

A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTARY
PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES

VISION

BOOK ONE

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Introduction

Have you ever noticed how some people are able to weather the storms of life while others fall apart during tough times? Have you wondered what makes some so strong while others are so weak? During times of uncertainty and upheaval in the world and in the Church, we are confronted with the need for a sure foundation. We can understand why things fall apart in the world, but it is hard to understand church splits and fallen ministers. However, these events should not dishearten us or cause us to wrongly judge others. Rather, we should examine our own lives to be sure we are stable. We need to answer the question, "On what foundation am I building my life?"

Laying the foundation is the first step in building a house. Since the foundation bears the weight of the whole structure, it must be laid well. When a firm foundation is laid in a believer's life, he can weather the storms of life. However, if this sure foundation is not laid, his house will fall during times of testing. Since the foundation determines whether we stand or fall, we are beginning **First Principles** with an emphasis on a sure foundation.

The apostle Paul stated that he was a master builder who laid the foundation upon which each of us is to build our life (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). We know that Paul is not the one who laid the foundation of salvation based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ; God was. Paul's message was "... *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Therefore, the foundation he was talking about is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached and taught by the apostles (Ephesians 2:20; Acts 2:42).

This foundation is laid in our lives when we are born again and is built upon by continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. In the life of the Church or individual believer, this foundation is the **basic Christian doctrine and experience upon which all later growth and development depends**. In other words, we must get the basics down before we can go on to maturity. We must learn to walk before we can run. We must learn the ABC's before we can read and write. Likewise, we must walk in the light God gives us before we will receive new light. Correct doctrine is not enough; we must know and do.

Matthew 7:24-27 *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who **hears** these sayings*

*of Mine, and **does not do** them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.*

The laying of a firm foundation is so important that we dedicate six lessons to each of the foundation stones: Repentance from Dead Works, Faith Toward God, the Doctrine of Baptisms, Laying on of Hands, Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgement. The Book of Hebrews states that these are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 5:12-6:2). Our hope is to see the foundation stones firmly laid in your life so you will not fall during times of testing but will stand victoriously.

What Is the Foundation

The Greek word for foundation is “themelios,” which means to be grounded, established, made firm and unwavering.”

The foundation of the Christian faith is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other foundation that can be laid aside from that which is already laid, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). For years churches have centered around one doctrinal truth or another rather than around The Truth, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, truths separated from The Truth are divisive. Outside of an active relationship with Jesus, we will be bound in legalism and mere doctrines. No truth can be properly understood by a person who does not **abide** in Christ. It is not enough to know about Christ; we must truly know Him through intimate fellowship.

The foundation stones, according to Hebrews Chapter 6, are the elementary principles of Christ. Establishing these stones is a basic need in Church life. Throughout Scripture the Church is referred to as a building, a house or holy temple. Every building needs a foundation that is secure, solid and reliable, or it will not stand. In prophecy, the Church has a sure foundation is Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. In both the Old and New Testaments, we find that the Holy Spirit uses different words to speak of the Church which are rich in symbolism. One of the words that often prophetically symbolized the Church is Zion.

1 Peter 2:6 ... *Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious...*

Isaiah 28:16 *Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily."*

Within the life of the believer, each of these foundation stones is established because of intimate fellowship with the Lord. To build the foundation of Solomon's temple, great care was exercised to cut large, costly, solid stones. In like manner, every foundational stone is precious to our experience with the Lord and should be laid with the utmost care.

1 Kings 5:17 *And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple.*

As a wise master builder, Paul laid the foundation in every church he established (1 Corinthians 3:10). He had a systematic teaching method for laying the foundation which included repentance, baptism, faith, etc.

1 Corinthians 4:17 *For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*

Establishing the Foundation

We are surrounded today with a society of low morality, unstable economy, humanistic education, broken families, and apathetic churches. The very seams of our society are coming undone, exposing things as they really are.

Everything that can be shaken is being shaken now. We must see through eyes of understanding because God's purpose is to shake and test all things. More importantly, He will establish those things which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:27). The instrument He uses to shake will also establish. **The Word of God is the main instrument which He uses to test and establish.**

Let us examine two passages of scripture to clarify this point:

Haggai 2:6–7 *"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations,*

Hebrews 12:26–27 ... *"Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that*

and I will fill this temple with glory,' are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.
says the LORD of hosts.

The writer of the book of Hebrews quotes directly from Haggai by stating that in the last days we would see the shaking of all things for the purpose of finding those things which remain unshakable. As God spoke over Israel in the wilderness, the whole earth shook. Out of His mouth came a fiery law which caused the people to back away from His presence. They were afraid of being consumed, so they asked Moses to go before the presence of God on their behalf. God spoke from the mountain and His voice made the mountain tremble and the earth shake.

At that time God spoke from the mountain. **Now** He is speaking from heaven and His voice shakes both heaven and earth to separate what cannot be shaken. In these last days, He speaks to His Church and establishes her. His Church is and will be unshakable.

After establishing the sure foundation, the blessings of God will begin to fall upon the Church. Haggai, who prophesied the shaking and the glory that would follow (Haggai 2:6-9), also prophesied that when the foundation was laid, God's blessing would fall upon His people (Haggai 2:18-19). Their barns-would be full, their vines laden with grapes, their fig and olive trees would bear a bountiful harvest. The blessing would begin on the same day the foundation was established. During Haggai's days as a prophet, the house of the Lord laid in waste (Ezra 6:14). If the foundation of the temple was in ruins, there was no blessing.

If the Church is yielding to God's Holy Spirit, she will see things shake that should be shaken, such as traditions, form, legalism, and sin. She will also be established on a firm foundation in the unshakable truths of the Word of God. Only then will she be able to handle the blessing and true prosperity which will follow. **The true Church will be established!**

Isaiah 2:2 *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.*

Dangers Of Neglecting the Foundation

The book of James says that if we do not practice what we have heard we deceive ourselves. When one is not a doer of the Word, his foundation cannot be laid. Many today have insight into the Word, but do not follow the principles which

they have learned. They can quote scriptures on repentance, but do not practice it in their daily lives. Therefore, they become lawless or workers of iniquity.

James 1:23-24 *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

Hearing the Word alone is not enough! We neglect to lay the foundation when we do not do what we have heard. In the parable of the Wise and Foolish Men (Matthew 7:24-27), the only difference between the two houses was their foundations. Realize, the storm did not destroy the house; the lack of a foundation destroyed the house. Both men heard the Word, but only the wise man did it. His foundation was properly laid through **doing the Word** and his house stood.

If we neglect the foundation stones, our building will crumble and fall in the time of testing. Also, neglecting the foundation stones indicates that we are unwilling to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 7:21 *Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

If we neglect the foundation stones, we will not know the freedom and life-changing experience that each principle of Christ provides.

2 Timothy 2:19 *Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

If we neglect the foundation stones, we will not be able to go on to maturity in Christ but will continue to be a babe on milk.

Hebrews 5:12-13 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

Having a sure foundation in our lives is of absolute importance! We must be sure to be grounded in God's Word and in relationship with Jesus Christ. When our foundation is securely laid, we can stand victorious and go on to maturity.

Responsive Reading

Question 1: What is the foundation of the Christian life?

The foundation of the Christian life is relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11 *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Question 2: What is the foundation based on?

The foundation is based on the Word of God and our obedient response to it.

James 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

Question 3: What does the foundation consist of?

The foundation stones consist of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Hebrews 6:1-2 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Question 4: What are the results of a sure foundation?

- a. Churches that are laying the foundation are seeing a steady, continuous growth of properly birthed and founded believers.

Acts 2:42, 47 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.... praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

- b. Having a solid foundation will produce unity in the house of God because all the members will be speaking the same thing, having the same mind and the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10 *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

- c. Laying the foundation will cause thanksgiving among the people of God.

Ezra 3:11 *And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.*

- d. Having a foundation will prepare and train the church for solid ministry.

Ephesians 4:14-15 *... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine ... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ...*

- e. Church leadership properly functions in ministry when a firm foundation is laid.

1 Timothy 4:6 *If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed,*

- f. When the foundation is properly laid, it will cause the building to be structurally sound so that it will stand firm during times of testing.

Matthew 7:24-25 *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

Homework

1. Complete the following: "The foundation is the basic _____ and _____ upon which all later growth and development depends."
2. What is God's purpose for testing truth in our lives and how does He test us?
3. Complete the following: "Within the life of the believer each of these foundation stones is established as a result of _____ with the Lord."
4. What happens to us if we do not have the foundation properly laid in our life?
5. How has the Word been an **instrument of testing** as well as an **instrument for establishing** in your life recently?

THE PLAN AND PURPOSE OF GOD

Understanding God's Eternal Purpose

Some Christians wander aimlessly through life because they have no idea of God's purpose for their lives. Yet, the Bible reveals that God has an **eternal purpose and plan** which transcends time, space, and creation. All history is a record of that purpose and plan. By Him, all things are held together, and nothing can occur without His foreknowledge. When God created all things, it was not without purpose; He knew all things, beginning to end (Acts 15:18). It is exciting to know that in this present hour, God has made His purpose plain. In fact, this lesson underscores the simplicity of God's plan.

Think of a jeweler making a long pearl necklace. He strings each pearl together and then adds a clasp. When the job is done, he holds the necklace by the ends and looks at the finished product. Much work occurred between the beginning and end, yet in the jeweler's mind, he saw the finished product from the start. Even so, each event of history leads to the consummation of God's overall plan, which He already views as completed (Acts 15:18).

Isaiah 46:9–10 *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'...*

To get a clearer understanding, we must begin with God. If we begin with creation, then the fall of man becomes a surprise and an embarrassment to God. However, God knew **before** the foundation of the world that man would fall. He knew about sin and had a plan for redemption, yet in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 there is no mention of sin. Therefore, God had something else in mind, an **eternal purpose** which we need to understand.

When Lucifer rebelled against God's authority he was judged and cast out of heaven (Ezekiel 28:14-19). From that point on, Satan's goal was to destroy God's kingdom. However, God purposed from the beginning to establish His kingdom through man. Therefore, He formed Adam in His own image. When God breathed the breath of life into Adam, he became a "speaking spirit." Adam contained the very likeness of God and was able to fellowship with God.

Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air,*

and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

When man sinned, he became separated from the presence of God. Also, he forfeited his position, allowing Satan to usurp his authority. In so doing man subjected himself to the enemy's domain (2 Peter 2:19). However, God did not leave man in this condition. He took the initiative to restore man to his original relationship and position of authority by forming the nation of Israel from whom the Redeemer of mankind would come.

Jesus, The Eternal Seed

God was not caught by surprise when man sinned. He had provided the perfect sacrifice through Jesus Christ from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). The first prophecy in the Bible concerns this truth:

Genesis 3:15 *"... And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*

God promised that the woman's Seed would crush Satan's head. The Seed was the promised Redeemer who would ultimately destroy Satan and his kingdom. Since Satan is not omniscient (all-knowing), he did not know when the Seed would come or who the Seed would be. Therefore, he attempted to corrupt and destroy all seed.

Satan used Cain to kill Abel, who was the promised seed. However, God had a substitute seed, Seth, through whom the lineage of Jesus was established (Genesis 4:25).

In Egypt, Pharaoh commanded that all the male Hebrew babies be murdered at birth (Exodus 1:12-16).

King Saul tried to kill David, who was in the lineage of Jesus (1 Samuel 18:11).

Athaliah destroyed all the royal seed of the kingdom except for Joash, in whom the lineage of Jesus continued (2 Kings 11).

Haman attempted to destroy the Jews during Esther's time (Esther 3:8-9).

Even at the time of Christ's birth, Herod killed all the male children in the Bethlehem area under two years of age (Matthew 2:16).

Despite all these attempts, God thwarted Satan’s plan and through his seed crushed Satan’s head (Colossians 2:15; 1 John 3:8). This seed (Jesus) fell into the ground, died and brought forth abundant fruit (John 12:24; Galatians 3:16). This was an essential part of God’s plan. Without the death of the Seed, it would be impossible to bring forth more seed.

Isaiah 53:10 *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed...*

Jesus is the "... *firstborn among many brethren*" (Romans 8:29). He has made the way for us to be "... *children of God... counted as the seed*" (Romans 9:8). God is a loving Father who desires many children. Even though "... *salvation is of the Jews*" (John 4:22), God in His mercy has extended salvation to Gentiles of all nations (John 10:16, Romans 11:30-31, Ephesians 2:12-13). His eternal purpose for us as individuals is that we become His children conformed to the image of Jesus and that we glorify Him in all things. He has "... *predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ...*" (Ephesians 1:5); He wants us to be like Jesus (Romans 8:29); and He wants our lives to glorify Him (Ephesians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 10:31). This is God’s will for each of us.

God’s eternal purpose is to gather all things together in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10). Within God’s eternal purpose, we find **the Church**. As Christ’s body resident in the world, the Church will fulfill God’s eternal purpose by making known "*the manifold wisdom of God... to the principalities and powers in heavenly places...*" (Ephesians 3:9-11).

In the first chapter of Ephesians there is a beautiful, clear description of God's purpose for the Church. The following chart is taken from The Ultimate Intention, by DeVern Fromke (Copyright© 1963, Sure Foundation, with slight changes, used by permission).

WHO	"He" (God, the Father) - verse 3
WHAT	"chose us" (picked out His bride the Church for His family) - verse 4
HOW	"In Him" (Christ-the eternal Son involved in all aspects)- verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10
WHEN	"before the foundation of the world ... "-verse 4
WHY	"for Himself," as His own (for His pleasure, glory and satisfaction)-verse 4
WHERE	that we should be "before Him" ("in His immediate presence," K. Wuest)-verse 4

The Church has been part of God's eternal purpose since the foundation of the world. The whole concept of the Church can be found throughout the Bible, not just in the New Testament

The Greek word for "church" is "ekklesia," meaning the "called out ones." It is used 114 times in the New Testament and 78 times in the Septuagint (Old Testament translated into Greek).

Understanding Israel in the Old Testament is fundamental in gaining insight into the New Testament Church. The people of God in both Testaments are a part of the same plan. Israel was the "... *congregation in the wilderness...*" (Acts 7:38). The Old Testament Israel looked forward to Christ and the New Testament Church is built on Christ. God promised to be with His people Israel and that through them all nations of the earth would be blessed. These promises are also for the Church today, which the Holy Spirit calls the spiritual seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:29).

Genesis 12:2-3 *"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Isaiah 2:2 *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.*

Without replacing these literal promises made to Israel, the writer of the book of Hebrews makes a spiritual application to believers.

Hebrews 12:22-23 *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 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*

In this passage, Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem are synonymous. This speaks of the Church, the people of God. Mount Zion in Jerusalem was established as God's habitation. This was the place where David brought the presence of God (the Ark) and set it in the Tabernacle. It was also known as the city of David, the place in which David ruled. Please note the following passages of scripture referring to Zion:

Psalm 87:2-3, 5-7 *The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! ... And of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her." The LORD will record, when He registers the peoples: "This one was born there." Both the singers and the players on instruments say, "All my springs are in you."*

Psalm 132:13-17 *For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation: "This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed... "*

Isaiah 28:16 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily... "*

Many terms used in the New Testament describing the Church are spiritually applied from the Old Testament description of Israel. The following chart is adapted* from The New Testament Church and Its Ministries by Bill Scheidler (Copyright © 1980, Bible Temple, used by permission).

TERM USED	O.T. ISRAEL*	N.T. CHURCH
Chosen People	Deuteronomy 10:15	1 Peter 2:9
A Holy Nation	Exodus 19:6	1 Peter 2:9
The People of God	Psalm 100:3	2 Corinthians 6:16
A Priesthood	Exodus 19:6	1 Peter 2:9
God's Treasure	Exodus 19:5	Matthew 13:44
The Bride or Wife	Isaiah 54:6, 62:5	2 Corinthians 11:2-3
God's Vineyard	Isaiah 5:7	Mat 20:1; 1 Cor. 3:9
God's Inheritance	Isaiah 19:25	1 Peter 5:3
God's Flock	Jeremiah 23:3	1 Peter 5:2
A House	Ezekiel 18:31	1 Timothy 3:15
A Light	Isaiah 60:1, 3	Matthew 5:14
God's Witness	Isaiah 43:10	Acts 1:8

We are at a crucial hour when God desires to fulfill His purpose through the Church. As His seed, we are being conformed to the image of Jesus so that we may show God's glory in all the earth.

Israel did not see God's purpose fulfilled because of their lack of faith and power (Hebrews 4:2). According to Romans 11:11-14 God's end-time fulfillment will be realized when the Jewish people (Israel) find acceptance before God by faith in their Jewish Messiah - Jesus. Through Christ's death and resurrection, the New Testament Church was born. Endowed with God's presence, the Church will see the overall intention of God fulfilled and will be instrumental in Israel fulfilling her calling.

The Church and Israel are God's instruments to bring about His purpose in the earth. He has no other plan! Let us "*pray for the peace of Jerusalem...*" for those who love her will prosper (Psalm 122:6). But let us also capture the vision of what God wants to do through each of us as His precious seed, **the Church**.

Question 1: Are we alive at this present time by chance or accident?

No, God has a plan for mankind as a whole and for us as individuals.

***Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Question 2: What is God's eternal purpose for all things?

God's eternal purpose is to gather all things together in Christ.

***Ephesians 1:9-10** ... having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ*

Question 3: Does the Church have a part in this eternal plan?

Yes, God's eternal purpose involves bringing all things under the headship of Christ through the Church.

***Colossians 1:17-18** And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 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.*

Question 4: How do we as individuals fit into this plan?

God's eternal purpose is to bring forth many sons into eternal fellowship with Himself.

***Galatians 4:4-5** But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

Question 5: What responsibilities do we have in God's eternal purpose?

- a. We are moving in God's eternal purpose when we manifest the glory of God.

Ephesians 1:11-12 ... being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

- b. We are moving in God's eternal purpose when we manifest the wisdom of God.

Ephesians 3:10-11 ... to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord

- c. We are moving in God's eternal purpose when His character is being formed in and manifested through us.

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Question 6: How do we as individuals become a part of God's eternal purpose?

We begin flowing in God's plan when we are born again and adopted into His family.

Ephesians 1:5 ...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will... .

Homework

1. To get a clearer understanding of God's eternal purpose, we must begin with _____.
2. Who will ultimately fulfill and complete God's purpose? Please explain.
3. The people of God _____ are a part of the same plan.
4. How are the terms "Mount Zion" and "the Church" related?
5. Since you are a part of the "ekklesia", the called-out ones, what do you see as the purpose of God for your life?

RESTORATION

Introduction

To be birthed into the vision of any local church, it is necessary to understand what God is doing in the Church today. It has been the tendency of some to see the Church only from a historical perspective - like in the Book of Acts or the great revivals of the past. We can learn from what God has done, but we must not limit His present move or actions by His past ways.

As we shared in the previous lesson, God has an ultimate purpose for the Church: to manifest God's glory, wisdom, and character so that He "... *might gather together in one all things in Christ ...*" (Ephesians 1:10). This is the result of an active relationship with the living Christ. We serve a God who is moving by His Spirit as the **I AM** in the present tense. He is not just I WAS, or I WILL BE, but He is always **I AM**.

When writing to believers in the early church, the Apostle Peter earnestly desired that they would be "... ***established in the present truth***" (2 Peter 1:12). "Present truth" is the truth which was revealed to them at that time.

The early church understood the importance of moving with God in the present tense. When standing before the Sanhedrin court, the disciples had an amazing testimony concerning those things they had personally **seen and heard**. The religious leaders "... *realized that they had been with Jesus*" (Acts 4:13). Today's world needs to see the same type of people moving with God in the present tense. The Church should testify to a **now** relationship with Him.

In hindsight, we see a glorious Church in the first century. Comparing it to the Church of today makes us wonder if we will ever see similar Christianity again. Yet the Bible makes plain that God is restoring truth to the Church in these final hours of history. This is what **restoration** is all about.

Haggai 2:9 *"The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place, I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts.*

Joel 2:23-25 *Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you - **the former rain, and the latter rain** in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the*

crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you."

Acts 3:20-21 " ... and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

Restoration Defined

The Hebrew word for "restoration" is "shalam." It means "to restore something stolen or owed."

The Greek word for "restoration" is "apokathistamai." It literally means "to set something back to its original state." Its fullest meaning is "to be complete, to finish, to refresh, to set again, to put back into existence or use that which has been lost."

The Old Testament has many examples of restoration when loss was incurred. When real property was stolen the offender was responsible to make restitution. Here are some examples of this principle:

1. Restoration had to be made either in a greater measure, more substance or better quality than that which was originally taken. So, through restoration one gained more than he had lost. This principle is clear in the following biblical principles of restoration:
 - a. **Exodus 22:1-9.**
 1. Five oxen were restored for the loss of one ox.
 2. Four sheep were restored for the loss of one.
 3. Two animals were restored for each one taken.
 4. The best quality was to be given when making restoration.
 5. Twice as much money was restored for a theft.
 - b. **Leviticus 6:1-5.**

An additional 20 percent was restored to that which was lost.
 - c. **Luke 19:8.**

Even in New Testament days, the principle of restoration was mentioned. Zacchaeus wanted to restore four times the amount of money he had gained dishonestly.
2. Sarah is an example of physical restoration. The Bible describes her as being well stricken (smitten) with age. She was 90 years old - an old woman who

was past the age of childbearing. However, God had promised that she would bear

Abraham's son, who would be the father of a great nation. This could happen only through restoration.

If we follow along in the Genesis narrative, we will notice that there was an apparent physical change in Sarah's appearance. Abimelech, king of Gerar, obviously wanted her in his harem (Genesis 20:1-18), which leads us to believe that God miraculously restored her physical beauty. She was restored to such an extent that she was able to conceive and bear the promised seed, Isaac.

Although man can restore physical property, only God can restore spiritual things (Joel 2:25). He alone can cause change in the lives of believers and in the Church. By God's purpose - not man's plans - the years the Church has lost are being restored.

The Present Truth of the Early Church

The power of the Holy Spirit which fell on the Day of Pentecost transformed the disciples into dynamic witnesses whom Christ used to establish His Church. The apostles gave themselves to prayer and study of the Word which caused the early church to operate in truth. The New Testament was written during this time by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through such men as Peter, James, John, Luke, and Paul. They experienced:

1. Salvation by faith (Acts 16:30-31)
2. Water baptism by immersion (Acts 8:38-39)
3. Holiness and sanctification from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17)
4. Healing by the power of the Spirit (Acts 5:16)
5. Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)
6. Laying on of hands and prophecy (Acts 13:3)
7. Resurrection of the dead (Acts 9:36-40)
8. Eternal judgment (Acts 5:1-11)
9. Praise and worship (Acts 16:25)
10. Joy (Acts 13:52)

The Church Through the Decline

Throughout the New Testament, the early church was warned against slow deterioration. The apostles could look ahead a few hundred years to see a Church which would err from its commitment to truth, holiness, and sincere faith. Here are examples of their warnings of this decline:

Acts 20:29 *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."*

2 Peter 3:3-4 *... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? ..."*

2 Timothy 4:3-4 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.*

There is a span of approximately 60 years between the writings of the apostles (which ended around 65 A.D.) and the writings of the first century church fathers (which began around 125 A.D.). During this lapse of communication, decline had already begun to grip the Church. As the Church expanded throughout the world, it picked up many pagan practices from other cultures. These compromises were soon tolerated as commitment to the Word and the local church was de-emphasized.

How could the Church which had experienced such power, grace, liberty, and pure worship fall into the death grip of the enemy? This decline did not happen overnight but took hundreds of years. With the slow deterioration of the Church, many **revelation truths** were either formalized, diluted or lost altogether. The Church reverted from life in the Spirit to a slowly encrusting heartbeat of lifeless liturgy. By the sixth century, the Church had lost almost all truth it possessed in its beginning. The material below shows what the Church lost during its first 500 years. It is taken from Present Day Truths by Dick Iverson (Copyright © 1975, Bible Temple, used by permission):

"1. 30-100 A.D. From the day of Pentecost to the death of John, the Church was a powerful instrument for the extension of the Kingdom of God. From the death of the last of the original Twelve Apostles we have no evidence that this type of **Apostolic ministry** continued.

"2. 130 A.D. Because the Apostolic ministry was no longer functioning in the Early Church, the parallel ministry of the **Prophet** soon vanished. With the loss of this ministry the doctrine of the **Laying on of Hands** became nothing more than ritual. By 140 A.D. prophetic utterance of any kind in the local congregation was very scarce.

"3. 150 A.D. With such lack of dependence on the Spirit of God and an actual persecution of the biblical manifestations of the Spirit by the established churches, it is not surprising that the biblical experience of the **Baptism of the Spirit** and the **Gifts of the Spirit** were no longer evidenced by 150 A.D. Much of the external form of these things was maintained, but the people had no living encounter with the Spirit.

"4. 160 A.D. As men no longer demonstrated a Spirit-controlled life, it became impractical to have a **plurality of eldership**. Without a strong unity of the Spirit, multiple leadership tends to pull against another. As a result, monarchical bishops became the norm by 160 A.D., and men began to appraise clergy based on natural ability.

"5. 180 A.D. If man is not able to look to the Spirit for direction and guidance, he must look to other men. So, it was with the smaller and more recently established Local Churches by 180 A.D. Many of these smaller Churches became so dependent on larger Churches that they lost their **Local Church autonomy**. By this time many such Churches were looking to Rome for direction, and thus, early seeds of Roman primacy are developing by this early date.

"6. 200 A.D. By this time the Spirit had very little control over the lives of individuals. Very little of the body of Church doctrine and truth became the actual experience of believers. A gap began to form between doctrine and experience. The external form remained the same in many cases, but the spiritual awareness of what was contained in the form was beginning to vanish. It was about this time that baptism began to be abused in many ways. In 185 A.D. we have the first record of an infant baptism.

"7. 210 A.D. Since the distinction between the clergy and the laity was so acute by this time, the concept of the **priesthood of all believers** was not understood or acknowledged. Therefore, the ministry of the body of Christ (Body-ministry) was not at all understood. Because of these trends, the truth was soon altered to line up with experience, and the ministers or clergy were the only ones designated 'priests'.

"8. 225 A.D. Most Churches by this time were not receiving direct guidance and teaching from the Spirit of God. They could, therefore, no longer trust the Spirit to bring and maintain unity of the faith. To enforce and maintain an external unity, **creeds** or statements of beliefs, began to be written as criteria for Church membership.

"9. 240 A.D. By the middle of the third century much worldliness had crept into the Church. Without the power of the Spirit to lead a separate life, the standard of **holiness** and the sanctified life held up by the Early Church became an unrealistic life for many. Some recognized this problem and began the first monasteries at this time. This made provision for a double standard in Christian living. There was the 'average Christian' and the ascetic who tried to lead the 'deeper life'.

"10. 300 A.D. Because of the rigor of these ascetic groups, there developed an over emphasis on works as a sort of merit for eternal life. This merely laid the groundwork for what was to come later under Constantine.

"11. 313 A.D. Constantine became ruler of the great Roman Empire and chose Christianity as the best possible of religions. At this time the state began to exercise control over the affairs of the established Church, and men of little or no religious experience became instrumental in shaping Church doctrine. Even the outcome of the Council of Nicaea was the result of the efforts of Constantine.

"12. 350 A.D. About 350 A.D., Christianity being the religion of the state, all those who were not in the Church were persecuted. As can well be expected, many heathens preferred to be called "Christian" rather than face the sword. At this time the experience of **salvation** with the doctrine of **justification by faith** and the new birth into the Kingdom of God was no longer emphasized.

"13. 380 A.D. This movement culminated with Theodosius who made Rome, which had already been the capital of the empire, the final authority in Church matters as well."

Thus, the Church entered the period known as the Dark Ages. It continued to sink deeper and deeper into darkness until the 15th century.

God's Plan of Restoration

During the 15th century, revelation truth began to be restored to the Church. God was once again breathing life into His Church.

1. 1400 A.D. The first translation of the entire Bible from the original scriptures was made available to the common people under the ministry of John Wycliffe. This is important because revelation is always based upon God's Word.
2. 1517 A.D. Martin Luther was used to restore the most foundational of all truth - **Justification by Faith**.
3. 1524 A.D. The Anabaptist movement was started as it saw the restoration of **Water Baptism**.
4. 1750 A.D. Through the ministry of John Wesley, the truth of **Sanctification and Holiness** was restored to the church.
5. 19th Century A.B. Simpson and others were used to restore the truth of **Healing** to the church.
6. 1901 A.D. The **Baptism of the Holy Spirit** came in a mighty outpouring upon the church.
7. 1906 A.D. The **Gifts of the Spirit** began to be restored in the Azusa Street Revival.
8. 1948 A.D. The truths of the **Five-fold Ministry, Laying on of Hands, and Praise and Worship** were restored through a mighty Canadian revival.

God moved in revival when each of these truths were being revealed. However, denominations were established basing their ministry on only one truth. When new truths were restored, these denominations were usually the first to persecute those who were following the present movements of God. For example, the Roman Church persecuted Luther's followers because of their position on justification by faith. In turn, Luther's followers persecuted the Anabaptists because of their position on water baptism. The persecuted became the persecutors due to their unwillingness to accept present truth.

We need to learn from historic errors of the Church and continue to yield to the Holy Spirit as He continues to restore the Church unto full stature. If we fail to do so, we will become "old wineskins" unable to hold on to God's truth (Matthew 9:17).

Restoration Applied to the Church Today

For many years, the Church has made attempts to fulfill the plan of God through its own programs without the Spirit. The need for restoration within the ministry of the local church is apparent. Yet, since the turn of the century, the amount of truth being restored has increased greatly. It seems as if each new decade is seeing a greater illumination of spiritual truth.

With abundance of truth, our accountability increases. We must maintain these precious truths without allowing them to become meaningless activities or empty form. We must not allow truth to become antiquated. When truth deteriorates into form or ritual, it becomes legalistic, grieves the Holy Spirit, and chokes out life. We must not become stagnant by camping on one truth, for this will lead to a narrow perspective of God's overall purpose. The following chart shows the result of principles becoming legalistic and lifeless.

PRINCIPLE	Can become	LAW
Revelation Truth	→	Dogma
Life	→	Legalism
Organism	→	Organization
Freedom	→	Form
Repentance	→	Penance
Worship	→	Ritual
Spontaneous Praying	→	Written Prayers
Glorious Processions	→	Religious Pomp
Holiness	→	Worldliness
Servant Leaders	→	Papal Dictators

Even though many churches have not even begun to enter the spiritual truths being revealed today, this does not mean that only a small portion of the Body of Christ will. God has been restoring truth for the last 500 years, and He will continue to restore it to those who are hungry.

The Church is experiencing the restoration of truth today. For example, in Acts 15:15 we read that God has promised to restore the power of His presence to the Church. This is described as the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David. A thorough study of the Scripture brings us to the understanding that the tabernacle of David speaks of worship being restored as a priority to God's people. The spiritual application of the tabernacle of David is that God's people gather unto the Lord Jesus Christ to worship Him and experience His presence. The result will be "... *that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us*" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

We are privileged in this day to see this truth restored to the Body of Christ. There is a restoration of praise and worship that is beginning to cover the earth *"...with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea"* (Habakkuk 2:14). We are beginning to see the fulfillment of all that the holy prophets have spoken concerning restoration.

Isaiah 61:11 *For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the LORD GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

Responsive Reading

Question 1: What is necessary for a local church or an individual to experience God's restoration?

It must be realized that God has something to say that is relevant to our present circumstances. This is called present truth.

2 Peter 1:12 *Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth.*

Question 2: Is there any indication in Scripture that truth would be lost to the Church?

Yes, the apostles warned about the loss of truth.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

Question 3: Does the Bible make plain that God is restoring that which was lost to the Church?

Yes, in fact Scripture indicates that Jesus is being retained in heaven until everything the prophets have spoken is restored.

Acts 3:20-21 *And that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

Question 4: Was the early church established in biblical truth?

Yes, the early church was established in truths such as salvation by faith, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, sanctification, gifts of the Spirit, praise, and worship.

Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Question 5: According to the prophets, how will the glory of the Church compare with the glory that filled the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon?

The glory of the Church will be greater.

Haggai 2:9. *"The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts.*

Question 6: What scriptural hope do we have for restoration?

The prophets of old prophesied that the house of the Lord would be established.

Isaiah 2:2 *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.*

Question 7: What does the tabernacle of David have to do with God's plan of restoration?

Everything, because it concerns the power of God's presence in the Church and in world evangelism.

Acts 15:15-17 *And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: "After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things."*

Homework

1. What is "present truth"?

2. Define restoration.

3. The apostles gave themselves to _____ and study of the Word which caused the early _____ to operate in _____.

4. How were these truths lost?

5. What stops our experience of God's restoration?

6. Why is the accountability greater on us to maintain these precious truths as they are revealed?

7. In a short paragraph, what is one truth that God has restored or revealed to you about Himself?

VISION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Introduction

As we have learned from the previous lessons, God is restoring man to His image through His Spirit. Also, the Church is being restored to a greater glory than it originally had (Haggai 2:9). It is the restored Church that will see the second coming of the Lord (Ephesians 5:27). The Church is the place for establishing, maintaining, and fulfilling the purpose of God. God's only plan for culminating all things is through the Church (Ephesians 1:10, 22, 23).

It would be foolish to think we are going to accomplish God's purpose by ourselves. Being empowered by the Holy Spirit, with Christ as the Head and the Church following in absolute obedience to His leading, we will see God accomplish all He purposed. Chapter 5 of Ephesians reveals Christ's role as the one who fulfills God's plan through the Church.

Christ is the:

Head of the Church (vs. 23)

Savior of the Church (vs. 23)

Sanctifier of the Church (vs.26)

Purifier of the Church (vs. 26)

Glorifier of the Church (vs. 27)

Builder of the Church (vs. 27)

Nourisher of the Church (vs. 29)

Protector of the Church (vs. 29)

Unifier of the Church (vs. 30)

Receiver of the Church (vs. 33)

The Church: Its Twofold Purpose

The Church is intended to be the habitation of God on earth.

Man, in his experience with God, has always wanted to build a house for God to live in. After the deliverance from the Red Sea and the Egyptian army, God revealed to Moses the pattern for building the tabernacle. God's purpose was to dwell in the center of the camp of Israel and be the focus of all their activity.

Exodus 25:8 *"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."*

In the tabernacle of Moses, God remained unapproachable except by the high priest once a year. God revealed to David something totally different from what was shown to Moses. David pitched a large tent in Zion for the Ark of the Covenant, where God's presence dwelt. He then appointed worshipers and instrumentalists to praise and worship directly in God's presence 24 hours a day. This activity continued throughout the reign of David, foreshadowing Pentecost when the presence of God fell upon the disciples. The New Testament Church was active in the same type of ministry, where continuous praise was offered in the presence of God (Acts 2:46-47).

David's Tabernacle did not remain during the time of Solomon; neither did Pentecost continue in the life of the Church. **This departure was not God's plan.** Every time revival was experienced, David's pattern of praise and worship was restored (2 Chronicles 29:25; 35:15; Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 12:24). The Scriptures teach that God will restore the Tabernacle of David again. The Church will see the habitation of God as a reality not just history. This does not mean that we will literally set up a tent, but that the Church will once again see the restoration of praise and worship and the manifestation of God's presence.

Acts 15:16-18 *'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.'* Known to God from eternity are all His works.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.*

The Church is intended to be God's instrument of outshining to manifest His glory to the world.

The Church established in God's presence becomes the vehicle for manifesting God's presence to the nations. God's purpose was always to reveal His kingdom through people that were willing to have fellowship with Him and manifest His presence on the earth. Here is a quick overview of this thought:

1. Adam and Eve were not only to be fruitful and multiply in their relationship with each other and God but were also to take dominion over the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:26-28).
2. After the flood, Noah was given the same blessing as Adam. The message was still the same: be fruitful, multiply and take authority (Genesis 9:1-2).
3. When God called Abraham, He spoke of blessing him and all the families of the earth through his seed (Genesis 12:1-3). The 70 families to which Abraham would show God's glory are mentioned in Genesis 10. They represent all the nations of that day. Abraham and his seed were called to be a blessing to these nations.
4. The nation of Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (literally: kings and priests) unto the Lord (Ex us 19:6). Israel was to be a nation of priests to the Lord, preparing a habitation for Him. They were also called to exercise authority as kings by taking dominion and subduing other nations.
5. The Church is God's instrument on the earth. God has called us to have that king/priest ministry (1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 5:10). We are to minister unto God as priests in worship and praise. We are to extend God's message of reconciliation to the world with kingdom glory, power, and authority. We are also to make natural Israel (the Jewish people) jealous (Romans 11:11) so that the natural branches would by faith be regrafted into their own olive tree and thus trigger ultimate blessing for the world (Romans 11:12-24).

The Church of the final hour will not fail, for it is Christ who will work through us. The Church will come to full stature bearing the glory of the Lord through all the earth.

The Universal and Local Church

There are two unique ways in which the term "church" is used in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus spoke of the Church only twice in the gospels, and in each of these occurrences a separate idea is conveyed. The first usage is found in Matthew 16:18 where He said, "... *on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*" This refers to the Church universal, made up of all those whose names are written in Heaven. The Church universal

is composed of all believers, including those who have gone before as well as those who are yet to come.

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Ephesians 5:23 *For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.*

Hebrews 12:23 *... 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*

Here are some of the names that refer to the universal Church:

- The Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12)
- The Pillar and Ground of Truth (1 Timothy 3:15)
- The Habitation of God (Ephesians 2:22)
- A Holy Temple (Ephesians 2:21)
- A Spiritual House (1 Peter 2:5)
- God's Building (1 Corinthians 3:9)
- The Glorious Church (Ephesians 5:27)
- The Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9).

The second usage of the word "church" stated by our Lord in the Gospels is found in Matthew 18:17. It refers not to the universal Church but to the local church. It expresses how the local church is to administer loving discipline to restore someone who has fallen. Of the 114 uses of the word "church," 96 refer to the local church. The local church is the **present visible expression** of Jesus Christ on the earth.

Here are two examples which refer to the local church:

Acts 14:23 *So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

1 Corinthians 1:2 *To the church of God which is at Corinth*

Local Church Defined

The word "church" comes from the Greek word "ekklesia," meaning "the called-out ones." The Church has been separated from the world through the blood of Jesus by the new birth and by submitting to Jesus as absolute Lord. The local church is the expression of the kingdom in a specific locality and can be described in the following way:

- A group of born again, baptized believers fellowshiping in a given location (Acts 2:38-39)
- All believers submitted to Christ, the Head and Husband of the Church (Ephesians 1:22, 5:23)
- Believers who have the Word of God as the guide to a disciplined life of holiness and separation unto God (2 Timothy 2:15).
- Believers who are submitted to the oversight of the five gifted ministries given by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- Believers who gather for the purpose of worship, prayer, communion, and instruction in God's Word (Acts 2:42).
- Those who are fulfilling Christ's command to extend the Kingdom of God worldwide (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20).

Vision of the House

God through His sovereign wisdom has given each local church a specific plan or direction. We call this the vision of the house. Vision may be defined as the ability to hear or see what God is doing, then bringing all our plans into harmony with His. Just as God gives specific direction to individuals, He also speaks direction to His ordained leadership in the local church. Vision can be summed up as the revelation of God's will for a particular local church, given through His ordained leadership. There are seven key principles revealing the importance of **vision**:

1. Vision determines the kind of house we are building.

The Book of Proverbs portrays the destruction of the lazy man's house and vineyard because he was void of vision and purpose (Proverbs 24:30-34). Where there is no vision, there is no corporate life. The church thrives and flourishes where it has specific vision and direction from God.

2. Vision motivates and creates desire.

The family which does not have a specific purpose and vision produces despondent or even rebellious children. Likewise, the church that does not have vision will see its members disinterested and apathetic. Vision is what keeps the church motivated; without it we simply cannot exist.

Habakkuk 2:2 *Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it."*

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.*

3. Vision establishes purpose.

We must know why God has brought us together. Vision establishes the purpose for gathering as a local church. When the people of God come together in one place, in one accord and in one mind, the results are powerful.

Acts 2:1-2 *Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

4. Vision gives the tenacity and fortitude to be able to wage a good warfare and stand in the time of testing.

When God speaks vision and direction, it gives the church the ability to stand against all opposition, knowing that what God has said will surely come to pass. Vision may take time for God to establish, but when established it becomes a lifeline to hold on to when testing comes.

Habakkuk 2:3 *"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."*

1 Timothy 1:18 *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare*

5. Vision is a key to restoration.

Seeing and understanding the things spoken by the prophets of old concerning the restoration of all things aids in the restoration of truth. God is restoring truth to the Church, and vision is the key to seeing truth fully manifested in church life

6. Vision aids in maintaining unity.

The early church understood the importance of unity. One hundred and twenty were together on the day of Pentecost in one accord and one place, then the Holy Spirit came. It is interesting to note that Jesus gave the command to wait in Jerusalem to over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6). Many must have lost the vision and gone home and therefore missed the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

7. Vision releases the power of God.

When the body is united in a specific vision, its impact is much greater than when the members walk in separate vision. In unity, God's power can spread through the church to make a greater impact on the world. God wants the church to have a unified vision and to be an explosive force to shatter the powers of darkness in these days.

Acts 4:32-33 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul ... And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

The Church Preparing for The Habitation of God

As we stated earlier, the Lord's purpose is to restore the Tabernacle of David so His glory will once again fill the church. There are certain principles set forth in 1 Chronicles, Chapters 14-16, about establishing the church as the habitation of God.

- The church needs to develop a **heart after God** (14:8-17; Acts 11:23).
- The church must realize it is in **spiritual warfare** (14:8-17; Ephesians 6:10-20).
- The families of the church must have their **houses in order** (15:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:4).
- The members must have godly relationships with one another (15:1; Ephesians 4:11-5:2).
- The members must **acknowledge God's appointed leadership** (15:2; Hebrews 13:17).
- The church is to **dwell in unity** (15:3; Ephesians 4:1-6).
- The church must realize God desires body ministry or **team ministry** (15:4; Ephesians 4:16).
- The church must walk in **sanctification** (15:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

- We should all with one accord **praise the Lord** (15:16; 1 Peter 2:9).
- We are to be **good stewards** of all that God has given us (16:3; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15).

Local Church Activities

God has ordained the local church to be His visible expression in the world and to carry out His plan in every location. Each church has the responsibility to establish its members, bringing them to maturity. The local church will therefore do the following:

- Sing praises (Hebrews 13:15)
- Preach the Word (1 Corinthians 1:18-24)
- Teach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2)
- Exercise the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12-14)
- Partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- Administer baptism (Acts 2:41, 16:33)
- Administer laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14, Acts 13:3)
- Send missionaries (Acts 13:1-4)
- Take offerings (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- Add members (Acts 2:41, 47)
- Discern and judge (Acts 5; 1 Corinthians 5)
- Pray (Acts 2:42).

Responsive Reading

Question 1: What are the two ways the word "church" is used in the New Testament?

- a. It is used to designate the universal Church, which is made up of all true believers, past, present, and future.

Hebrews 12:23 *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.*

- b. It also refers to the local church which is a group of believers fellowshiping in each location.

Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Question 2: What is the two-fold purpose of the Church?

- a. The Church is intended to be the habitation of God in the earth.

1 Peter 2:5 *... you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

- b. The Church is intended to be God's instrument to manifest His glory to the world.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

Question 3: What is vision?

Vision is the God-given ability to hear, see, perceive and understand what God desires for an individual or local church.

Habakkuk 2:2 *Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it..."*

Question 4: What is the vision of the house?

It is the revelation of God's will for a local church given through His ordained leadership.

2 Peter 1:19 *“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”*

6. How is God dealing with you concerning your involvement in preparing the church to be a habitation of God?

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Introduction

Every truth God declared to the early church will be established in greater measure within the Church of the last days. This is the principle of restoration. The Scripture declares in Acts 3:21 that Jesus will be restrained in the heavens until this fullness of restoration occurs. We have seen how truth is being restored to the Church. One aspect of this truth is the principle of praise and worship (Psalm 102:18, Isaiah 61:11).

True praise and worship has become one of the most important principles in the Church today. It is imperative to establish praise and worship in local churches because of the mandate of the Scriptures and the strong move of the Holy Spirit today. We should study praise and worship as a biblical truth in all the following areas:

- The Biblical Pattern of Praise and Worship
- The Tabernacle of Moses
- The Tabernacle of David
- Worship in the Life of Jesus
- Worship in the Early Church
- The Priesthood of the Believer
- Reasons to Praise and Worship God
- The Results of Praise and Worship
- How to Praise the Lord.

We must understand the meaning of praise and worship before we examine their various aspects. Praise is declaring the wondrous works of God (Psalm 92:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9). It means to boast in God for who He is and what He has done. It involves declaring His character (Psalm 89:1). Worship is first and foremost an attitude of the heart. It involves reverence, adoration and heart-felt response to God. Worship is closely related to the attitude of submission and surrender. Praise is our entrance into the presence of God (Psalm 100:4); worship is our response to His presence (John 4:23-24).

The Biblical Pattern of Praise and Worship

God created man to worship. As a tripartite being of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23), man has the capacity to worship the Lord intimately. Man's spirit contains three important capabilities: conscience, intuition, and

communion. It is within his spirit that man communes with the Lord. The soul (mind, will and emotions) is inadequate to worship God alone; so, God has placed His Spirit within our spirit so we may commune with Him directly, without being limited by human understanding or feeling. For use in this lesson, we define the attributes of the human spirit in the following way:

Conscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an inward law of divine origin which distinguishes between right and wrong.
Intuition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to receive truth and guidance apart from reasoning. Revelation from God and the moving of the Spirit are known through the intuition.
Communion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to worship, adore and praise God in the spirit. Because communion is a God-given desire within the human spirit, everyone worships someone or something.

God created man to worship Him, but we have struggled with the fact of how to do so acceptably. As a result, man has developed various forms of worship to which people adhere according to their individual tastes. Is this what God wants, or is there a biblical pattern for worship?

There is an acceptable way to worship! The key is found in John 4:24 where Jesus said, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* Worshiping in **spirit and truth** is honoring and adoring God, first by the quickening of the Holy Spirit and secondly according to the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word are both necessary to worship God. If the Spirit is not present, worship becomes empty, lifeless form. Worship that does not conformed to the Word of God may become either unbalanced emotionalism or dead ritualism. God has placed within His Word the **how, when, where, and why** we are to worship Him. When our worship is guided by the Holy Spirit, centered on Jesus Christ, and conformed to God's Word, then we are worshipping in spirit and truth.

The Tabernacle of Moses

Throughout the Old Testament, God gave a progressive revelation of how man should approach and worship Him acceptably. The Lord first revealed to the patriarchs the altar and the blood sacrifice as grounds for them to approach and worship. Later, God said to Moses, *"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of*

the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:8-9). This structure became known as the Tabernacle of Moses.

The Tabernacle of Moses, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, was also with the children of Israel during their wandering in the wilderness and possession of the promised land from Mount Sinai to Shiloh. It consisted of a board structure overlaid with various curtains and coverings. The Tabernacle of Moses had three parts: the outer court, the holy place, and the most holy place.

The outer court contained two articles of bronze:

- The bronze altar for blood sacrifices.
- The bronze laver for washing and cleansing with water.

The holy place contained three articles of furniture:

- The table of showbread with the bread of communion.
- The golden lampstand providing the only light
- The golden altar of incense bearing the sweet-smelling fragrance before the Lord.

The most holy place had only one article of furniture:

- The Ark of the Covenant was the dwelling place of the presence of God to the nation of Israel (Exodus 25:22).

It was upon the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place that the visible glory-presence of God dwelt. However, this did not provide **a pattern** for sincere worship for the people. The Ark of God's presence was contained within walls made with animal skins and separated by a veil. No man could enter the Most Holy Place except the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The Tabernacle of David

David established his tabernacle between the Tabernacle of Moses and Solomon's temple. This structure only remained for approximately forty years, yet God emphasized its importance. God revealed the order of the tabernacle when King David desired to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 13:3).

David recognized the importance of having the Ark of God. He knew that the Ark was the place where the Lord dwelt and communicated with His people. David

understood that when the Ark was gone, the manifest presence of God and the glory of Israel had departed. He knew that the manifest presence of God was most essential.

When David recovered the Ark of the Covenant, he constructed a separate tent to house it (2 Samuel 6:17-). After he set the Ark in place, David appointed priests to minister before the Lord continually (1 Chronicles 16:4). David's Tabernacle had no veil. The priests stood directly before the Ark in the manifest presence of God. The ministry of the priests who stood before the Ark was not one of blood sacrifice. Instead, they offered up the spiritual sacrifice of praise and worship in the very presence of God.

Everything done in the Tabernacle of Moses was a type and shadow of future reality experienced in the Tabernacle of David. God declared that He had withdrawn from the Tabernacle of Moses to the Tabernacle of David (1 Samuel 2:27-36; Psalm 78:67-72).

The Lord revealed to King David the pattern of worship which was pleasing and acceptable to Him. Examples of this are:

1. David appointed priests to minister before the Lord with singing (1 Chronicles 15:16).
2. David appointed musicians with a variety of instruments to play before the Lord (1 Chronicles 23:5).
3. David appointed Levites to stand in the presence of God and thank Him (1 Chronicles 16:41).
4. David appointed Levites to praise the Lord, acknowledging that His mercy endures forever (1 Chronicles 16:4).
5. There was the ministry of rejoicing and joy before the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:25-31).
6. As a natural response of rejoicing before the Lord, there was the ministry of hand clapping (Psalm 47:1, 98:8),
7. The ministry of shouting was an expression of praise (Psalm 47:1).
8. The priests that ministered before the Ark lifted their hands as an act of worship to the Lord (Psalm 141:2).
9. One of the most expressive ways of worship was the ministry of the dance (Psalm 149:3).

Worship In the Life of Jesus

In the study of praise and worship, many people look at the example of the life of Jesus. Was praise really an active part of His life? Did He really teach that worship was an important part of the believer's walk with God? The Bible clearly shows that praise and worship was always an integral part of the life of Jesus. Here are just a few examples of this:

1. Before the foundation of the earth was laid, Jesus continually rejoiced before the presence of the Lord.

Proverbs 8:30 *Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him*

2. Jesus' lineage was from the tribe of Judah, which in the Hebrew means "praise."

Hebrews 7:14 *For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah*

3. At His birth, a multitude of the angelic host were praising God shouting, "Glory to God in the highest." Along with the angelic beings, the shepherds, the wise men and many others worshiped.

Luke 2:13 *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God ...*

4. During His earthly ministry, Jesus taught and approved praise.

Matthew 21:15-16 *But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David!" they were indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?"*

5. During His ministry, Jesus continually exemplified praise and worship to the Father.

Luke 10:21 *In that hour **Jesus rejoiced** in the Spirit and said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."*

6. His ministry in the midst of the church is to sing praise unto the Father.

Hebrews 2:11-12 ... for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation, I will sing praise to You."

Worship In the Early Church

Access to the presence of God was made possible through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20), but the plan for worship in the New Testament was revealed through David's Tabernacle. According to Acts 15:16-17 and Acts 24:14, the early church worshiped in Davidic order.

Paul encouraged the early church to admonish each other with "... psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19). The early church's book of praise was the Psalms, part of which was written during the time of, and as a result of, the Tabernacle of David.

David received a New Testament revelation of the sacrifice of praise. In the New Testament, the presence of God was also manifested in praise and worship. Every subsequent revival in Church history has seen the restoration of Davidic worship. Even today, Spirit-filled churches all across the earth are experiencing a restoration of Davidic order in worship.

This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy given by Amos concerning God's pattern of worship.

Amos 9:11 "On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old "

Acts 15:15-17 "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.' "

The Priesthood of the Believer

In the Old Testament, God gave the priesthood to the Levites. As New Testament believers, we have entered into a holy priesthood with Jesus Christ as the High

Priest (Revelation 1:5-6). As priests unto our God, we are to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The sacrifices New Testament priests are to offer are:

1. Ourselves - when we offer ourselves wholly (spirit, soul and body) to God, we are an acceptable sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1).
2. Our substance - involves the giving of tithes and offerings, and also meeting the practical needs of our brethren (Hebrews 13:16).
3. Sacrifices of joy - involves more than just the inner expression of joy. It involves a life of victory and close fellowship with the Lord (Psalm 27:6).
4. Sacrifices of thanksgiving - that which will cause us to lift up our hands and voice and thank God even in the most trying circumstances, realizing that He is in control (Psalm 116:17).
5. Sacrifices of praise - what we offer to the Lord, realizing who He is and His greatness (Hebrews 13:15).
6. A broken and contrite heart- true worship can only come from a heart that is pure and broken before God (Psalm 51:17, 24:3-4).

Reasons To Praise and Worship God

1. *God commands us to praise Him.*

1 Chronicles 16:29 *Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering and come before him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!*

2. *God is worthy to be praised.*

Psalms 18:3 *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised*

3. *Praise is God's acceptable way for us to enter into His presence.*

Psalms 100:4 *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

4. *Praise and worship glorify God.*

Psalms 50:23 *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.*

The Results of Praise and Worship

1. Praise is a way to experience the manifest presence of God.

Psalm 22:3 *But You are holy, who inhabit the praises of Israel.*

2. Praise is a way for stopping the advances of Satan.

Psalm 8:2 *Out of the mouth of babes and infants You have ordained **strength**, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.*

Matthew 21:16 ... *"Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected **praise**'?"*

3. Praise is a way to reach those needing salvation.

Psalm 40:3 *He has put a new song in my mouth - praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.*

4. Praise is a way of receiving God's deliverance.

2 Chronicles 20:21-22 *And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever." Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.*

5. Praise is a way to exercise the weapons of our warfare.

Psalm 149:6-7 *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance*

6. Praise is a way to live a long and fruitful life.

Isaiah 38:18-19 *For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. The living, the living man, he shall praise You*

7. Praise is a way to renew the mind.

Colossians 3:2 (NIV) *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

8. Praise is a way to see the provision of God.

Psalm 107:8-9 *Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.*

How to Praise the Lord

There are seven Old Testament Hebrew words translated "praise" in the English Bible. Each one has a different meaning and expression associated with it. Through these seven words, we find the ways that the Old Testament saints worshiped the Lord. They are a vehicle for us to enter the presence of the Lord through praise and worship.

1. "Yadah" means to lift hands individually before God's presence.

Psalm 138:1 *I will praise (yadah) You with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing praises to You.*

2. "Towdah" means for the congregation to lift hands in unison before the presence of the Lord.

Psalm 50:23 *Whoever offers praise (towdah) glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.*

3. "Halal" means to boast, to rave on foolishly before the presence of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 20:21 *And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who would sing to the LORD, and who should praise (halal) the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever."*

4. "Tehillah" means the same as "halal" except that it means to sing halals.

Psalm 22:3 *"But You are holy, who inhabit the praises (tehillah) of Israel."*

5. "Zamar" means to celebrate before the presence of the Lord with musical instruments.

Psalm 21:13 *Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise (zamar) Your power.*

6. "Shabak" means to praise the Lord with a loud voice.

Psalm 117:1 *Oh, praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud (shabak) Him, all you peoples!*

7. "Barak" means to kneel in adoration before the presence of the Lord.

Psalm 103:1-2 *Bless (barak) the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits*

....

Responsive Reading

Question 1: Why are we to praise and worship God?

- a. God commands us to praise Him.

Chronicles 16:29 *Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!*

- b. God is worthy to be praised.

Psalms 18:3 *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised*

- c. Praise is God's acceptable way for us to enter His presence.

Psalms 100:4 *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

- d. Praise and worship glorify God.

Psalms 50:23 *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him that orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.*

Question 2: What is the acceptable way to worship?

True worship must be in **spirit**, which means that the Spirit of God initiated it in the spirit of man; and in **truth**, which means it is based on scriptural principles and the person of Jesus Christ.

John 4:24 *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Question 3: In the tabernacles, what was the significance of the Ark of the Covenant?

The Ark of the Covenant was where God manifested His presence.

Exodus 25:22 *"And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony... ."*

Question 4: Was praise exemplified in the life of Christ?

Yes, Jesus continually praised the Father.

Luke 10:21 *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth... ."*

Question 5: What New Testament passage validates praise and worship in Davidic order?

Acts 24:14 *"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets."*

Question 6: What special promise does God give to worshipers?

He hears them.

John 9:31 *"Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him."*

Homework

1. What are the three attributes of man's spirit? Give a brief definition of each.
2. What is the distinct difference between the Tabernacle of Moses and the Tabernacle of David regarding the presence of God?
3. Complete the following. "Praise is God's _____
_____ for us to enter into His presence."
4. What is the definition of the word "Shabak"?
5. Has the truth of praise and worship been established in your life? If so, in what ways?

LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY

Introduction

We are beginning to understand why God has ordained the Church as His habitation on the earth. We are also learning God's perspective on restoration. He is making the Church of the final hour to be the explosive, vibrant, worshiping, and ministering Church it needs to be in order to touch the world with His glory.

Now with the foundation laid regarding the Church, we need to look at the practical areas of local church ministry. The Bible emphasizes that each believer has a specific function in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:18). God has gifted each believer to support, complement, and build up the church in love.

1 Corinthians 12:7 *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all*

Ephesians 4:16 *... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

True Body Ministry

The church is not meant to be an organized business with trained professionals promoting various programs, but a sensitive organism of unified people under the direction of the Holy Spirit and God-ordained leadership.

God does not divide the church into two classes of people: laity and clergy. This division is a non-scriptural tool that divides Christians. Scripture calls every member to be a minister (Ephesians 4:11-12). For centuries, the responsibility of the church has rested upon professionally trained leaders alone. Many times, their training consists of executive business principles which cause them to view the Body of Christ and its ministries as:

A corporation	instead of	a community
Entertaining programs	instead of	ministry to needs
Musical entertainment	replacing	worship
A meeting to raise money	instead of	freedom in giving
Ministry by "professionals"	rather than	God-ordained leaders

This type of ministry has sapped the church of its power and kept it from the spiritual body ministry God intended. True body ministry begins with the realization that each member has a specific calling and purpose to fulfill.

Ephesians 4:1 *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called*

2 Timothy 1:9 *... who has saved us and called us with a holy calling*

2 Peter 1:10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure*

Leading By Serving

In the early church, the word "minister" had a different meaning than it does today. "Minister" comes from the Greek word "diakonia" which means "to be a helpful, supportive servant within the house of the Lord." We use it today as a **noun** describing the **position or office** of a person, but the early church used it as a **verb** - an action word describing **the believer's function**. The word means to be a servant (Matthew 20:26, 27). Each member of the body is to function actively as a minister (servant) in the New Testament Church. Ministry does not mean that when one receives a calling, he should seek an office. **God's call is a call to serve.**

The great leaders of the Old Testament were servants of God and of the people.

1. The Bible portrays Abraham as God's servant; therefore, God blessed him (Genesis 26:24).
2. The Old Testament described Moses as God's servant many times. This was even his epitaph from God when He spoke to Joshua concerning Moses' death (Joshua 1:1-2).
3. Joshua was known as Moses' servant. God therefore chose him to succeed Moses in ruling Israel (Exodus 33:11).
4. David was characterized as Saul's servant as well as God's servant (1 Samuel 29:3, 1 Chronicles 17:4).

Not all are called to leadership positions such as the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher, but all are called to serve the Body of Christ.

God's Chain of Command

God has ordained only three institutions: family, government, and Church. In each, He established structure to maintain order and to allow these institutions to function. The head of each of these institutions is God, and all authority flows from Him.

According to God's chain of command, Jesus is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). He appoints servants and ministers, and delegates authority to maintain order and perfect the saints (Ephesians 4:8-12). He also enables people to function properly in their ministry through His gifts

Ministry Gifts

Prophecy

Service

Teaching

Exhorting

Ruling

Giving

Mercy

Manifestation Gifts

Word of Wisdom

Word of Knowledge

Faith

Gifts of Healing

Working of Miracles

Prophecy

Tongues

Interpreting of Tongues

The Purpose of God-Ordained Leadership

God has a purpose in church government. The apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher each has their place in bringing the church to **maturity**. The responsibility of these ministers is to train and equip each believer to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The Greek word for maturity is "katartizo" which means "to perfect, to thoroughly adjust, repair, mend or restore." Here are examples of how this word is used in the Scriptures:

1. In Matthew 4:21, two of the disciples were **mending** (katartizo) their nets, which were torn and needed restoring.
2. In Galatians 6:1, Paul exhorts the brethren to **restore** (katartizo) into right standing him who had fallen into sin.
3. Hebrews 11:3 states that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. This means that the worlds were fashioned, put in order, and **equipped** (katartizo) for God's purpose.

4. In 1 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul's desire was that he might see them, to **perfect** (katartizo) that which was lacking in their faith and to supply what was necessary to bring them into maturity.

When the church is walking in maturity, it will accomplish the work of the ministry. A real sign of maturity within each believer's life is when he becomes a supportive minister in the house of the Lord. All members, therefore, should function in their proper place, working together as a team with a common vision (Philippians 1:27).

Team Ministry

God has not called us to be "lone rangers" who minister by ourselves apart from the Body. We need each other! A "one man" ministry is extremely limited and easily attacked. On the other hand, there is protection and multiplied effectiveness in team ministry (Proverbs 11:14; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). The biblical pattern of team ministry can be seen in ministries of Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul.

In 1 Chronicles 15:4, David saw the importance of assembling the children of Aaron and the Levites. He united them for a common goal by assembling them into groups or teams as follows:

Singers (15:17)	Instructors (15:22)
Carriers (15:15)	Trumpeters (15:24)
Gatekeepers (15:23)	Recorders (16:4)
Cymbals players (15:19)	Praises (16:4)
Strings players (15:20)	Thankers (16:4)
Harpists (16:21)	Musicians (16:4)

Team ministry can be defined as two or more people who are joined together by the Lord for multiplied effectiveness in fulfilling a common task. Their effectiveness is determined by their mutual submission, their recognition of God's authority on God-called leadership and their exercise of the gifts God has given them.

How Teams Are Formed

God first imparts vision and direction to the leadership of the church. Vision is comprehending or grasping God's purpose for His house as presented by God-ordained leadership. The local church cannot be established without a specific

vision. Individuals are not really joined as members unless they are **birthed** into and support the overall vision of a church.

Secondly, God imparts a vision to the individual. Worship sets the stage for this impartation (Revelation 19:10). This vision or purpose will release an individual into his or her ministry. The fulfillment of this vision flows from the overall vision of the local church.

Thirdly, each person must respond to his individual vision while staying within the framework of the vision of the local church. Vision becomes a basis of unity when the body responds to God as one. The children of Israel entered the promised land because they were a part of Moses' original vision.

God has always placed tremendous emphasis on team ministry. The effectiveness of team ministry can be felt throughout the local church. Through church leaders, effective teams have been put together which have enhanced the ministry in areas such as worship, missions, education, fine arts, evangelism, outreach to the poor and counseling.

Getting Into Team Ministry

It is the desire of church leadership that God would begin to speak to you regarding your specific ministry within the fellowship of ministering believers. It is our belief that you have not been led here by accident, but by the plan and purpose of God.

During the coming weeks, you will find God speaking to you about involvement in a particular area of ministry within the church. Feel free to pursue this direction, submitting to the God-ordained leaders in this local church. If you desire to become involved in team ministry, the following steps are suggested.

- Confirm your commitment to the overall vision of your church.
- Pray for our leaders to walk in love and wisdom.
- Place priority on worshipping Jesus.
- Listen for God to speak.
- See if there is already a team ministry addressing your concern and see how you can become involved with them. Home Care groups are an effective way to get involved in team ministry.
- If there is not a team already ministering in your area of interest, locate one or two people of like calling.

- **Confer with the pastor** about building personal relationships with those of like vision.

Remember, local church ministry is effective when we each do our part while being "... *knit together by what every joint supplies ...*" (Ephesians 4:16). The word "joint" indicates relationship between members of the body. Our effectiveness is determined by our mutual submission to the Lord and the team

Responsive Reading

Question 1: What is true-body ministry?

True body ministry is being joined together, ministering as servants to one another in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16 ... *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

Question 2: Does every member of the Body of Christ have a specific calling, purpose, and ministry function?

- a. Yes, every member of the Body of Christ has a specific calling.

2 Peter 1:10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure*

- b. Every member of the Body of Christ has a specific purpose.

Romans 8:28 (NIV) *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

- c. Every member of the Body of Christ has a specific ministry function.

Romans 12:4,6 (NIV) *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function ... We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*

Question 3: Does God prepare us in order that we might fulfill our calling?

Yes, He gives us gifts and leaders to equip us for the work of the ministry.

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

Question 4: Does submission to leadership play a part in true body ministry?

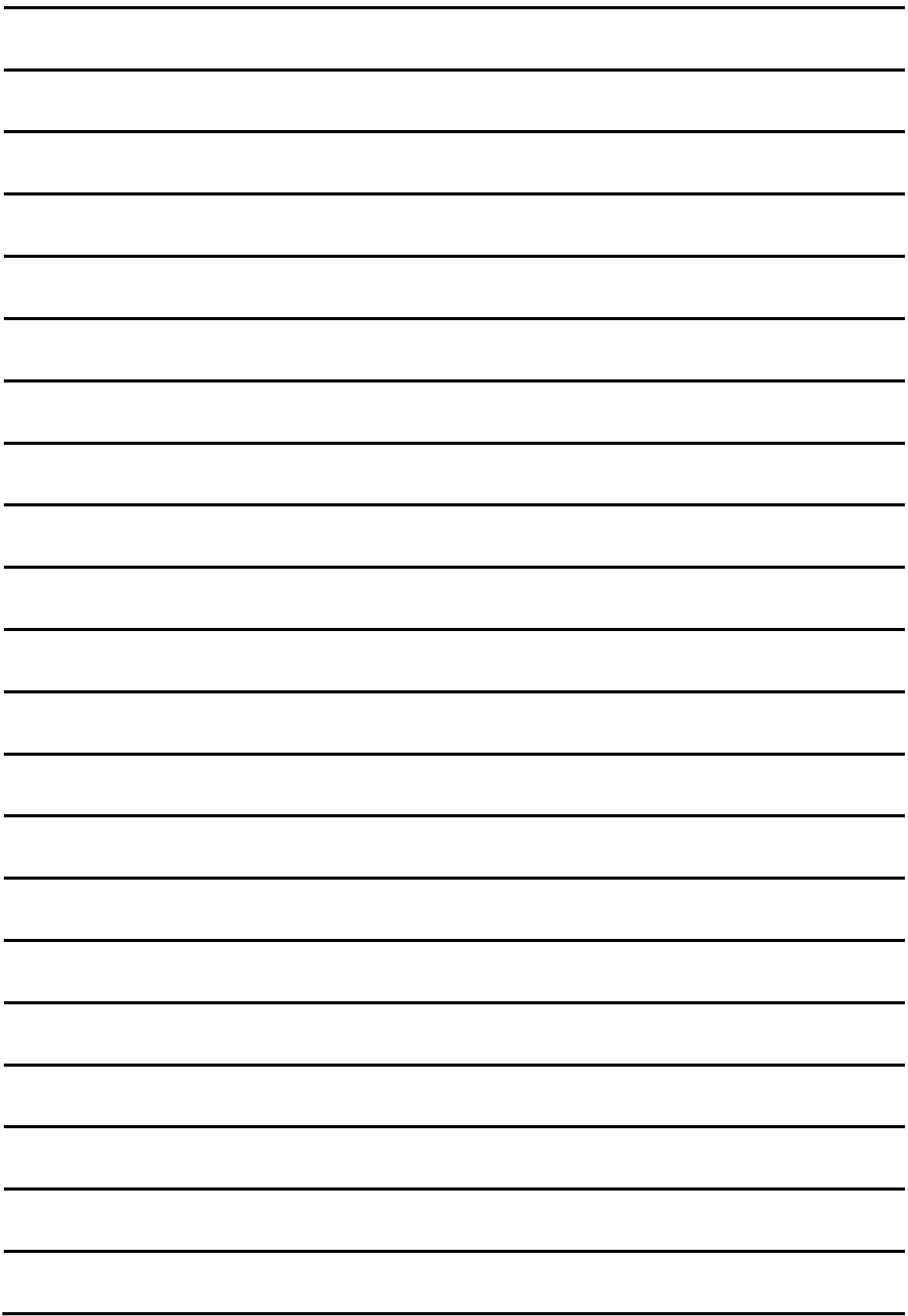
Yes, we must function in our gifts and calling with the proper oversight of God-ordained leadership.

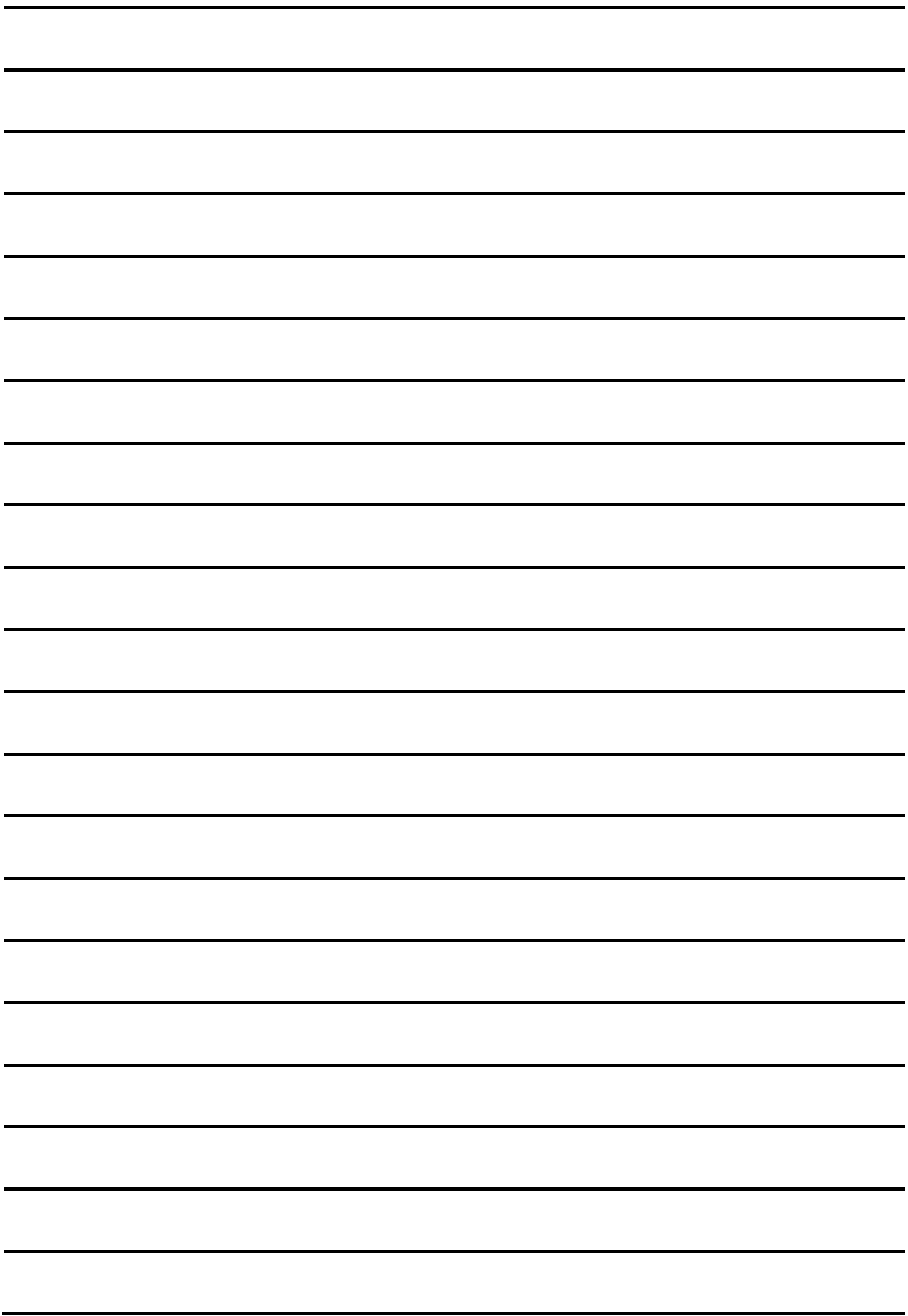
Hebrews 13:17 *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

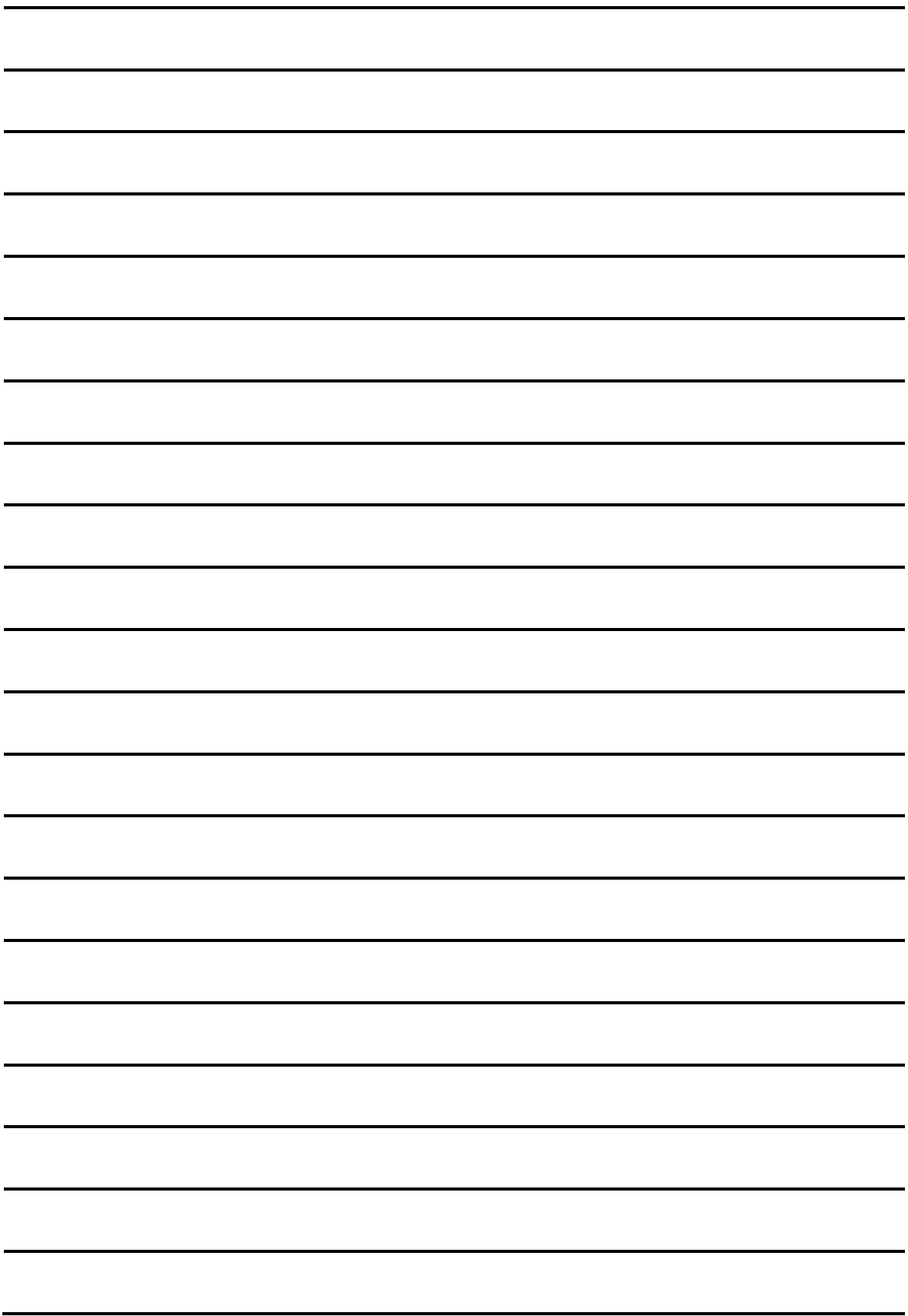
Homework

1. Complete the following: The Bible emphasizes that each _____ has a _____ in the Body of Christ.
2. Why has the church been sapped of power and kept from true spiritual body ministry?
3. What is the difference between the early church's definition of "minister" and what has been evident in the church today?
4. What are the three God-ordained institutions?
5. What is the purpose of God-ordained leadership?

6. What do you feel to be your place of ministry within the local church?
This can include any calling you have on your life, or if yet unknown, state the real desire of your heart.







FIRST PRINCIPLES

A STUDY IN THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST

BOOK ONE: VISION

The Sure Foundation
The plan and Purpose of God
Restoration
Vision of the Local Church
Praise and Worship
Local Church Ministry

BOOK TWO: REPENTANCE

The Biblical View of Sin
Repentance
The New Covenant
The Father Heart of God
Forgiveness
The Lifestyle of Repentance

BOOK THREE: FAITH

Faith Toward God
The Abiding Faith
Living by Revelation
Developing Faith
The Response of Faith
The Testing of Faith

BOOK FOUR: BAPTISMS

The Doctrine of Baptisms
Baptism in the Body of Christ
Water Baptism
Baptism in the Holy Spirit – Part 1
Baptism in the Holy Spirit – Part 2
The Baptism in Fire

BOOK FIVE: LAYING ON OF HANDS

Laying On of Hands
Healing
Gifts of the Spirit
The Motivational Gifts
The Five-Fold Ministry
Presbytery

BOOK SIX: RESURRECTION LIFE

Resurrection Life
Body Life
Church Life
Overcoming Life
Family Life
Prayer Life

BOOK SEVEN: ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

The Eternal Perspective
The Eternal Judgement
The Eternal Word
Eternal Worship
Eternal Life