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“REFOCUSING”

TEXT: I Pet. 4:10-11

INTRO: A. Question: What is the purpose of the church? There are two basic answers: The Man-Centered (Anthropocentric) View = the purpose of the church is mainly evangelistic with the emphasis on soul-winning and missionary outreach. The God-Centered (Theocentric) View = to bring glory to God (that the works of creation, redemption, judgment and consummation of all the ages are all “scenes” in God’s great drama of bringing glory to Himself).

B. The Westminster Confession of Faith said: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” The Bible speaks truthfully about Who and What God is like as seen in the creation, fall, choice of Israel, birth of Christ, the cross, redemption, the establishment of the church and the fulfillment of prophecy, and all testify to the character of God. Creation reveals His glory, the angels declare His glory, the Lord Jesus worked for His glory, we are saved for His glory (Eph. 1:3-14), are to live for His glory, and are expected to minister to one another for His glory (text).

I. HOW DO WE GLORIFY GOD?

A. Bible Definition:

NOTE: Both Old Testament and New Testament words translated “glory” and “glorify” are from terms meaning “to honor.”

1. Old Testament - the term “glory” connotes heaviness, weight and wealth i.e., it speaks of the reputation of the person; worthy of respect and honor.

Is. 42:8

8 I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Ex. 34:14

14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

2. New Testament - the term implies the honor of having a good opinion of someone.

a. Glorifying God means to hold a good opinion of Him and to solicit good opinions about Him from others.

b. The New Testament word suggests that the obedience of the believer is as important part of glorifying God as worshipping Him.

B. Behavioral Definition:

1. To worship and live in such a way that God’s reputation is truthfully revealed and enhanced.

2. In the Bible both the saved and unsaved concluded that Jesus was the Son of God, without aulf; even those who didn’t believe on Him testified to His character and reputation.

ILLUS: We are to live so others will draw proper conclusions about God, i.e., glorify Him.

1 Pet. 2:12

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

II. THE MEANS OF GLORIFYING GOD:

A. Honoring God For Who He Is:

1. Moses is an example of one whose life was characterized by a consistent awareness of the glory and majesty of God. Cf. Ex. 15:1-3,11-14
2. David is another whose personal worship of God recorded in his many songs have enhanced the worship of believers for 3000 years.

ILLUS: Cf. Ps.139 Omniscience (v.1-6), omnipresence (v.7-12), omnipotence (v.8-16), sovereignty (v.17-24). What practical help might a believer (or church) draw from knowing these attributes of God?

B. Honoring What God Says:

1. Moses was known as one with whom God could speak face-to-face and David was known as a man after God's own heart.
2. These reputations were because of their lives of obedience (though neither were perfect).

ILLUS: The congregation in Jerusalem devoted themselves to the study of God's Word and worshipped together and the effect was that they were able to confront the community with the truth of the Gospel and the reality of their faith. Their obedience exalted the reputation of God in the eyes of the unbelievers so "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:41,47

III. THE EFFECTS OF GLORIFYING GOD:

ILLUS: Glorifying God is not merely an end in itself, it is also a means to an end. 3 major groups are immediately affected by the faithful worship and obedience of believers.

A. Education of Angels:

1. Angels are very interested in knowing what God is doing.
2. Their textbook? The church: in worship and at work.

1 Cor. 11: 10

10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

Eph. 3:10

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

3. The church demonstrates not only a recognition of God's worth but also His wisdom.
4. His worth is reflected by the worship of the church.
5. His wisdom is reflected by the obedience of the church.
6. In both the reputation of God is enhanced in the eyes and understanding of spirit beings.

B. Edification of Believers (text):

1. Every believer is gifted in a way that will benefit the whole assembly.
2. The obedience of the bel. in the exercise of his/her spiritual gifts benefits other believers and brings glory to God.

ILLUS: How can the use of our gifts (Rom.12) benefit and edify other believers in church services, outside scheduled meetings? What might older believers do to encourage and edify younger believers.? (and vice-versa?)

C. Evangelization Of The Lost:

Mt. 5:16

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

1 Pet. 2:12

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1. The “good works” of the believers helps others to come to a right opinion about the Lord.
2. Even the lost are expected to have a proper opinion about the Lord.

CONCL: To glorify God is the purpose of the church. Thus, it is the responsibility of every believing Christians who endeavor to glorify God come together to form churches that endeavor to glorify God. The church provides both worship and service which enables believers glorify God. We need to “REFOCUS” our priorities as individuals and believers as to the purpose of the church. We can glorify the Lord by attending church, witnessing, giving generously, living clean and serving God with our gifts. “LET’S REFOCUS”!

“LET’S HEAR IT FOR THE CHURCH!”

TEXT: Mt. 16:18

INTRO: A. There is much confusion about what a church is and is not these days. When people use the word church they may be speaking about a denomination (like the Methodist Church), a building (“there is Bensalem Baptist Church”), a sect (the Mormon Church), it may be referring to a group of religious people, etc. The Church is NOT a home-Bible study, a Radio or TV ministry, a school, a non-church organization, a non-church church (e.g., the Catholic Church).

ILLUS: It is interesting that the church which calls itself the “only true Church” is not a church at all in the Biblical sense. (This week Pres. Clinton got in trouble (again), with another female: “the mother of harlots” - the Catholic Church. He was criticized as a Southern Baptist taking the Eucharist or what they call the Lord’s Table in a Catholic Church in Africa. Two things are wrong with this: no real Baptist would be caught dead taking Mass in a Catholic Church and the Catholic Church’s criticism of him doing this in a non-ecumenical atmosphere. They said it is O.K. for a “non-Catholic” to take Mass in an ecumenical spirit - which means the “non-catholic” had to accept the “mother of harlots” as HIS mother, before he or she could partake!

B. The word “church” comes from the Greek word “ekklesia” (ek = out and kaleo = to call; thus a church is a called out body). The Lord does the calling out and He forms the body. Unless He does it is NOT a church. The people called out must have been a part of another group. Then they form another entity.

Acts 15:14

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

TRANS: There is much confusion even among Bible-believers over the nature and definition of the church. Some, because of extremes in Catholicism and denominations concerning the “invisible”

church or “universal” church teach that the only church is the local church. Let’s examine the Scriptures and when we discover the Biblical definition and distinctiveness of the church “LET’S HEAR IT FOR THE CHURCH!”

I. THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANISM (BODY):

A. Jesus Promised to Build His Church:

Mt. 16:18

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

B. Jesus Promised To Bless His Church: Mt. 16:18b

1. He is assembling His Body:

a. He is the Head of His Body:

Col. 1:18

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

b. The Church is The Body:

Col. 1:24

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

1 Tim. 3:15

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Rom. 12:4-5

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

1 Cor. 12:12-13

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

ILLUS: When you join the Army, you become a part of the *organism*, and then you are assigned to an *organization* within the organism. It goes something like this, you are maybe in the 3rd Army, the tank division, headquarters battalion, Charlie company, 2nd platoon, ammo squad...

2. He is calling out a people for His Name from the nations.

Acts 15:14

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

ILLUS: It is difficult for me to see how the above Scriptures can apply to a single local church. This body which is being called out from the world transcends any single local assembly.

II. THE CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZATION (BUILDING):

A. Christ Is The Cornerstone:

Eph. 2:19-22

19 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;*

20 *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

21 *In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

22 *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

B. Believers Are The Building Stones: 1 Pet. 2:3-10

Eph. 3:4-6

4 *Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)*

5 *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*

6 *That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

ILLUS: A believer becomes a member of the Body (organism) called the Church when he or she gets saved and is placed into the Body thru Spirit baptism. Then he or she should become a part of the local assembly or body of believers who meet together regularly to hear the preaching and teaching of God's Word, to observe the ordinances of the church, to evangelize their community and the world, by their support, presence, service and gifts. They also become members of that organization and place themselves under the authority and discipline of that local assembly and Pastor.

Heb. 13:17

17 *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

1. The Church and It's 2 Officers: Pastor and Deacons

Phil. 1:1

1 *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: (so much for "where 2 or 3 are gathered in His Name")*

2. The Church and It's 2 Ordinances: Baptism and Lord's Supper

Acts 2:41-42

41 *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

42 *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

3. The Church and It's 3 Primary Objectives: Soul-winning, Baptism, Teaching
4. The Church and It's Membership:

- a. The disciples of Christ; i.e., those who are saved
- b. The discipline of Christians: (Mt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:1-5; 9-13)

ILLUS: When you join a church (through baptism in water), you place yourself under the authority of that organization. In a Baptist Church you are voted into the membership and in order to get out you must be voted out, Scripturally. The only ways to leave a Baptist Church is to be voted out because you have died, joined another church, or are removed from the role because of inactivity, doctrinal deviation, or behavior problems (disciplined) and your right of franchise is removed along with the privilege of communion and all the rights and privileges of membership.

III. THE CHURCH AS THE OBJECT OF HIS LOVE (BRIDE):

TRANS: The body and bride concepts are 2 sides of the same coin. The body speaks of life and the bride speaks of love.

A. The Church Is the Prospective Bride of Christ:

2 Cor. 11:2

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

1. A Bride becomes so on her wedding day.
2. Now we are only espoused (engaged) to Christ.

B. The Church Will Be the Perfect Bride of Christ:

Eph. 5:27

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. S.A. Eph. 5:21-32

CONCL: “LET’S HEAR IT FOR THE CHURCH!” The Body, Building and Bride.

“WHY SO MANY KINDS OF ‘CHURCHES’?”

TEXT: Acts 2:41-42

INTRO: A. There are really only two kinds of churches, biblical and non-biblical or churches and non-churches. Many organizations and denominations which use the name “church” do not fit the biblical definition and thus are not really churches.

B. Where did all this confusion come from. When Jesus prayed “that they all may be one...” was he referring to the unity of churches? No! Rather, the unity of believers. However believers need to examine the “church” they attend and see if it meets the biblical prerequisites. All true believers are in the Body of Christ, but they may be assembling in a non-church. The question then becomes “WHY SO MANY KINDS OF ‘CHURCHES’?”

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH:

A. The First Church: Acts 2:41-42

1. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended and baptized believers into one Body.
2. At Pentecost the new converts were “added” to the 120 disciples gathered.
3. In the strictest sense the church had not yet evolved into an ‘organization’ with a Pastor and deacons, etc. and with “Jew and Gentile” members.

B. The New Testament Churches:

1. Before the New Testament was completed the early churches experienced problems of disunity, division and false doctrine.
2. Most of the New Testament Epistles to the churches were written to correct those pro-

blems. (Corinth: division; Thessalonica: Rapture; Colossians: angel worship, philosophy, tradition; Galatians: legalism; Hebrews: apostasy, etc.)

ILLUS: The 7 letters to the 7 churches in Asia Minor in Rev. 2 and 3 give us an outline of the decay in the church. In Ephesus they had already lost their “first love”, in Smyrna the trials came and they lost their soul-winning zeal, in Pergamos they became worldly and embraced the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (Niao = “to conquer” and Laos = “laity” or people) and the hierarchy of Denomination-alism began, in Thyatira Jezebel shows up representing ecumenicalism, then in Sardis they had a reputation of being alive but were actually dead (like the Charismatic movement). The next church was Philadelphia which was a good church. (This tells us that when the deterioration sets in it is time to get out and find a good church.) Finally comes the church of Laodicea, the totally worldly and apostate stage in church deterioration.

C. ‘Baptist’ Churches:

1. True Baptist churches are nothing more than Bible-believing churches and God has always had a witness among sound churches, though the word Baptist may not have identified them.
2. So ‘Baptists’ can trace their roots back to New Testament churches; not perfect but sound in doctrine.

D. Denominationalism:

1. There is always a tendency toward control by a man, a committee, a group or by some within a good church who have some doctrinal aberration.
2. In the New Testament there was no inside or outside control by any man or hierarchy of the local, independent church.

ILLUS: The idea that someone outside the local church decides what is best for the local church, e.g., when to change pastors, which books to use in Sunday School, etc. is foreign to the New Testament.

II. THE ONGOING OF THE CHURCH:

A. Corruption:

1. Formalism:

- a. Formalism is not the same as order.
- b. Formalism is the intrusion of rituals and ceremonies, high church music, etc. into the preaching services of a church.

ILLUS: The general rule is, the more ceremony, the less preaching; the more organization (committees, boards, etc.) the less authority the preacher has. (Find even ONE board or committee in the New Testament!) Pastoral authority, i.e., where the Pastor decides the spiritual direction of the church and leads (shepherds) the church is the only biblical pattern in the New Testament.

2. Doctrinal Deviation:

ILLUS: The first deviation of baptism by immersion was a ‘couch baptism’ for a dying man who couldn’t get to church after he was saved. The next step was to imply that baptism was necessary before a person died, then came infant baptism, “just in case...”

- a. Every “denomination” was started because of some aberration of doctrine.
- b. Catholicism was started over baptismal regeneration and an aberration regarding the Lord’s Supper.

3. Catholicism:

- a. Pastoral authority on a local church level was replaced by an outside authority of a “bishop” which later evolved into the papacy.
- b. Sacramentalism grew out of a misplaced emphasis on baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- c. As priest craft grew, so did control, so more sacraments had to be added to govern the church member from the cradle to the grave.

4. Protestantism:

- a. Protestantism did not grow out of a spiritual revival, but as a move to “reform (Reformation), Catholicism.
- b. That’s why most “Protestant” church preachers wear robes, the choir wears robes, candles are lit in services, baptism is by sprinkling, there are stained glass windows, ceremonies, rituals, etc.

ILLUS: Protestant churches resemble their Mother. The Bible calls her the “Mother of Harlots.” That’s why Protestant churches are going back to “mama” today! They never came out far enough in the first place!

B. Cleansing:

1. The Anabaptists:

- a. Our predecessors were persecuted because they insisted on “rebaptizing” converts from Catholicism and Protestantism.
- b. The Catholics and Protestants united to exterminate the Anabaptists.

ILLUS: Henry VIII gave them 12 days to leave England or die. Anabaptists were slaughtered in the Netherlands. They were banned in Germany. They were drowned or burned at the stake in Switzerland. In America the Pilgrims came to get religious freedom for themselves, but persecuted Baptists! Why? Because they opposed infant baptism, baptismal regeneration and believed in the separation of church and state.

(When the Dec. of Independence was drawn up it was considered to be an Anabaptist document because of its emphasis on the separation of church and state.)

2. The Fundamentalists:

- a. Protestant Fundamentalists:

ILLUS: These grew out of the old line Protestant denominations and were a part of a 2nd Reformation. They look like the old Protestants, maintain their formal worship services and hold on to infant baptism, etc. This was largely a northern movement and they are usually a part of the IFCA and have names like “Church of the Open Door (or Bible), Community Bible Churches, etc. They are NOT Baptist churches! Billy Sunday, R.A. Torrey, D.L. Moody, Harry Ironsides, and Bob Jones, etc. came from this movement.

- b. American Baptist Fundamentalists (the old Northern Baptist Convention)

ILLUS: Out of this group came the GARB churches and the CBA churches. These groups were separatists and the first generation were also soul-winning. They have now splintered into sub-groups and fellowships. Again this is primarily a northern movement.

- c. Southern Baptist Fundamentalists:

ILLUS: Schools and a Sunday School publications movement, things deteriorated and they moved further to This group produced some of the most powerful preachers and churches in America. But as it became more and more centralized and began its Missions policy of the “Cooperative Program,” founded sthe left. Most independent Baptist churches in the south came out of the SBC. They split over evolution in the schools, social drinking, mixed bathing, etc.

and formed soul-winning centers in most of the major cities in the south. Out of this group came J. Frank Norris, G.B. Vick, Lee Roberson, Jack Hyles, etc. This group produced the 20th century American phenomenon of the return to the independent, fundamental, local Baptist church.

The problem is that most of the schools for fundamentalist young people were provided by this group (Wheaton, Moody, Bob Jones U., Penascola, etc.), and most of the literature we have used over the years. AWANA and Pioneer Girls, etc. were started by these groups and independent Baptist churches used them extensively.

NOTE: The neo-evangelicals are the compromising part of each of the above groups. The group of independent, fundamental, soul-winning, Baptist churches are the hope of America. No-one else will or can get the job done.

CONCL: This has been an attempt at dealing with a complex historical subject as to “WHY SO MANY DIFFERENT ‘CHURCHES’?” History is non-judgmental, simply factual. We have not meant to be unkind, simply to present the facts of church history and the evolution of so many different ‘churches.’ I hope it has helped you with some perspective at least.

I am afraid that our youth are growing up with little or no appreciation for their heritage and with a great deal of confusion as to their identity. For that matter I doubt if many of our adults, especially our young adults recognize why they are who they are. Do you?

“THE CHURCH AND ‘THE GATES OF HELL’”

TEXT: Matthew 16:18

INTRO: A. Because of the importance of the Church in God’s economy, because of His special love for the Church and because He died for the Church it is always the focal point of Satanic attack. The ‘Gates of Hell’ will not be victorious over the Church, but there will be both frontal and indirect attacks upon it. As with Satan’s attacks upon the Bible, he will seek to discredit it, deny it, water it down, change its nature, add or subtract to it or simply declare all-out war on it.

B. His attacks upon the Church have been both blatant and subtle. There are 3 main areas where Satan has been successful in destroying and/or discrediting the Church and weakening its effectiveness. These are the 3 areas we will examine today.

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD: John 17:1-6; 13-19

A. The Believer and The Kosmos:

The word “world” is the word “kosmos” in Greek and means the world system (there are other words for “world” meaning nations or soil).

1. Hollywood is a part of the “world” but not all of the world is evil.
2. Jesus described it well when he said: eating, drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage; none of which is evil or wrong in itself.
4. Everything in this world outside the Church is a part of the kosmos.
5. When God calls us out of the world there is no place to go except the Church; either you are in the Church or you are in the kosmos.
6. The believer is called out of the world, then is commanded to go back into the world. V.14-18
7. We are commanded not to love the world nor the things in the world. V.15

ILLUS: The purpose of a church service is neither ‘worship’ nor entertainment. It is a place where you come to hear His Name praised, after hearing it cursed all week; His Word preached, to equip you for the work of the ministry in the

kosmos. It is a place where you come to fellowship with God's people, so you can receive strength to go back out into the kosmos and talk about Jesus to the devil's crowd.

We are IN the world but not OF the world. If you are on an airplane and they offer you booze, you will refuse it. You are IN the plane, but not OF the plane. The same goes for work, the mall, the amusement park, etc. There is good kosmos and bad kosmos, but we are called out from the world to the church to go back into the world to witness.

II. THE CHURCH AND THE STATE: Rom. 13:1-7

ILLUS: The U.S. Government believes in the separation of Church and State for Catholics, but not for believers. When Manuel Noriega sought asylum, he went to the Catholic embassy in Panama, and our Government did nothing to get him. If he would have gone to a Bible-believing church, the Govt. would have broken the doors down!

A. Two Kingdoms:

1. The world.

Mt. 4:8

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

2. The Church:

John 18:36

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

B. The Co-existence of the 2 Kingdoms:

1. We live in both and have our citizenship in both.
2. We are subjects of both.
3. Both co-exist:
 - a. Each is to allow the other to exist and operate.
 - b. Neither is answerable to the other. (Ex.: U.S. Government and Canadian Govt.)
 - c. The threat is two-fold:
 - 1) State-Church (Communism, Germany, etc.)
 - 2) Church-State (Catholicism)
 - 3)
4. Both have legitimate authority:
5. We are to honor both.

Prov. 24:21

21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

6. There is a priority for the believer. Rom. 13:1-4

ILLUS: God sets up the "powers" so He is the greatest power. Thus the higher the power, the greater the subjection. School accreditation by the State is 1 kingdom trying to rule the other. Church taxation by the State is 1 kingdom trying to rule and control the other. Neither the church nor the state should support the other. Tuition tax credits: who will decide which schools qualify and which do not? The Government that means they will have to check on each school and our school is not open for Government approval.

III. THE CHURCH AND THE 'CHURCHES:'

A. God Started The Church At Pentecost.

B. The 'Churches' (read denominations) Were Started by Men:

1. The Catholic church was started in 313 AD by the Emperor Constantine.
2. The Lutheran church was started in 1530 by Martin Luther.
3. The Episcopalian church was started about 1531.
4. The Congregational church was started about 1541.
5. The Methodist church was started in 1785 by John Wesley.
6. The Disciples of Christ church was started about 1812.
7. The Non-denominational church began to flourish about 1900.

ILLUS: The "evangelical" movement was not founded out of conviction, but because they were unwilling to be branded for Jesus' sake. They did not want to bear the stigma of fundamentalism. We ought to rejoice that a Methodist church may preach the Gospel, get folks saved, hold revival meetings, but we cannot rejoice that he is wrong on eternal security, wrong on baptism, wrong on the Lord's Supper, etc. I can thank God for them, but I cannot join up with them.

C. The Sins of Denominations:

1. The sin of idolatry.

Col. 1:18

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

- a. Jesus is the head of the church.
- b. Anything in His place is an idol.

ILLUS: Denominational headquarters usurp the Headship of Christ and control the churches. They control the local church thru a hierarchy, literature, accreditation, ordination, cooperative programs, ownership of church property, etc.

2. The sin of 'muzzling the ox.'

1 Tim. 5:17-19

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. 19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

ILLUS: The denomination ordains the preachers and gives them their papers and authority, thus they can take them back. They can decide to 'muzzle the ox.'

I am not the head of this church, but I am in charge of the pulpit. I am under Christ in the pulpit, and we are all under Him in the church. I have no power but the power of influence. I stand up and preach and teach, trying to influence people how to live, but I have no power over them, nor do they have power over my preaching. No church can be a New Testament church if the ox is muzzled.

3. The sin of removing Divine perpetuity. Mt. 16:18

- a. Anything or anyone that comes between the Savior and His church or anything not under the canopy of the local church does not have the promise of Divine perpetuity.
- b. If a denomination starts a church, the church is answerable to the denomination, thus

Christ is no longer its head and is not a true church and has no claim on His protection .

c. We too may die, but we don't have to die.

CONCL: Here are 3 areas where the devil may gain a foothold and assail the Church. But though he may win a battle here and there, He cannot defeat the Church!

“HOW SATAN ASSAULTS THE CHURCH”

TEXT: Isaiah 14:12-14

INTRO: A. Last week we saw that “the gates of hell” would not prevail or be victorious over the Church. But this week we want to see “HOW SATAN ASSAULTS THE CHURCH.” We need only to know that because Christ died for the Church it will be the target of Satanic attack.

B. Before examining Satan's assaults we will examine his strategies...

I. SATAN'S STRATEGIES:

A. His Pride: (text)

1. He wanted to be King.

- a. The Bible calls him “the anointed cherub.”
- b. No one knew the Lord like Satan (Lucifer) did (!).

2. He fought to be King.

ILLUS: Some think that the angels were divided into 3 main groups, each under an archangel; Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer. The problem with this view is that Satan is seen as a Cherubim, not an archangel. Nonetheless Satan did lead 1/3 of all the angels in rebellion against God.

3. He was defeated and cast out of heaven.

Luke 10:18

18 And (Jesus) said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

4. He wanted revenge and he knew the best way to hurt God was thru His children.

- a. Satan targets you, as one of God's children.
- b. Satan has no plan for your life.
- c. Satan wants you to go any way but God's way.

Is. 53:6

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

B. Satan's Plan:

ILLUS: Satan has no plan for your life, but he does have a plan for you as a member of the body of Christ, the Church. He will assault the Church. As the great counterfeiter, he will closely duplicate

those things associated with the true Church. His counterfeits look good and are not openly wicked. They are good things distorted. They offer the believer, and thus the Church, a choice...

1. Baptism - it is to be by immersion after salvation. The counterfeit looks sweet. parents, grandparents, godparents are there, the preacher is there.
2. Lord's Supper - God gave us a memorial supper and Satan made it into a Sacrament.
3. Spirit-fullness - God has given us power to be soul-winners and to serve Him, Satan's counterfeit is the charismatic movement, where people babble and get all emotional.
4. Bibles - God gave us His inspired Word(s) and Satan gave us the perversions.
5. Love - Satan's counterfeit is lust.
6. The Church

Rev. 2:9

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

NOTE: The word "synagogue" = assembly. The word "church" = called out assembly. If God has an assembly, so does Satan. Any assembly NOT a true "church" is a "synagogue" (not capitalized) of Satan. A group of people who are religious and assemble, but are not called out of the world by God, are a synagogue. No group has a right to call itself a church if it is not separated from the world. It is merely an assembly. The devil doesn't care if we assemble if that assembly is not a true church. These assemblies may do many good things, but they are counterfeits.

C. Satan's Program:

1. Non-church organizations - the devil wants us to get involved in any "Christian" organization that looks like the real thing, but is a counterfeit.
2. Home Bible studies - the wealthy and intelligent are prone to fall for these because they think hell-fire preaching is below their dignity. (Athletes are also big on these. They have "chapel" before the game on Sunday to salve their conscience for not being in church, where they belong.)
3. Radio and TV preachers - God's church struggles while God's people support these often corrupt "ministries." These preachers get into the hearts and heads of church members. They are parasites who use church members to finance their programs. Most of these men are not even faithful members of a local church! (Once a believer becomes a follower, he becomes more loyal to him than to the church. His faults are not visible. He doesn't live under scrutiny.)
4. Schools - Any school which has services which compete with a true local church is dangerous. There is no such thing as a college church, but there is a church college. Jesus is the head of the church, not a college. IF the college runs the church it is no longer a church.
5. Non-church churches - The devil's church is any church WE choose. We are not to join a church because of the youth program, the Christian school, the children's activities, etc. God is to lead us to a church of HIS choice!

II. SATAN'S ASSAULTS:

A. He Will Attack the Pastor Who Must Be the Supervisor:

1. The Pastor is the Shepherd who must oversee the work.
2. The Pastor's job is to guard the church and the truth.
3. The Pastor must beware compromise.

4. The Pastor must beware sin.

B. He Will Attack the People Who Must Be the Sentinels:

1. God's people must help police the church.
2. God's people must not grow weary of the battle:
 - a. The sentinels must never lay down their arms, go AWOL, or go to sleep.
 - b. The sentinels must not lose their burden for souls or the church will die.
 - c. The sentinels must not get weary of the constant warnings from the Pastor.

C. He Will Attack the Church Which Must Set the Standards:

1. The Church must stay fundamental, not just evangelical.
2. The Church must be soul-winning, not just evangelistic.
3. The Church must be theologically right, not centrist.

ILLUS: The centrist position is the safe position. Every time the theological winds blow we should not alter our course. Our position must not be set with regard to others. If our position is not popular and we lose members, we must not change course even if we are labeled extremists. We should not try to be extreme. We need to just stand where we are supposed to stand. I appear to be more extreme today than 40 years ago but I have not changed. The position of the extremes have changed making me appear more extreme than I once was.

4. The church must be missions-minded, not self-centered.
5. The church must be others-oriented, not selfish.
6. The church must be practically straight, not just theologically correct.
7. The church must make preaching paramount, not entertainment, etc.

CONCL: Satan is assaulting the church today. He knows he will not be victorious in the end, but he is making a no-holds-barred assault to snatch as many Christians and churches as he can before he is cast into the lake of fire. I have tried to show you "HOW SATAN ASSAULTS THE CHURCH" tonight. If you want your children and grandchildren to have the same kind of church you have, beware!

**"AUTOPSY ON A DEAD CHURCH" or
WHAT WILL KILL OUR CHURCH?**

TEXT: Revelation 3:1

INTRO: A. There is a principle among all living things that new energy (food, sunlight, water, etc.) must constantly be put into the organism or it will get sick, wither and die. The same is true of the organism called the Body of Christ, the church. When a church stops feed-ing on the Word of God, and there is little or no maintenance (constantly watching for signs of poor health, allowing negative influences to impact the church, etc.), it will get sick and eventually die.

B. If you were to perform an "AUTOPSY ON A DEAD CHURCH" you would find the answer to the question of WHAT WILL KILL OUR CHURCH! All kinds of diseases attack the Body of Christ on a regular basis...

I. DISEASE FROM WITHOUT:

A. The Virus of Organizations Placed Above The Church:

ILLUS: An old Southern preacher said that there is as much Scripture for having a tavern as there is for having a denomination. No superintendent, state representative, denominational headquarters, etc. is above the pastor or the local church.

B. The Infiltration of Deadly Doctrines From Outside:

1. There are the goofy doctrines of the cults and sects.
2. There are the neo-evangelical doctrines of the “gurus.”
3. There are the charismatic doctrines of sign gifts, etc.

C. The Virus of Radio and TV Personalities:

ILLUS: These glamour boys sound like us, look like us and even use our Bible (sometimes), but we need to check their lifestyle as well as what they preach and beware comparing our local church to their flamboyant ministries or “mega-churches.”

D. The Venom of A ‘Good Cause’:

ILLUS: Fighting the evils of society: communism, socialism, liberalism, etc. or the immorality of homosexuality, abortion, etc. are proper issues for the church to address, but the danger is allowing that issue to consume the church. We need to “Keep the main thing, the main thing.” Balance is the need.

E. The Bane of School Influence:

ILLUS: A church or Pastor must never be tied to a school to the place where it decides or dictates direction.

F. The Cancer of Home Bible Studies:

ILLUS: Home Bible Studies using material not approved by the church, or operating outside the authority of the church can seriously compromise the doctrine of the church. They can be a blessing or divisive.

G. The Blight of Government Interference:

ILLUS: The fact is both the church and Govt. are God-ordained. But the Government is secular and is designed to protect and serve, while the church is spiritual and is dedicated to bless and help. When the church surrenders any area of its biblical domain to the Government it is a surrender of the strong to the weak.

H. The Bacteria of Accreditation:

ILLUS: It doesn't matter if that accreditation is from the Govt. or from a Christian college, the church of Jesus Christ needs only the accreditation of the Savior. Anything outside the church which approves the church is the destruction of the church's good health.

II. SICKNESS IN THE PULPIT:

A. The Problem of Pastoral Change:

ILLUS: Something in people makes them want a different kind of man as Pastor. It is like politics. When the Republicans are in, they get blamed for everything. When the Democrats are in they get blamed for everything. That's what makes the 2 party system work. In the church it is easy to become enamored over a man who is totally different from the former preacher. Often it is change just for the sake of change. (More next week.)

B. The Bacteria of The Pastor Who Loses His Vision: Prov. 29:18

C.

C. The Microbe of The Pastor Who Loses His Motivation:

ILLUS: It is easier for a young preacher to stay motivated while he is on the "honeymoon" and the ministry is new and exciting. Unless the older preacher works at it, he will lose his motivation. He needs to stay fresh, read voluminously, study ever harder, keep in contact with the people, never lose his passion for the lost and never get hardened to the saints and their needs - in spite of disappointments, etc.

D. The Toxin of The Pastor Who Loses His Bite:

ILLUS: An older preacher is like an older parent or grandparent. The parent is always harder on his children than his grandchildren. Preachers need to beware the grandfather toxin.

E. The Syndrome of A Changed Emphasis: Deut. 22:9-11

1. The seed: God's Word v.9
2. The ox: God's man and an unequal yoke (separation)
3. The garment: doctrine of salvation

III. INFECTION FROM WITHIN:

Acts 20:28-30

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

A. The Malady of Change From Strong To Weak:

1. Removing the ancient landmarks of soul-winning, standards and sound doctrine often come from the congregation.
2. Pressure is often put on the pastor by the congregation by lack of support for his position in these areas.

B. The Affliction of Worldliness and Carnality:

1. As the church becomes more and more worldly the pressure is to conformity.
2. The believer and the church are to be in the world, but not of the world.

C. The Ailment of Divisions and Cliques:

D. The Malaise f Loss of Excitement and Enthusiasm:

ILLUS: The best way for a church to die is for the older saints to quit the choir, soul-winning, bus routes, Sunday School classes, quit bringing folks to church, etc. If you want your grandchildren to have a good church, you have to keep it that way till they get there. Don't retire – re enlist!

E. The Disorder of Loss Of Thankfulness:

F. The Tumor pf Weak Spirituality In The Home:

G. The Malignancy of Lethargy Regarding Dangers:

1. The believers have no spiritual discernment.
2. The church tires of the Pastor's warnings of men and movements.

H. The Bacteria of Financial Miserliness:

I.

J. The Disorder of No Burden For The Lost:

K.

L. The Germ of Lukewarmness: (attitude and atmosphere and being "at ease in Zion"

M.

N. The Death Rattle of No New Families:

O.

ILLUS: What keeps our church alive is the number of new faces and families we see in the congregation and joining the church. (I believe if I can keep my preaching alive, they will keep coming, regardless of my age. It is the message NOT the man that is the issue!)

CONCL: It may only take one germ to kill a body. It may only take one of these things to kill our church! Let's all consider ourselves watchmen on the walls of Faith Baptist Church to keep the Disease From Without, The Sickness in the Pulpit and The Infection from Within from invading our local body of believers.

"SHOPPING FOR A PASTOR"

TEXT: Acts 20:17-38

INTRO: A. Most churches, especially those which have had the same pastor for many years, haven't the foggiest notion about how to go "SHOPPING FOR A PASTOR." The most vul-nerable time in a church's history is when they are without a shepherd. The danger is that the sheep will scatter, be fearful, get discouraged, divide and if they call the wrong man, the church flock may even die.

B. If the former pastor was loved, appreciated and respected, the church may feel that he cannot be replaced. But the Lord of the harvest takes care of His work. If the pastor was "stolen" by another church, some may feel animosity; they need to remember that's how they got their pastor!

Of course, in most cases, they will do the same thing and look to other churches when they begin “SHOPPING FOR A PASTOR.”

TRANS: What is involved in looking for a new pastor?

I. WHO WILL LOOK?

A. The Church:

1. Everyone in the church should keep their eyes and ears open for possible prospects.
2. But a church “body” needs to have one “head” to direct it, so there is a need for...

B. The Pulpit Committee:

1. In our church the Pulpit Committee is the deacons.
2. The deacons were chosen by the church to represent them and hopefully represent a cross-section (young and old) of the congregation.
3. The pulpit committee should set some guidelines for itself:
 - a.
 - b. Set aside times for special prayer.
 - c. Make sure the biblical guidelines for a pastor take precedence.
 - d. Don’t allow this to become a popularity contest.
 - e. Don’t usurp the church’s authority.
 - f. Investigate every legitimate lead.
 - g. Keep all information confidential, in spite of pressure.
 - h. Don’t be hasty or impatient, “wait upon the Lord.”
 - i. Remember it is the church’s resp. to call a man and not get discouraged if they don’t respond in the manner we desire.

II. WHERE TO LOOK?

A. To The Lord:

1. He is the Lord of the harvest and His face should be sought first by the congregation, then by the pulpit committee corporately and individually.

B. To The Churches:

1. The first people to contact are the pastors of the churches in the circle of fellowship and ask them for prayer and help.
2. They may also be a good source for filling the pulpit when needed.

B. To The Schools:

1. The schools to whom we entrust our young people to train for the ministry are a possible source for prospective candidates.
2. They often hear of men seeking a new ministry or, because they know something about our church, may think of someone they would recommend.

C. To Men Who Are Looking:

1. This source is last on the list deliberately.
2. Generally the person who tells you he feels “led” to pastor the church is not the best candidate, so go carefully here, he probably has ulterior motives.

III. HOW TO LOOK?

A. Contact Prospects: (after narrowing the list)

B. Invite Some To Preach A Service(s):

C. Visit Their Present Church: (discreetly)

1. Preferably do not let him know when you will be coming.
2. Try to meet with him after the service(s).
3. Try to evaluate fairly the ministry, mood, atmosphere, etc.
4. Be alert to how the congregation responds to him outside the pulpit.
5. Ask the prospective candidate for a resume and references.
6. If his church knows he is looking, contact deacons or others in the church.

D. Decide To Recall A Prospective Candidate:

1. Realize when you take this step, you are finalizing the procedure.
2. Have one man at a time considered.
3. Have him and his family come for several days.
4. Look for his strengths and weaknesses.
5. The pulpit committee should meet with him.
6. The congregation should meet with him.
7. Help the candidate. (Give him a tour or a map of the area, discuss various ministries within the church you expect him to endorse, support and promote.)

NOTE: Provide food and lodging and pay all expenses. Provide him with a church constitution. Answer any questions he may have. Discuss his needs and the church package (salary, housing, benefits, etc.). Consider his years of experience, etc. before a final offer is made.

8. Ask pointed questions and be clear about your expectations as a church.
9. Let him know what he will be expected to do (a job description).

IV. FOR WHAT DO YOU LOOK?

A. Scriptural Qualifications: 1 Tim. 3:1-7

B. Doctrinal Soundness.

C. Soul Winning Zeal.

D. Missions-Emphasis.

E. Future Vision.

F. Fundamental Position.

H. Separatist Stand.

I. Practical Balance:

1. Dispensational.
2. KJB only.
3. Hobby horses? (Does he “ride” any particular issue?)
4. Standards. (Does he agree with the church, will he promote them?)

5. Divorce and Remarriage. (What is his personal view and practice?)
6. Money matters. (debt, how he will raise funds, etc.)
7. Educational background. (Which schools does he NOW support?)
8. Former ministries. (Why leaving present ministry?)
9. Problem areas? (wife, home, family?)
10. Church discipline? (On him? His views.)

CONCL: No man is perfect, but a pastor must be “blameless” in the church, home and community. No one should be able to justly accuse him of doctrinal, moral or spiritual aberrations. If and when the final vote is taken, it may not be 100% and if you were one of the dissenters, now is the time to recognize the church has spoken and determine in your heart to wholeheartedly support your new pastor! Get on board!

“WHAT ABOUT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?” or “The Duties And Privileges of New Testament Christians”

TEXT: Luke 17:10

INTRO: A. Many Charismatic and other churches today have no membership. People float in and out at will. Because there is no membership there is no obligation, no discipline, no standards and no commitment.

ILLUS: Even the world recognizes the concept that without membership there is no loyalty and little dedication to an organization. That’s why the lodges, fraternal organizations, clubs, etc. all require membership. But the issue before us is more critical. We are dealing with the Church for which Christ died. And the world is not to be our example. We must look to the Word of God.

B. The issue is “WHAT ABOUT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?” according to the Bible? What are “The Duties and Privileges Of Church Membership”?

I. THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVER IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: (Is Membership Man-Made Or God-Ordained?)

A. Biblically Normal: 1 Cor. 5:12-13

1. The context of the passage is church discipline.
2. There can be no church discipline without church membership.
3. The passage deals with those “within” and those “without.”
4. The New Testament knows nothing of Christians not associated with a local church or outside the fellowship, authority and discipline of a local church.
5. The concept of membership is assumed as well as in evidence in Acts and thru out the New Testament epistles.

B. Scripturally Necessary:

1. The mention of a church roll.

1 Tim. 5:9

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

2. The fact of church officers and church elections.

Phil. 1:1

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at

2 Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Acts 6:5-6

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

3. The practice of church discipline. 1 Cor. 5: 2 Thes. 3, etc.

QUOTE: “One of the strongest arguments supporting church membership is the obvious factor that in the New Testament the churches are empowered with the responsibility of the discipline of believers. Paul’s admonition to... “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” would have little meaning if, 1) he had not been received by the church, 2) was not publicly and officially identified with the church, and 3) consequently, could be purged from the fellowship and privileges of church membership.

ILLUS: One obvious but unscriptural reason for not joining a church is an unwillingness to place oneself under the authority and discipline of the church. A rebellious generation dislikes the biblical concept of those who “have the rule over you” (Heb. 13:7,17,24).

II. THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS FAITHFULNESS: (Is Unfaithfulness Sin?)

A. Exhortation: Heb. 10:25

ILLUS: To show how far away from New Testament Christianity we have come, we now have people calling themselves Christians who never attend church. Many so-called “Christian athletes” have Bible studies in place of church services so they can play sports on the Lord’s Day. Many Christian watch their favorite TV preacher instead of going to church. The competition for the believer’s loyalty continues to mount; sports activities, picnics, RV’s, the beach, the mountains, more leisure time, holidays, vacations, TV, family get-togethers on the Lord’s Day, etc. etc.

The question is: “Is Unfaithfulness Sin?”

1. God’s program for believers is unquestionably the local church.
2. No para-church or “church-related ministry” can replace the Biblical program for believers today.
3. Thus to be unfaithful to the local church is to show disrespect and disloyalty to the One Who died for His Church.
4. Since the Savior gave gifts to the church, e.g., pastors and teachers to feed the flock, we sin against God’s program for spiritual growth when we are not faithful.

B. Example:

1. What do we teach young converts, new Christians and young children when we are unfaithful to the local church?

ILLUS: We teach them that God's work, his program for this age and His plan for the evangelization of the world is not a priority. We show by our example that sports, recreation, relaxation, entertainment, etc. are all more important than His church.

2. We only have one chance at properly training our children; the results will be a blessing or a blight in later years.

C. Edification:

1 Thes. 5:11

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

1 Cor.14:12

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

1. Am I edifying, building up, strengthening other believers when I am unfaithful to the church?
2. When my car is in the driveway when the church is meeting it is a loud and clear advertisement that the church is unimportant.

III. THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS GIVING: (Where Should The Believer Give?)

1 Cor. 16:2

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

A. New Testament Giving Is Church Giving:

1. The Tithe: The minimum standard
2. The Offering: Calvary Giving
3. The Love Gift: Grace Giving

B. New Testament Giving Is Great Commission Giving:

Luke 24:47

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

1. Without the faithful support of God's people the Great Commission cannot be fulfilled.
2. When we give thru the local church, we support worthy missions projects decided upon by the assembly, not by whim, or personal bias.

IV. THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS SOUL WINNING: (Every Member Evangelism?)

A. No One Excluded:

1. Soul winning is not a gift for the few, but a command for the many.
2. Let's stop using excuses and trust the God of the impossible.
3. Let's stop shifting responsibility and allow God to use His weak vessels.

C. Everyone Included:

1 Thes. 1:7-8

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

1. The church at Thessalonica had the reputation of being a soul-winning church which became an example to the entire New Testament church.
2. The word "you" in v.8 refers to the entire church.

ILLUS: Here is "every member evangelism" in action. What an impact our church could make in this area if we adopted the Thessalonian attitude that soul-winning is not merely a privilege, but a duty!

CONCL: The concept of church membership is God-ordained and with that membership goes certain privileges and duties.

Lk. 17:10b

"...we have done that which was our duty to do" should be the response of the believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Will it be yours?

"THE GIFTS GOD GAVE"

TEXT: Ephesians 4:11-17

INTRO: A. The last words of our Savior to His disciples before leaving them were to win folks, baptize them and teach them, so they in turn can win folks, baptize them and teach them and on and on. In the process, someone has to prepare the baptismal pool, take care of the clothing, clean up, etc. Some of the converts will get sick and some will have to care for them, feed them, etc. As the number increases buildings must be built, money has to be raised, the buildings will have to be cleaned, decorated, etc

B. God gave gifts to His Church so all these things could be cared for, but His gifts were never intended to be substitutes for the main thing. The main thing must remain the main thing.

ILLUS: A fire department performs a critical service. It must keep the main thing the main thing! Someone needs to polish the trucks, sweep the garage, do the paperwork, etc. - but when a fire is raging, the minor jobs can't get in the way of putting out fires. In the church the Lord never intended that the gift of singing, being a servant, teaching a class, etc. would be a substitute for soul-winning, the main thing!

There are more than 20 separate gifts under 3 headings, notice that soul-winning is NOT listed as a gift! We want to focus on the SPEAKING GIFTS. Jack Hyles said: “No one has all the gifts and there is no gift all have.

I. THE GIFTS ARE MEN:

- A. Apostles: (Men sent who are under orders) (Foundations) You only need to build the foundation once!**

ILLUS: An Apostle had to have been chosen by Christ Himself (hence Matthias does not qualify, and had to have seen the resurrected Savior. He was also given unique powers not given those who were just disciples of our Savior.

- B. Prophets: (Men who received special revelation re: future events) (Foretellers) There is no new revelation given after the New Testament canon.**

Acts 21:10-11

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

1. These men, apostles and prophets, were unique individuals given to the early church before the canon of Scripture was completed.
2. These gifted men, who were gifts to the church, were foundational to the early church.

Eph. 2:20

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

- C. Evangelists: (Men called to preach the Gospel and establish churches, e.g., Paul. (Footmen) These men planted the seed of the Gospel re: missionaries.**
- D. Pastor/Teachers: (Men called to preach, teach and shepherd the churches.) (Foremen)**
- E. These men are gifted men, not just gifts to the Church.**

QUOTE: Oliver Greene, “...I do not believe there is an evangelist on the face of this earth who, if he is a God-called, God-sent evangelist, can successfully pastor a church, teach the people and lead them into the deeper spiritual experiences set forth in Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus.”

ILLUS: When Jesus called Peter he was “casting a net into the sea” (evangelist), and when he called John and James they “were in their ship mending their nets.” Peter was the “fisher-man” and on Pentecost he showed what a fisherman he was. James and John repaired the net so Peter’s fish could not escape. (pastors) Both need each other.

II. THE GIFTS ARE MEANINGFUL:

- A. To Perfect The Believer:**

1. They are to get God's people ready for work! "...the work of the ministry"
2. They are motivators, builders, exhorters, who excite others to God's work.
3. The reason preachers preach hard on standards, etc. is because they are trying to "perfect the saints" so their testimony will be effective.

B. To Edify The Body: cf. v.13 with v.1-6

NOTE: Ivor Powell offers this outline: One Body (The Church), One Spirit (The Comforter), One Hope (The Challenge), One Lord (The Christ), One Faith (The Credentials), One Baptism (The Confession) and One God (The Creator).

1. The Body needs unity. (unity comes from the inside, uniformity from the outside!) v.13

NOTE: Paul waited till after he had laid the doctrinal foundation in chs. 1-3, before speaking about unity in ch.4!

2. The Body needs maturity. V.14 "no more children..."

ILLUS: I was told this week that the biggest need of the "church" today is "unity." I would agree if that unity was biblical unity based, not on love, but on sound doctrine. The greatest need among believers today, as I see it, is discernment. V.14b

3. The Body needs Honesty: v.15 "...speaking the truth in love..."

ILLUS: The word of the believer ought to be his bond. What he says or promises he should be expected to do. A handshake should be enough to clinch any agreement. In the church, if the Pastor preaches the unvarnished truth, some saints get shook up!

4. The Body needs humility: v.16 (When we realize we are all in the same body, we will take a place of genuine humility.)
5. The Body needs stability: v.17

CONCL: The purpose of the gifts Christ has given to His Church is to help the Body of Christ to grow up! The gifts are given so we can effectively "get the Bride" for our Savior. The gifts are simply aids to help us to do what we were left here on earth to accomplish.

Gen. 24:22

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold; (as aids to enable him to get the bride for his father's son!).

**"THE CHURCH WITH A HEART" or
"have compassion, making a difference"**

TEXT: Jude 22

THESIS: To show the ministry the Lord wants for every church.

INTRO: A. The year was 1968 and my wife and I had traveled to Ind. by train. We stayed in the Indiana hotel (a fleabag!) and woke up to 55 inches of snow on the ground and it was still snowing. The temperature was 20 below zero! We trudged a couple of blocks thru the snow to the First

Baptist Church of Hammond for Sunday School and they had over 2000 in attendance and were able to run most of their buses. They had a one-day building fund drive and raised \$77,000! The next night they put on a program that changed my life and ministry. It was called "THE CHURCH WITH A HEART." That night they paraded across the platform hundreds of people many would call the dregs of society. The mission men, the handicapped, the bus kids, the deaf, the homeless. What I saw that night showed me what the ministry was supposed to be about...compassion.

B. That night we laughed and cried as the Pastor, Jack Hyles, showed us the ministry of First Baptist Church of Hammond and how they made an effort to reach into every strata of society for the Lord. What he showed us was compassion on display. Later he would write: "*Compassion is the nurse given to mankind. Compassion cares for the helpless. It mothers the orphan, feeds the hungry, clothes the cold, helps the helpless and raises the fallen. Compassion shines upon the coldness and warms it. Compassion shines upon suffering and relieves it. Compassion shines upon sorrow and cheers it.*" When a short time later I was called to Fairless Hills, I determined that our church would be known for hard preaching and doctrinal faithfulness, but also compassion and so I took the slogan of that night's presentation as the motto for Faith Baptist. I want to look at our church tonight. I want you to see why we are called "THE CHURCH WITH A HEART"...

I. HIS NAME IS JOHNNY AND HE IS A BUS KID:

A. He Lives in A World Of Instability:

1. Johnny doesn't know much about his daddy and has only seen him a few times in his 8 years of life.
2. Such words as love, kindness, steak and peace are foreign to him.
3. His mom leaves for work every morning and comes home late at night.
4. It is expensive for the church to bring Johnny here to church and he may disturb the
5. service, be a discipline problem, not dress too nicely, not know how much money we invest in buses, insurance, gas, etc. and may never say thank you for your sacrifice – but Johnny needs someone to care about him.

ILLUS: He needs a bus captain who will visit his house once a week and give him a piece of candy, a hug and an "I love you, Johnny." He needs a teacher who doesn't resent him or his appearance or his unruly conduct, but who will take the extra minute to put her arm around him and tell him he is loved, and then present God's Word to Him. He needs a Children's church teacher/preacher who will preach the plan of salvation to him, visit his home, buy him a needed pair of shoes or whatever he needs... He needs someone who will "*have compassion making a difference.*"

II. HER NAME IS ELIZABETH AND SHE IS HANDICAPPED:

A. She Lives In A World Of Confusion:

1. Somehow things just don't connect in her brain so that she can think logically or see things as clearly as most.
2. She may look strangely different than so-called "normal" people.
3. She doesn't always "make sense" when she talks, but can be very loving and will respond to a hug or a kind word.

ILLUS: She needs a lot of special attention, someone to pick her up on a bus, someone to care for her, to help her up and down stairs, someone to tell her about the Lord Who died for her. She needs a teacher who will be patient, longsuffering, understanding, someone who will "*have compassion, making a difference.*"

III. HIS NAME IS PAUL AND HE IS DEAF:

A. He Lives in A World Of Silence:

1. He has never heard a bird chirp, the splash of water, an airplane over head, or the sweet words “I love you.”
2. When he attends a service he never hears the organ or piano, or the voice of the one who sings special music or even the congregational songs.
3. Any sounds he makes are difficult or impossible to understand as he struggles to form words he has never heard spoken; he may squeak or squeal, but he can experience joy, happiness, sadness and loss just like the hearing.

ILLUS: He needs someone with dedicated hands and a dedicated heart, who can somehow translate the music and message in a service so he can comprehend it. He needs patience, love and understanding. He may need someone to go with him about a medical or legal problem to interpret for him. He may have a difficult time getting a good job, because many look at him as being handicapped. Sometimes he may have more than one disability and that compounds the problem. He needs someone to *“have compassion, making a difference.”*

IV. HER NAME IS JANE AND SHE IS A SINGLE MOM (OR WIDOW):

A. She Lives in A World Of Loneliness:

1. She comes to church and sees the husbands sitting with their wives and children and looks back to a day when that could have been her.
2. Perhaps she has never been married and feels somewhat unfulfilled and wonders why the Lord has not seen fit to meet her needs...
3. She eats alone and sleeps alone and is alone more often than not, she has few friends who can relate to her needs and often has no one to talk to, but the Lord.

ILLUS: She needs a few close friends who would be willing to listen to her problems, hear about her loneliness, minister to her needs. She needs the fellowship of other singles or an invitation to a meal in the home of a family. She needs a “special friend” who would be there for her when the loneliness is unbearable. Could YOU be that friend? Could you invite her to YOUR home? Or take her to lunch? or buy her a little gift that says “I care”?! She needs someone who will *“have compassion, making a difference.”*

V. HIS NAME IS DON AND HE IS A MISSIONARY:

A. He Lives In A World Of Strangers:

1. He has left home, friends, family, luxuries, even necessities.
2. He has made a new home in a strange world of different sights and sounds as well as different lifestyles and strange customs.
3. He has moved his wife and children far away and wonders sometimes if anyone remembers they are there.

ILLUS: He needs someone who will be faithful in prayer as well as support. He needs someone who will hold up his hands and understand if his ministry on the field doesn’t grow as expected. He needs people who read his pleas in missionary letters and who take those needs personally. He needs

someone who will remember that his children have birthdays and holidays and that he and his wife have anniversaries. He needs someone who will ***“have compassion, making a difference.”***

VI. HIS NAME IS JEROME AND HE IS ELDERLY

A. He Lives in A World Of Isolation:

1. Many of his friends, and maybe even his wife, has passed away.
2. Sometimes he is confused and so is often misunderstood.
3. Sometimes he cannot hear what is said to him and people grow impatient and yell at him.
4. Now he lives in a nursing home where the smells and surroundings are different that he has ever known.
5. When he looks around he sees the same 4 walls day after day and the people around him all look very old, except for the nurses who look like kids.

ILLUS: He needs someone, especially family and former friends, to not forget him or where he now lives. He needs someone who will read the Bible to him, pray for him, talk to him and listen to him (even if what he tells you, you have heard again and again). He needs someone who will ***“have compassion, making a difference.”***

VII. HIS NAME IS STANLEY AND HE IS HOMELESS:

A. He Lives in A World Of Violence and Hardship:

1. Sometimes he sleeps on the street.
2. He is glad that a few fundamental churches have provided a rescue mission for him and others like him.
3. Many days he has nothing to eat and often has very few warm clothes.
4. He carries all his earthly possessions in a paper or plastic bag.

ILLUS: He needs someone to know that he wasn't always a “bum.” He once had a good job, a nice home, a family, etc., but he became addicted to booze or drugs. Maybe it was because no one ran a Sunday School bus to his house when he was young and took him to Sunday School and church. Maybe the Christians in his neighborhood were so preoccupied with their comfortable lifestyle and nice church that they never took the Gospel to his home, never knocked on his door. (If Christians won't make visits, the devil and his crew will!) Now he needs a rescue mission and a church, like Pastor Rivera's church, that cares and not only will run a rescue mission, but also bring these same people into their church. He needs someone who will ***“have compassion, making a difference.”***

VIII. HIS NAME IS _____ AND HE IS YOUR NEIGHBOR: v.23

A. He Lives in Your World!

1. He may be religious, respectable and even rich, but he is lost.
2. He is just like you, except that he is headed for hell.

ILLUS: He needs someone to care enough to come to his home and at least give him the opportunity that you have had and hear what Jesus did for him. He needs someone who will ***“have compassion, making a difference.”***

CONCL: Could YOU be that someone? If you are not involved in any of these and the many other ministries of our church, would you consider getting involved and becoming someone who will *"have compassion, making a difference"*?

"LET'S BUILD A GREAT CHURCH"

TEXT: Luke 14:12-14

THESIS: To show the definition of greatness in God's eyes and how we and our church may attain greatness.

INTRO: A. God apparently likes the word "great". He uses it in His Word over 900 times and well over 1000 times in its various forms: "greater, "greatest" etc.

B. I want to Pastor a "Great Church"! Not great in men's eyes, but in God's. There is a vast difference.

C. Before we decide we want a "Great Church" we had better check with God to see what true greatness is in His eyes. We had better "count the cost" of true greatness...

TRANS: The Apostles had this "greatness complex" and argued about who should be "the greatest" in Christ's Kingdom; here is what Jesus taught them about greatness:

I. GREATNESS EXCLUDES THE PREMISE OF PERSONAL GAIN: v.12

A. We Must Not Minister to Men for Reward:

1. To "friends" for their praise,
2. To "brethren" for their approval,
3. To "kinsmen" for their continued good relationship,
4. To "rich neighbors" for their contributions.

ILLUS: On several occasions during my ministry I have been confronted with "spiritual extortion", i.e. the suggestion has been made that if I wanted either financial or personal support for my ministry I should back off of certain areas of conviction, standards, doctrine, etc.

B. We Must Not Place a Price on Service:

ILLUS: I must never preach to gain the favor of men. I must never "trim a message" or soft-pedal a doctrine for fear it might hurt the offerings: "The fear of man bringeth a snare..."

C. We Must Not Expect Reward for Doing Right:

- 1.. We do right because it is right, not for reward!

ILLUS: That is not to say there is no reward in doing right. Right is its own reward but it almost always produces some reward as well, e.g. honesty is right but honesty may lead to a better position (though sometimes it is reversed). Brushing your teeth is right and usually leads to fewer cavities.

Honoring your parents is right and usually leads to benefits, but even when it doesn't we should honor our parents - because God says so!

2. We do right to please God, not to please men.

ILLUS: We cannot stop doing right because of the criticism of others, because of inconvenience, increased response, etc. Note the principle in v.1-6. It is always right to do right, it is never right to do wrong even if it affords us an opportunity to do right later.

II. GREATNESS INVOLVES THE PRECEPT OF A PECULIAR MINISTRY: V.13

A. The Great Man is the Humble Man in God's Sight:

ILLUS: Cf. Mt. 23:8-12 "Rabbi"...Jewish priest or teacher; "Master"..."Grand Worshipful Master, lodge..."Father", R/C priest...Address to Pope "We know that thou art the father of princes and kings, the ruler of the world, the vicar of Christ on earth...Most Reverend Holy Father" "Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased..." cf. v.11

B. The Great Church is the Serving Church in God's Sight:

ILLUS: Cf. Mt. 18:1-4 Please note that the way up is down in God's Kingdom.

1. The great church (or Christian) lives to serve others: children, poor, maimed (deaf, crippled, etc.), lame, blind...cf. v.13 with v.12

ILLUS: "But how will we pay the bills?" Serving is our business...paying the bills is God's business. If we do our job, he is obligated to do His.

3. The great church may not look great to the world.

ILLUS: Jesus and the twelve plus the sinners, publicans, harlots, crippled, etc., did not seem significant to many in His day, but 2000 years later we remember Him and His followers and no-one remembers them!

III. GREATNESS INCLUDES THE PROMISE OF A PURE REWARD: v.14

NOTE: The principle here is that if we take care of those who cannot reward or repay us, the One Who can repay us will!

A. Greatness By God's Standards Does Not Impress the World: cf: Luke 22:24-6

1. In God's Kingdom the servant is greater than the one served!
2. The servant will be exalted by God beyond anything the world can afford or conceive.
3. We may not be very impressive now, but we will be by and by.

B. Greatness By Worldly Standards Does Not Impress God!

ILLUS: Hollywood and Dollywood do not impress the Lord. Movie Stars and Sports Stars do not impress God. Superheroes including the latest "First Gay Superhero" are abominations in God's sight. Millionaires and Money do not impress God. Limosines and Lamborghini's do not impress Him.

C. Greatness By God's Standard Demands Giving without Expected Rewards:

1.. There is blessing here in giving to those who cannot return what we can give.

ILLUS: Loving the UNLOVELY, helping the HELPLESS, lifting the DOWNTRODDEN brings its own reward here. "God helps those who help themselves" may sound good, but "God helps those who help others" is more scriptural!

2. There may be no reward here for this kind of ministry: (blessings yes, but no material reward is promised).

3. There is a promised (and thus guaranteed) reward hereafter for this type of ministry.

CONCL: Let's have a GREAT personal ministry! "LET'S BUILD A GREAT CHURCH!" Let's launch ever new "helping" ministries. Let's gather in those the world despises. Let's be abased that we may be exalted. Let's stoop to help others that the Lord may be pleased to lift us and our ministry.

Most of our rewards will only come in the "resurrection of the Just" at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But they are nonetheless real.

Maybe you are one of the UNLOVELY, SICK, BLIND, MAIMED, HALT, LAME, DEAF, NEEDY, POOR, SPIRITUALLY IMPOVERISHED or a LITTLE CHILD. God loves YOU and gave His Son for YOU!

“WORTHY WORSHIP” (“Butter or Margarine?)

TEXT: Gen. 22:5

INTRO: A. Our text presents an interesting question: what did Abraham mean when he said: *“I and the lad will go yonder and worship?”* What is worship? Or, more biblically What is “WORTHY WORSHIP?”

B. Jesus said that *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24* What we will attempt to clarify tonight is “in spirit and in truth” or exactly what is “in spirit and in truth?” or what is “WORTHY WORSHIP?” Last week we spoke on the subject “Worship Is For Priests” - this week we want to define worship...

I. DEFINING WORSHIP:

A. Substitutes For Worthy Worship:

ILLUS: Who prefers margarine to butter? Those who remember when margarine was first manufactured and marketed remember how white it was and how it had to be colored and how bad it tasted compared to butter. Those who were raised on butter couldn't easily make the change. But those who have been raised on margarine prefer the substitute over the real thing. Many believers who came from religious traditions with substitutes for “WORTHY WORSHIP” or biblical worship may not know the difference between “margarine worship” and “butter worship” and may have accepted the substitute for the real thing.

1. Form is not worship.
2. Ritual is not worship.

3. Even services in a fundamental, Bible-preaching church may not be true worship!

B. Substance Of Worthy Worship:

1. Old Testament word for “worship” meant to “bow down”.

ILLUS: Posture is important in worship. Does it really matter what posture we assume if our hearts are right? Have we grown too casual about our posture in worship? Should we kneel or “bow down” when we pray. Should we have kneeling pads built into our new pews?

Perhaps the Moslems and Catholics are closer to “Worthy Worship” regarding posture in prayer and worship? Posture at least communicates something of our heart attitude.

Gen. 24:26

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

Gen. 24:52

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

Dan. 6:10

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid.

2. The New Testament word for “worship” means to “kiss the hand”.

ILLUS: Combining these two definitions the RCC has men bowing and kissing the hand of the Pope. They are right in the body language of worship, but wrong in the person they worship! It is impossible to kiss God’s hand and unnecessary to bow to the ground in order to worship Him, but the attitudes behind such acts ought to be ours. We must acknowledge God’s superiority and greatness and maintain an attitude of reverence before Him.

II. DISCERNING WORSHIP:

NOTE: There are 2 aspects to Worthy Worship which are necessities: Self-denial and Service. We need to examine both in order to discern or understand biblical worship...

A. Self-Denial:

1. No Jew ever came to worship empty-handed.

ILLUS: Of the 13 boxes in the Temple treasury, 4 were for the freewill offerings of the people. Self-denial begins after the tithe has been paid.

Ps. 96:8

8 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Mt. 5:23-24

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

2. God demands that true or worthy worshippers deny themselves activities that compete with scheduled public worship services.

Heb. 10:25

25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

B. Service:

1. Serving God with the right attitude.

Heb. 12:28

28 *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*

2. The right attitude is “with reverence and godly fear.

a. There is no real worship without reverence; the recognition of Whom we serve, Who He is and what He has done.

b. There is no real worship without godly fear: we serve an omnipotent God, Who is “a consuming fire...” (v.29)

ILLUS: How would you rate your worship on a scale of 1 to 10 regarding reverence...godly fear?

2. Serving God with the right life:

Rom. 12:1

1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

a. Self-denial is meaningless apart from service.

b. Only one who denies self can truly serve another.

III. DETAILING WORSHIP:

ILLUS: True or “WORTHY WORSHIP” demands total involvement. A believer’s body, soul and spirit must be involved.

A. Our Bodies:

1. In the Bible we find some worshipers bowing, some kneeling, some falling down, some raising hands, some clapping and some looking up.

2. Our Savior and others raised their eyes and hands toward heaven when praying.

3. Discipline of the body is involved in our personal worship; we must get out of bed to have our devotions, etc.

4. The person who has no discipline over his body rarely worships!

B. Our Souls:

1. When we speak of the soul we are talking about the mind and the emotions.

Mt. 22:37

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

2. When we sing or pray or listen to sermons we must be certain our heart and mind is involved.

Ps. 47:7

7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

1 Cor. 14:15

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

C. Our Spirits:

1. That part of worship which is the hardest to define but the easiest to experience is that which involves the spirit; we all know when our spirit is truly involved in real worship.

Luke 1:46-47

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

ILLUS: Mary dedicated her body to the purpose of the Incarnation and her soul and spirit to the exaltation of God.

2. Did you really worship God tonight? Your body was involved (you made the effort to come), but was your soul and spirit involved also?!

CONCL: “WORTHY WORSHIP” is true worship. It is Biblical worship. On a scale of 1 to 10 how are you doing? “Worship is for Priests” (those who have been born again) but they must worship Him in spirit and in truth (sound doctrine). How are you doing?

“TRUE and FALSE - WORSHIP”

TEXT: John 4:22-24

INTRO: A. What qualities do you admire most in others? Give me the name of a person you know with that quality. All the positive qualities of humans are infinitely expressed in the God head. Therefore He alone is worthy of our worship.

In our text Jesus makes the statement that the woman at the well and her people, the Samaritans, worshipped but they did so falsely; whereas the Jews worshipped the true and living God and even many of them did so falsely. Jesus often castigated the Pharisees for their false worship where they had substituted their traditions for the Word of God.

I. GOD’S SEARCH FOR TRUE WORSHIPERS:

John 4:23b “...for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”

A. False Worship: 4:22

1. Jesus was speaking to a worshiper. “Ye worship...”
3. Jesus was speaking to a worshiper who had no peace, joy or satisfaction.
 - a. In spite of her 5 husbands and sexual sin, no one really loved her, she had no self-esteem or sense of worth.
 - b. All she knew was guilt, frustration and bitterness.
 - c. Though He had asked her for a drink of water He knew her unquenched spiritual thirst was greater than His physical thirst.

B. True Worship: 4:24

1. In spirit: Eph. 5:18-21

- a. True Worship is communication between one spirit and another.
- b. It has nothing to do with ritual, preferences or traditions.
- c. Its form is dictated by God, not man.
- d. We will see that God bypasses man’s tastes and emotions in true worship.

ILLUS: In spirit-worship or “Spirit-filled” worship, several characteristics are evident. (There should be praise (often expressed in music), joy (which comes from the heart and may be expressed in song, or just quiet rejoicing), thanksgiving (realizing God is our Provider and Benefactor, humility (realizing who we are and Who He is) and godly fear (without this element there is no true worship)!

2. In truth: Col. 3:16-22

- a. Scripture-filled worship includes the same elements of true worship as Spirit-filled worship.
- b. Worshipping in truth means that worship must be according to God’s revealed truth, not man’s imposed and usually perverted traditions.

Mt. 15:6

6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Mark 7:9

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Mark 7:13

13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Col. 2:8

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

- c. Tradition kills true worship!
- d. Worship and truth are consistent and compatible.

II. GOOD EXAMPLES OF TRUE WORSHIP:

A. Abel: Gen. 4:3-5

1. Abel brought a blood sacrifice and God accepted it.
2. This sacrifice represented Abel's admission of his sinfulness and his acceptance of God's method of true worship. (Humility and godly fear)
3. Cain's fruit stand offering showed he wasn't seeking forgiveness (didn't see himself as a sinner) and saw no need for salvation and God rejected his offering and him!

B. Abraham: Gen. 22:1-14

Gen. 22:5

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

1. Submission to God's will (obedience); he held nothing back God requested.
2. Absolute trust in God; even though it didn't make any sense to Abraham.

C. Abraham's Servant: Gen. 24:1-4; 10-26;42-52

1. A true worshipper will always influence others; Abraham's example influenced his servant.
2. Three times we are told that the servant "worshipped the Lord" (vv.26,48 and 52).

a. His posture: "bowed down his head...I bowed down my head...bowing himself..."

NOTE: There is no universally accepted posture, but bowing communicates reverence and humility.

b. His prompting: "I being in the way, the Lord led me..." v.27

NOTE: You cannot be a true worshiper when you are outside the will of God.

c. His praise: both private and public. v.26,48,52

III. GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR TRUE WORSHIPERS:

A. Make Worship A Priority:

QUES: What kinds of activities and interests tempt us to move personal worship down on our list of priorities? Or what things hinder true worship?

ILLUS: After His baptism when He was ready to begin His public ministry, Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days. Though weak and hungry afterwards, when Satan tempted Him to disobey the Father and worship him and offered Him food, power and prestige, Jesus refused to divert His loyalty from God and serve only Him. Obviously worship was at the top of His list of priorities. (Where does worship appear on our list?)

Luke 4:8

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

B. Make Sure You Persist:

1. Don't be easily diverted from personal and public worship.
2. Our schedules and pressures are not greater than our Savior's, yet nothing kept Him from private nor public worship.

NOTE: This no doubt explains how He was able to accomplish so much in just 3 1/2 years! Did you ever notice how much more YOU accomplish if you put God at the first part of your day and at the first part of your week?

CONCL: No matter how beautiful or aesthetic the ritual or ceremony, unless worship is according to truth (God's Word) and in spirit (from one born again), it is FALSE WORSHIP! How do we measure up as Christians and as a church?

“THE WONDER OF WORSHIP”

TEXT: Ps. 92; 100 and Heb. 10:25

INTRO: A. There are many things which are wonderful about worship. It is wonderful and a wonder that our great God would permit sinful human beings (even though blood washed) to come into His presence to worship Him. It is also wonderful and a wonder that He would accept worship from such rebellious, disobedient and sinful beings.

B. Tonight we want to consider not just the private worship of the individual, but the public and corporate worship of the Church. For the younger generation of teens and adults who have grown up in a high-tech, video-oriented world, church services may seem boring by comparison.

For the middle aged and senior adults there is a danger of making worship casual and mechanical.

For both groups it is easy to lose “THE WONDER OF WORSHIP.” Our goal tonight will be to examine the biblical elements of corporate worship and then strive to make our service conform to that example.

ILLUS: In Ps. 92 which is distinctly a corporate worship Psalm, we find these ingredients: v.1 - Praise and Thanksgiving, v.3 - Music, v.5 - Adoration and v.12,13 - Spiritual Growth. The same basic elements are found in Ps.100. In Heb. 10:25 believers are admonished not to forsake public worship. Private and public worship are complementary, not exclusive of one another.

QUES: What is the main reason YOU attend a worship service? What do you believe is YOUR greatest contribution to a worship service?

TRANS: Old Testament and New Testament worship are really related, as we shall see...

I. WORSHIP IN THE Old Testament:

A. Tabernacle Testimony:

1. The Brass Altar of Sacrifice: Reminded worshipers of their sin and need of a sacrifice.
2. The Brass Laver: Spoke of the need for cleansing thru God's Word; initially and continually.
3. The Golden Table of Showbread: Represented the continuing need for Christ and His Word.

4. The Golden Candlestick: Spoke of Christ the Light of the world and the Illumination ministry of the Holy Spirit.
5. The Golden Altar of Incense: Showed the need of constant prayer and communion.

B. Sacrificial Testimony:

1. The Burnt Offering: Pictures total consecration. Rom. 12:1
2. The Meal or Grain Offering: Speaks of our offering back to God the life we rec'd. of Him.
3. The Peace Offering: Placed on the ashes of the Burnt Offering (No peace with God apart from His sacrifice).
4. The Sin Offering: Offered for sins committed in ignorance; to cover unintentional sin.
5. The Trespass Offering: Offered for specific sins committed intentionally (require restitution).

II. WORSHIP IN THE New Testament:

A. From Symbols To Substance:

1. What the Old Testament worshipers saw in shadows we see in reality; what they saw in type, we see in fulfillment.
2. From the dwelling place of God in a building, the believer's body becomes the Temple.

B. From Sacrifice To Service:

1. In the Old Testament the emphasis was on sacrifice, in the New Testament it is on service.
2. In both the Old Testament and New Testament corporate worship was given to stimulate and encourage the saints.
3. A New Testament church service included: praise, thanksgiving, preaching (for edification, rebuke, reproof, exhortation, comfort and information), prayer, and hearty "Amen's"!

1 Cor. 14:15-16

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

III. WORSHIP IN HEAVEN:

A. Heavenly Worship:

1. Rev. 4:1-11: 4 Living Creatures worship God because He is holy, almighty and eternal. (They are joined by 24 elders who worship Him as the Creator of all things.)
2. Rev. 5:1-14: The 4 cherubs and 24 elders are joined by many angels and every creature on the earth and under the earth to praise the Lamb of God for His redeeming blood.
3. Rev. 11:15-19: All heaven worships God and the theme is His Lordship.
4. Rev. 19:1-10: Multitudes of the saved rejoice that Christ is coming to celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

NOTE: Worship in heaven revolves around the Person and Work of our Savior; Who He is and what He has done!

IV. WORSHIP IN CHURCH:

ILLUS: Name some things which are out of place in our church services or things that you or we do which may be displeasing to the Lord: Lack of preparation, coming late, distracting others, lack of attention, not joining in the singing, falling asleep, etc.

A. The Person: The Living Word

B. The Book: The Written Word

1. Attitude: sensing God's presence, self-exam, confession of sins, a fear of God.
2. Appreciation: Thanksgiving for salvation, desire for communion.
3. Awe: A sense of His greatness and praise for His goodness.
4. Adoration: Respect for His authority and power and a willingness to obey Him.
5. Acceptance: Accept those who minister to you and the blessing they seek to convey (choir, special music, preaching, etc.).

CONCL: True worship is not a spectator sport! It is active, not passive. We don't come to be entertained, we come to praise, sing, adore Him, grow in grace and knowledge. Oh "THE WONDER OF WORSHIP!"

John 4:23

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

"THE WORLD'S GREATEST LONG DISTANCE SERVICE"

TEXT: Jer. 33:3

INTRO: A. "THE WORLD'S GREATEST LONG DISTANCE SERVICE" is not ATT, MCI, LCI, Sprint or Lifeline...it is found in our text.

Jer. 33:3

3 CALL UNTO ME, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

B. We can not only "reach out and touch someone" we can reach up and touch the throne room of God.

ILLUS: What if we had a "hotline" to heaven, where we could just pick up a phone and dial God's number? Say: 1-800-DEAR LORD! If you could pick up the phone and hear God's voice and converse with Him. What would you like to talk to Him about?

If talking to God were as simple as picking up a telephone, would we pray more? What obstacles make praying more difficult? (Living and praying by faith go against our natural inclinations; praying in faith requires trust in God and in His Word; we also doubt our understanding of God's Word and what He has promised.)

C. But we can connect with God at any time and talk to Him, IF we are on speaking terms with Him and others. God even invites us to pray.

I. GOD'S INVITATION TO PRAY:

A. In All Situations:

ILLUS: The miracles in the Bible and the wonderful answers to prayer recorded there are illustrations of God's omnipotence and willingness to hear and answer our prayers.

1. In our text God invites us to pray in any and all situations: "CALL UNTO ME..."
2. The Apostle Paul admonished the Phillipians to not be anxious or fret over anything, but in everything to pray and petition God from a thankful heart.

Phil. 4:6

6 *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

NOTE: Paul wrote these words while in prison, with the possibility of execution hanging over his head. Two words stand out in this verse: "nothing" and "everything"! He says worry about nothing and pray about everything. We turn them around!

QUES: What answered prayer have you had lately?

B. At All Times:

1. There are some 22 commandments for believers in the New Testament, but in relation to prayer one stands out.

1 Thes. 5:17

17 *Pray without ceasing.*

2. Even Jesus didn't pray 24 hours a day; everyone must work, eat, sleep, etc., but we can develop the habit of prayer which means we will see every situation as a subject for prayer and keep our lives clean so we can pray at any time.

II. GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRAYER:

ILLUS: God not only invites us to pray, He tells us how to do it properly. He warns against vain repetition, "showboat" prayers, and tells us before praying we had better check our fellowship with Him and with others...or don't bother.

Mt. 5:23-24

23 *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*

24 *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

A. Praising:

1. Note how the "Lord's prayer" begins: "Our Father.... hallowed be Thy name..." this keeps the petitions in perspective and eliminates selfishness in prayer.
2. The Psalmist had the proper prayer attitude in Ps. 34:1.

Ps. 34:1

1 *I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

B. Thanking:

1. In Phil. 4:6 we have “thanksgiving” listed with the main ingredient of prayer which is “supplication”.

Phil. 4:6

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

2. We need to maintain a proper spirit of Thanksgiving in our prayer life or we will simply become beggars without appreciation. (Like the 9 lepers who were healed and never stopped to thank the Lord.)

C. Confessing:

1. Beware the attitude that we can sin to our old nature’s content and get by with a simple “I’m sorry, I messed up.”
2. Sin is serious and unconfessed, habitual sin brings chastening.
3. Confession (like thanksgiving and praise) is not really prayer; it is a prerequisite to prayer, but we need to be clean before we pray.

D. Interceding:

1. Prayer should not simply be selfish; praying for our own needs alone; we must pray for others.

1 Sam. 12:23

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

ILLUS: Samuel stepping down as leader of Israel, but he assured the people his prayer ministry would continue. He saw such failure as potential sin.

3. Specifically we are to pray for leaders in Government, for the lost and for the spiritual development of other believers.

E. Asking:

Mt. 7:7

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

1. Real prayer is asking: “prayer and supplication.”
2. The word “supplication” means petition.
3. The Lord is our Heavenly Father and like our earthly father delights in giving us things which will benefit and bless us and enrich our lives.
4. He is under no obligation to give us things which will harm us.

POEM: “INTO THE DAY”

I got up early one morning And rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish I didn’t have time to pray.
Troubles just tumbled about me And heavier came each task.

Why doesn't God help me, I wondered, He answered, "You didn't ask."
I tried to come into God's presence, I used all the keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided, "Why child, you didn't knock."
I wanted to see joy and beauty, But the day toiled on gray and bleak,
I called on the Lord for the reason - He said, "You didn't seek."
I woke up early this morning And paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish That I had to take time to pray.

CONCL: Prayer is a vital part of worshipping God. It acknowledges Who He is and our dependence upon Him. How much do YOU pray each day?

“HOW TO AVOID BEING PUT ON ‘HOLD’”

TEXT: Prov. 15:29

INTRO: A. I hate being put on 'hold' when I am on the phone! But sometimes God has to put us on 'hold' when we pray. Though, as I taught last week, we have "THE WORLD'S GREAT EST LONG DISTANCE SERVICE" thru prayer, things interrupt that service from time to time. It isn't that God is too busy or that all the prayer lines are jammed, it is just that something in our life as a believer interrupts our prayers.

B. We all need to keep the prayer line open! Young adults face critical decisions regarding career, marriage, housing, goals, etc. Middle adults confront problems relating to parenting, a changing job market, finances and possible health problems. Senior adults face declining health, an uncertain future, widowhood, retirement, inadequate health coverage, etc. But all of the above concerns should be dealt with thru a healthy prayer life.

TRANS: For these and many other reasons, we don't need God to put us on 'hold' when we pray...

I. HEARING PRAYER:

NOTE: Obviously God desires to hear and answer our prayers, or He wouldn't have told and taught us to pray. Sometimes we think that the people in the Bible had better access to God in prayer than we do. Not so. In fact, if anything, with the indwelling Holy Spirit we may have an advantage over them.

A. Examples:

1. Old Testament Examples: Moses (Ex. 17:4-6 - water from the rock); Daniel (Dan. 2:17-19 - the secret interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream revealed to him); Jonah (Jon. 2:1-2 - delivered from the whale's belly).

NOTE: The Old Testament tends to give us more examples of individuals who prayed successfully, while the New Testament tends to give us teachings about prayer. But the New Testament also has some examples of success in prayer.

2. New Testament Examples: Dying Thief (Lk. 23:42,43, -immediate answer: "Today ...paradise..."); Cornelius (Acts 10: 2-4 - God sent Peter); Peter (Acts 12:5 - Peter released from jail).

B. Encouragement:

1. God heard David's prayer when fleeing from wicked King Saul: "I sought the Lord, and He heard me." Ps. 34:4
2. God promised Jeremiah while in prison: "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee..." Jer. 33:3
3. God has a promise for us as well: "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you..." James 4:8

TRANS: It is obvious that God delights to hear His children pray and that He desires to answer our petitions. Why then would He put us on 'hold'?

II. HINDRANCES TO PRAYER:

A. Doubts:

1. Doubting keeps the believer from going to God in prayer and robs him of joy and assurance after he has prayed.
2. Satan is the source of our doubts.

James 4:7-8

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

- a. Satan plants doubts about prayer, the goodness of God or the trustworthiness of Script.
- b. He will even attempt to convince believers that they are unworthy of God's attention or His love (some even imagine God hates them!).

B. Lack of Giving:

1. Disobedience always hinders prayer and since giving is one area of obedience, the believer's blessings in prayer are linked to his proper or improper response.
2. To some extent the measure of our receiving from God depends upon the measure of our giving to God.

Lk. 6:38

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

C. Marital Strife:

1 Pet. 3:7

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

D. Pride:

1. Pride (Luke 18:10-14) hinders prayer and places the pray-er on 'hold'!
2. Pride is the opposite of humility and dependency.

ILLUS: Last week we taught that prayer is an expression of our dependence on God. It humbly says we don't have all the answers and very few resources and must trust God to provide. Money, success, clothing, food, transportation, shelter, appliances, etc. do not simply come from the department store or grocery store or ---?, but come from a heavenly Father who has promised to supply the needs of His children.

III. HELPS TO PRAYER:

A. Pure Heart:

1. Sin in the life and unconfessed, can deprive God's children of answered prayer.

Ps. 66:18

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Is. 59:1-2

1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

4. The antidote for the believer's sin is confession.
 - a. Naming the sin.
 - b. Admitting it.
 - c. Calling it what God calls it.
 - d. Having the same attitude God has towards it.
 - e. facing it
 - f. Appropriating God's power for victory over it.

B. Pure Motives:

1. Define motives: (Something that causes a person to act in a certain way.)
2. An improper view of who we are and Who God is will lead us to treat God as some kind of genie to get us out of every jam and problem and to give us everything we crave.
3. Some impure motives are praying to impress others (Mt. 6:5-8); praying to get our own way (Ps. 106:13-15); praying to get things for selfish purposes (Jas. 4:3).

Ps. 106:13-15

13 They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: 14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

C. Pure Relationships:

1. Nothing will cause a believer's prayers to be placed on 'hold' quicker than this.
2. We cannot enjoy a right relationship with God as long as we nurse a fractured relationship with fellow Christians.

Mt. 6:15 *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Mt. 5:23-25 *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*

3. One of the first signs of true revival is the making right of relationships with one another.

CONCL: Are the heavens as “brass” to you? Has God “put you on hold”?! Are you no longer seeing answered prayers? Check yourself carefully as to unconfessed sin, impure motives and broken relationships. Also be sure you faith is in tact and you are not doubting, you and your spouse are O.K. and you are not puffed up with pride. This then is “HOW TO AVOID BEING PUT ON HOLD” in your prayer life.

“YOU NEVER OUTGROW YOUR NEED FOR PRAYER”

TEXT: Rom. 1:19

INTRO: A. “YOU NEVER OUTGROW YOUR NEED FOR PRAYER” - unless you are greater than Jesus or a better Christian than Paul (text).

B. Jesus’ example:

- Before beginning to serve (Prayed for 40 days)
- Before Calling Disciples: (Prayed all night) Lk. 6:12,13
- Before Daybreak (Mk. 1:35) [one of the busiest times in His ministry]
- Before eating
- Before miracles (raising of Lazarus)
- Before trials (Gethsemane)

C. David’s Example:

- Danger: (Execution) Dan. 6:4-10
- Demons (21 days) Dan. 10:10-13

QUES: What are some reasons (excuses) we use not to pray?

I. PROBLEMS AND PRAYER:

Mt. 26:41 *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

A. When It’s A Struggle To Pray:

Col. 2:5 *For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.*

1. Omnipotence: Nothing lies outside the ability for God to perform.
2. Omnipresence: No matter where you pray, God can hear.

ILLUS: One of the strangest “prayer closets” was when Jonah was in the whale’s belly. (Have you prayed in a “strange” place or circumstance?)

3. Omniscience:

Rom. 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

B. When You Don’t Get Answers:

1. Foolish praying: (Jonah 4)
2. Selfish praying (James 4:3)
3. Unconfessed sin (Ps. 66:18; Mt. 6:14,15, etc.)
4. Marital disharmony (I Pet. 3:1-7)
5. Wrong motives (Mt. 6:1-8)
6. Doubt (Jas. 1:6,7)
7. Trusting in praying rather than in God (Mk. 11:22)
8. God wants you to mature and give you something better (John 11:1-6; 2 Cor. 12:6-10)

II. PROVOKING TO PRAYER:

Heb. 10:24

24 *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

A. At Home:

1. Parents/Children:
 - a. Teach them.
 - b. Be an example to them.
 - c. Family devotions
 - d. Have a prayer list
 - e. Share answered prayer

B. At Church:

1. Prayer requests
2. Missions/meetings/ministries

CONCL: If our Savior felt the need to pray, surely we should “go...and do likewise.” Have you prayed today? How often do you pray? **“YOU NEVER OUTGROW YOUR NEED TO PRAY.”**

“GOD LOVES MUSIC!”

TEXT: Eph. 5:18-19

INTRO: A. The first mention in the Bible of music and musical instruments is negative and found in Gen. 4:21. Since “every bad thing is a good thing twisted” this comes as no surprise. The first music originated in heaven around the very throne of God and involved the Cherubim God created for praise, including the 5th Cherub, Lucifer himself, before his fall. He actually was a musical being with musical instruments as a part of his “standard equipment.”

Ezek. 28:13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

A simple definition of music would be: sounds arranged in a pleasing manner to create a mood or to convey a message. The dictionary definition is: “the art and science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds or tones in varying melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre...to form structurally complete and emotionally expressive compositions.”

C. A biblical study of music in relation to worship can be very enlightening and sometimes disconcerting. Everyone has strong personal concepts as to what is or is not acceptable regarding music. Some churches have substituted music for preaching. Others have thrown out music or at least certain kinds of music without ever consulting the Bible. Because some music is obviously (?) improper for a “worship service” (or at least that is the opinion of some), they will leave a church over their “musical convictions. The issue is not “what I like” but what does the Bible say!

ILLUS: Most of our opinions about what is or is not acceptable music in church is derived from music background, church indoctrination, personal preferences or preconceived ideas. Tonight I will ask that we set aside all of the above and examine what God has to say about the music He likes or doesn't like!

Often people who don't know a G-sharp from a Gee Whiz have strong opinions and church splits occur over musical tastes. Some “like” southern Gospel and others see it as too wild. Some prefer a liturgical atmosphere where only hymns in the hymnal are acceptable. Some want all “contemporary Christian music” thrown out while others enjoy that form. Some will leave a church if “taped” background music is permitted in services. Some consider hand clapping as undignified and shouting during a service as outrageous. Again, the real issue is what does the Lord prefer? The only place to find the answer is in His Word...

TRANS: Buckle your seat belts. I am about to “shake up the saints” with this study. But I promise to distinguish between “Fedena's Philosophy” and “Thus saith the Lord...”

I. PRAISING AND SINGING:

A. Praise is Worship:

Ps. 98:4-8 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. 7 Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

1. Music is definitely a biblical way to praise the Lord.
2. Music was a part of the New Testament as well as the Old Testament (see text) worship.
 - a. "Psalms" (PSALMOS) means "striking or twitching with the fingers on stringed instruments usually accompanied by sacred singing...a song or praise to God with
 - b. musical accompaniment." (McComas)

ILLUS: The Psalms were Israel's hymn book and were sung along with musical instruments.

- b. "Hymns" (HUMNOS) means "a song of praise to God."
- c. "Spiritual songs" are songs inspired, written and sung under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: There are varying degrees of spirituality, it is not a fixed or absolute condition. Thus a person may write or sing a spiritual song today with a greater or lesser degree of spiritual quality than a year from now. It is NOT a matter of skill as much as it is a matter of spirituality! We are to "make melody in our hearts unto the Lord" (not necessarily to the likes or tastes of men!). The melody God looks for comes from the heart, not the head, larynx or mouth!

ILLUS: There is no doubt that the father in the parable of the prodigal son is a picture of the heavenly Father. In Lk.15:24 the Bible says that when the father and son were reconciled the father ordered the household servants to prepare for a great celebration. "They began to be merry." The word "merry" means "to activate the voice, to cheer, rejoice and express happiness."

Next, v.25 says "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing." Without speakers or amplifiers he heard the music and dancing coming from the father's house! Singing and dancing in Scripture are consistently associated with praise! (More later.) The son who stayed was jealous over the son who strayed. **SOME SONS WHO STAY IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE DISCOURAGE SONS WHO STRAY FROM COMING HOME!** It's a good thing the son in the far country remembered his loving father instead of his bitter brother! The straying son was so near the father and yet so far and the staying son was so near the father and yet so far away! He didn't like the celebration, the music and dancing, so he got angry!

B. Music Is Praise:

1. Heaven itself is a musical place where God is constantly praised.

Job 38:7

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Rev. 5:9-13 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

- a. Some of the "dignified" "reserved" saints are going to have a tough time in heaven!

ILLUS: Vance Havner used to say "Most Baptist churches stand a good chance of being first to go up at the rapture, because 'the dead in Christ shall rise first.'"

- b. Biblical praise is missing from most churches.

ILLUS: B. R. Lakin told of a lady who said to him “I like the services to be very quiet.” He said, “Go to the cemetery, they never get noisy out there.” After 60 years of preaching he observed, the deader the church was spiritually, the quieter they became in their worship.

“Music and singing in Script. is normally an expression of joy and praise to the Lord. The absence of music and singing is usually a sign of spiritual dearth.” -McComas As an act of God’s judgment, He silences musical praise.

Is. 16:10

10 And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage shouting to cease.

2. Everything on the earth ought to sing God’s praises: Ps. 148,149,150!
3. The redeemed ought to constantly sing God’s praises.

Ps. 33:1-3

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

ILLUS: Before we leave this area I want to address an issue that confuses many today. Some churches and schools forbid taped music and/or “contemporary” music. While I respect their preference I believe we have do our “homework” before making decisions. “Contemporary” means: “to live at the same time...” There is a great deal of inconsistency here. What this would mean is that the pastors and churches contemporaneous with John and Charles Wesley or Fanny Crosby couldn’t have used their music. (Fanny Crosby was an ordained minister of the Gospel!) Some accepted and famous hymns were poems set to barroom music! Someone has said: “Perhaps our contemporary songwriters won’t look so bad after they’ve been dead a few years.” Yes, we, like the Pharisees, still like to “garnish the tombs of the prophets”

TRANS: So far, are we on Scriptural grounds? Amen!

II. PLAYING AND SHOUTING:

A. Playing Instruments:

1. Some Christians forbid certain instruments or complain because of their volume.
2. We will examine both issues from the Scriptures now.

Ps. 33:3

3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

3. Some of the musical instruments mentioned in the Bible are: the harp and organ, cornet, cymbal, dulcimer, flute, gittith (stringed instrument), pipe, psaltry, sackbut, tabret, tambourine, trumpet, and viol (lyre). (No piano or electronic organ, etc.)
4. No instrument is forbidden in the worship of God in the Bible.

2 Sam. 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

Ps. 150:4-5 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

QUES: What about amplification? Electric guitar? Organ? Microphone for singing or preaching? The Bible surely permits “loud noise”! It even encourages it! The word “loud” means to use intense force to produce high audio volume. IBID. p.9

1 Kings 1:40 And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

5. Percussion instruments and rhythm instruments were often used in Scripture; women often used tambourines.

Ex. 15:20-21 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Judges 11:34 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

B. Shouting Praises:

1. Remember what took place on that first “Palm Sunday”?

Luke 19:37-40 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

2. Shouting God’s praises seems to have been a regular part of Israel’s worship.

- a. The church today has not only lost the art of praise, but biblical praise is often prohibited.
- b. The Hebrew word “HALLELUJAH” has become an international word: “Halal” means praise; “Havah” or “Yahweh” is Jehovah.

NOTE: The English equivalent is to boast or brag or rave about. Ps. 113-118 are called the Hallel. They contain the boastings of Israel to God for their deliverance out of Egypt. Ps. 146-150 are crammed with musical praise. It is sad that pastors who are so sanctimonious that they wouldn’t permit a loud “Amen!” in the morning service, will go home on Sunday afternoon and HALLEL or PRAISE or RAVE ABOUT their favorite team on TV!

3. If shouting was a routine part of Israel’s worship, shouldn’t the church shout even louder since our salvation is complete?

TRANS: Are we still on Scriptural ground? Amen!

III. CLAPPING AND DANCING:

A. Clapping Our Hands In Praise:

Ps. 47:1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

1. The phrase “Bless the Lord” is often used in Scripture and literally means “Give God Applause.”
2. This form of praise is not an option for the redeemed.

Ps. 103:1-2

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

Is. 55:11-12

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

QUOTE: “The presence of God creates praise. Praise will never create His presence. Is God present in our formal church services or has the glory departed?” - McComas

3. During the Feast of Tabernacles, which Jesus attended (John 7), men danced with joy and when 21 trumpets blasted the people raised their hands waving bouquets of palm, willow and myrtle as they harmoniously reached a crescendo of praise to God.

NOTE: The ancient Rabbis said: “No one knew real praise (HALLEL) until they witnessed praise at the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. Dancing To Praise the Lord:

1. Dancing in Scripture is consistently associated with praise and worship.

ILLUS: Dancing in the Bible is never men with women or even men with men, it is an individual expression of praise using the entire body. We have already seen that when the Prodigal son came home they celebrated with singing and dancing.

Ex. 15:20-21 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2. The Ark of God was no longer in the Tabernacle, but the priests keep going thru their religious rituals and meaningless worship, while God’s blessing is on a farmer and his home.

3. David decided to bring the Ark home properly and began to praise the Lord with dancing!

2 Sam. 6:14-16 And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. 15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 16 And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

ILLUS: Our primary problem with these forms of worship is that God’s glory has departed from many of us and we can’t praise Him in biblical ways. We are like Michal, David’s wife, who instead of joining the King in worshipping the Lord, criticized him instead.

CONCL: Yes, **PRAISING AND SINGING, PLAYING AND SHOUTING AND CLAPPING AND DANCING** are all Biblical forms of genuine worship. We need to be in a place spiritually where we can do any or all of these things to God’s glory! Do you worship God according to His desires or yours?

(Before you toss this message into “file 13” please point out to me where I have not used Scripture properly or twisted it to suit the subject.)

“COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET”

TEXT: Mt. 6:6

INTRO: A. Have you ever watched the slimy creatures and critters scurry for their hiding places when you have turned over a rock or an old board and the light hits them? They love darkness. They hate light.

B. The gays have come out of their hiding places or as they say “OUT OF THEIR CLOSET.” It is a sign that there is too little moral or scriptural light being shed on our world. Maybe the homes are “COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET” because Christians are “COMING OUT OF THEIR (PRAYER) CLOSETS.” Jesus instructed His disciples to get into their prayer closets. When this happens the slimy creatures will crawl back into their dark closets.

Mt. 6:6

6 *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

I. GET INTO YOUR CLOSET!

A. No Hypocrisy There:

ILLUS: The Greek word for “closet” here means “secret chamber.” This reminds us and surely reminded the Jews of the Most Holy Place in the Temple. There were no doors or windows there and the only access was a heavy veil which closed behind the H.P. - it was a silent, secluded, secret and separated place. (When Jesus died the veil was rent and the access into the holiest became available to all - not to just one man.)

1. Secret prayer is between the believer and His God alone.
2. Secret prayer eliminates hypocrisy:
 - a. There is no one to impress in the closet!
 - b. There is no human audience.

ILLUS: Jesus issued 3 prayer warnings in the passage: 1) Don’t pray to impress others. 2) Don’t use vain repetition. 3) Don’t expect to be heard because of verbosity (Don’t tell God what He already knows and don’t advise God on how to run the universe).

B. No Choice Here:

1. Not “if” you pray - but “when...”
2. Jesus issued a command - not a request. “Pray without ceasing.”
3. The prayer closet is a secluded but not a lonely place - He promises to meet with us there.

ILLUS: God told Elijah to “hide thysself” before he was to “show himself” to Ahab. Elisha went into the house and shut the door before he came out with the resurrected son.

4. We need to seek God’s face before seeking His hand.
5. We need to commune with God before “commanding” God.
6. In the closet there is not only communion with God but also examination before God.

7. The better we get to know God the better we get to know ourselves.

ILLUS: Isaiah cried “Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips.” Daniel’s comeliness was turned into correction. Peter cried out in Christ’s presence: “Depart from me for I am a sinful man.”

II. SHUT THE DOOR!

A. Close Out Distractions:

1. This is why we often close our eyes to pray.
2. Getting away from distractions helps us focus our thoughts.
3. We need to stay in the closet long enough to lose the impression of what lies without in order to gain the impression of what lies within.

ILLUS: A wind-driven lake can’t reflect the beauty around and above it till the waters calm down! Our souls cannot reflect God’s glory till we let the storms of life pass by and settle down.

B. Get Into The Secret Chamber:

Ps. 91:1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

III. FIND THE TIME!

A. We Must Pray:

1. When we want time to pray we will find time to pray.
2. There’s plenty to pray about: sins to confess, burdens we need help carrying, needs to fill, and much to thank and praise Him for.

B. We Must Have A Place To Pray:

ILLUS: That doesn’t mean you can’t pray anywhere at anytime, it simply means that you should have a designated time and place to meet the Lord. Peter prayed on a housetop; Paul in prison, Nathaniel under a fig tree; Jonah in a whale’s belly and Jesus on the Cross!

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Eph. 1:15-16 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Col. 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

1 Thes. 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

2 Tim. 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

God takes notice of every secret attempt to pray. The Lord saw Paul on his knees immediately after his conversion and said: "Behold he prayeth..." (Acts 9:11)

1. The main problem today is not the condition of the country, it is the condition of the church.
2. Prayer meetings die because there can be no meaningful public prayer corporately if there is no secret prayer privately; we need to GET BACK INTO THE CLOSET!
3. Today the emphasis is on entertainment, but what we need is intercession.
4. Self-indulgence is the norm but prayer and fasting are the need.

QUOTE: S.D. Gordon: "There is more to do after you have prayed, but until you do pray there is nothing more you can do but pray!"

CONCL: Many "say prayers" few pray! Prayer is "heart speech" between the believer and God. We need to GET BACK INTO THE PRAYER CLOSET AND STAY THERE FOR AWHILE until we get God's attention and God's power!

Mt. 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.