is a useless structure. However ornate it may be in its organization, however perfect in all its arrangements, however rich and increased with goods, if the Church is not revealing the Person of Christ, lifting Him to the height where all men can see Him, then the Church becomes an impertinence and a sham, a blasphemy and a fraud, and the sooner the world is rid of it, the better.
– G. Campbell Morgan

Explanation:

At this point in human history, all over the globe, **there are few words in our collective cultures that are in greater need of God-honoring clarification & application than “CHURCH.”** While terms like God, Love, Sin, Discipleship, and other essentials also need care & attention, even so, each of those words will be biblically and missionally connected to CHURCH.

THE CHURCH is God’s miraculously saved and missionally sanctified, set-apart, Spirit-filled, servants of the living God who live sent with a supernatural unity and shared passion... ALL to bring God glory by finding & growing more glorifiers. Thus, **THE CHURCH is a people, not a person... a body, not a building... a family, not a formality... a worshipful gathering that is NOT about you, but ALL about God & His glory.** In other words, THE CHURCH is made up of those who have died to themselves (Galatians 2:20) and who daily decide to pick up their cross (Luke 9:23) and faithfully follow (Luke 14:27) Jesus The Christ... fishing for men (Matthew 4:19)... locally, regionally, and globally (Acts 1:8)... making disciples who will make disciples who will make disciples (2 Timothy 2:1-6)... ALL by God’s grace... ALL through His Gospel... and ALL and ALWAYS for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). Amen & Amen

Acts 2:47

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.
– John Wesley

These then are the marks of the ideal Church – love, suffering, holiness, sound doctrine, genuineness, evangelism and humility. They are what Christ desires to find in His churches as He walks among them.

– John Stott

Application:

“What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the [Holy Ghost](#) can use — men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men, men of prayer.”

- E. M. Bounds

The early church was most useful when it preached the meaning of Christ through the lens of the whole of Scripture. It was most powerful when it maintained integrity with God and other human beings. It was most evangelistic when it understood that adherents of other religions, whether Jewish or Greek or Roman, faced eternal judgment without Christ.

– Paul House

CLOSE:

Ours [God’s adopted CHURCH family] is not a social message, it is not a political message. It is not a philanthropic message. It is not a moral message. It is a message of sin and salvation and forgiveness. Just think what would be happening across the world if Christian ministry was simplified to that.

The church’s goal is not to make unbelievers feel comfortable and nonthreatened. On the contrary, it is to make them feel uncomfortable with their sins and threatened by God’s judgment and the terrors of hell that they face.

– John MacArthur

For What?

The purpose of the church assembling together for the regular worship service is not for evangelism. The church is a gathering or assembly of believers... The purpose of the church meeting together is to edify the saints, equip them for service, and to bring them to maturity (Eph.4:13-15). The early church met together and "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They met together to worship God, and to minister to one another, thus building up the Body of Christ. When saints are taught and trained, then they will be brought to the "fullness of Christ" (Eph.4:13).

A church that is busy ministering to itself, building itself up, edifying itself, and reaches no farther than its own four walls is self-centered. Training, edification, and equipping of the saints is not an end itself, but is a means to an end. God's goal is that the church be built up SO THAT it can effectively function in the world and carry out Christ's will on earth.

- J. Delany

Disturbers are to be rebuked, the low spirited to be encouraged, the infirm to be supported, objectors confuted, the treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught, the lazy aroused, the contentious restrained, the haughty repressed, the poor relieved, the oppressed liberated, the good approved, the evil borne with, and all are to be loved!

- Augustine

So What?

God reveals His glorious majesty in the highest heavens, His fearful justice in the hell of the damned; His wise and powerful providence is manifest throughout the whole world; but His gracious love and mercy in, and unto His Church here upon the earth.

- John Robinson

“One hundred religious persons knit into a unity by careful organization do not constitute a church any more than eleven dead men make a football team. The first requisite is life, always.”

- A. W. Tozer

Now What?

“I lack the fervency, vitality, life, in prayer which I long for. I know that many consider it fanaticism when they hear anything which does not conform to the conventional, sleep-inducing eulogies so often rising from Laodicean lips; but I know too that these same people can acquiescently tolerate sin in their lives and in the church without so much as tilting one hair of their eyebrows.”

- Jim Eliot

A church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood, a church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness, is a church that has no right to be.

There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this church, distinguished for holiness.

It is the Christian’s crown and glory.

An unholy church?

It is of no use to the world and of no esteem among men. Oh, it is an abomination, hell’s laughter, heaven’s abhorrence. And the larger the church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become when it becomes unholy.

The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy church.

- C.H. Spurgeon

The mission of the Church is missions!

- Oswald Smith

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

"Biblical Birthmarks Are Obvious!"

1 John 2:29 – 3:10

November 3, 2013

Sermon Series: BE The Church