

## CREDO

### 10. The Church

Tonight we are going to talk about the Church. I will preface our time by saying that the average man or woman is generally confused about what the church is, and how they relate to it. They also generally have a very low and unbiblical view of the church. It's my prayer our time together tonight will shape the way we perceive what we are collectively — and what that means to us individually.

With that being said — we're going to start with some very important broad stroke looks at the church — and then move into specifics.

**I. We need to see the Church as Jesus sees it.** Jesus LOVES the Church. Jesus died for the Church. Jesus *redeemed* the Church — purchased it unto Himself.

*Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained (KJV = purchased) with his own blood.*

*Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

In fact, the church is so precious to Jesus that the Bible speaks of the Church as being the Bride of Christ.

*Revelation 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; <sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

As I have grown in my understanding of how wonderful Jesus is and in my understanding of the GREAT love Jesus has for the Church, my sense of how

beautiful and great the church is has grown proportionately.

**Our relationship with Jesus** is CRUCIAL to our understanding of the church. Jesus said that he is *the True Vine* and those who believe the Gospel are *branches in Him*. The branch is truly in the Vine and the life of the Vine is truly in the branches. From the moment you are born again you enter into that Vine/branch relationship with Jesus. The very nature of that relationship means that if you are in Jesus, and if you love Jesus, you will love what Jesus loves. That means that IF you love Jesus, YOU love the Church. One of the greatest tests of our love for Jesus is our love for the church. There are some huge implications in that.

IF you LOVE Jesus, YOU will see the Church as Jesus sees it. You will see that the Church belongs to Jesus, not to you. It is not a sub-cultural playground for you to play around in. If you love Jesus, and see the Church as Jesus sees it, you will embrace everything that Jesus intends it to be for you; and you will embrace all that you are to be in it. If you love Jesus, and see the Church as Jesus sees it, you will embrace the mission Jesus gave to the church.

The problem is that a lot of people don't see the Church as Jesus sees it. Because they don't see the church as Jesus sees it, many people have totally bailed on church because by observation and experience they have concluded that the church is pretty messed up! And to that I say, "AND....?" Jesus knows every flaw and failure in His church. By the way — where it is flawed, and when it has failed — it's because you and I are in it. I am not shocked at how messy church can be. Sometimes it's grieving — sometimes it's a source of tremendous heartache. But a shock? — No!! Because I get up in the morning ; I look in the mirror and I say: *Oh... the church is made up of THAT guy.*

*We are the bride of Christ.* As messy as we are — as messy as we can be — THIS is what Jesus died for!

But if I see the Church as Jesus sees it, I really can't give up on it. If we see the Church as Jesus sees it we can't criticize it from a distance. If I see the Church as Jesus sees it I will want to give myself to that for which Jesus gave Himself. I'm going to want to seek Him for grace and for the power of

the Holy Spirit to make it better. You see, Jesus is into building His church; Jesus is into fixing His church. So much so that He is active in dispensing gifts, raising up people to help the church grow up — help individuals in it become mature and useful in the building up of the church in love.

***Ephesians 4:11-16** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to **mature** manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup>so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, **makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

SO — We want to begin by recognizing the need to see the Church as Jesus sees it.

## **II. We need to understand that Jesus has SENT the Church on a mission.**

Did you know that there are 39 times in the Gospel of John that Jesus says, *“The Father has sent me”*? Jesus is God the Son, **sent** by the Father as a missionary into this world. He left the culture of heaven, if you would and stepped into human culture (specifically 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture). Jesus built friendships with lost men and women. Jesus ate food with them. Jesus loved on fallen man; spoke truth to fallen man; served fallen man; and then, as we saw in our study of THE CROSS, Jesus redeemed the world — and in all of it brought glory to God the Father. Before Jesus returned to heaven He said — ***John 20:21** ....As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”* So the Church is sent on mission, even as *Jesus was sent*.

For us to understand the DYNAMICS of our mission we need to understand the relationship of Jesus to God the Holy Spirit. Again, this series is so foundational to who we are and what we are as believers. In our very first

study we looked at the Doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity states that there is One God, who eternally exists in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, each fully and equally God. In that study we learned about the “economic Trinity.” We saw the work of each member of the Trinity in creation. We also saw the work of each member of the Trinity in redemption (especially Ephesians 1). Then in the study of Incarnation we saw that God the Son came into human flesh as the man Jesus Christ. In that study we learned about a concept called “the Hypostatic Union.” Hypostasis means that Jesus is one person with two natures — divinity and humanity — fully God and fully man. Paul called it a “great mystery” (1 Timothy 3:16). We learned that Jesus never divested Himself of His divinity, but He did set aside the right to fully express Himself as God.

In His humanity Jesus serves as the model for the believer. In His humanity Jesus showed us that the disciple is to live a life that begins with the Holy Spirit, and is empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. Follow me.

We are told in both Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels that Mary conceived Jesus by the power of God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:34-35). In Luke 2:11 Jesus is called “Christ,” which means *anointed*.

*Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me*

Jesus was “anointed” or “empowered” by the Holy Spirit to undertake His mission. At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the baptizer. As Jesus came out of the water Luke tells us that

*Luke 3:21b-22 .....the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove;*

The Holy Spirit visibly came upon Jesus for ministry. Luke then tells us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days where Jesus was tempted by Satan and resisted, refuted and defeated Satan in each temptation. Then Luke writes

*Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee,*

*Luke 4:16-21* <sup>16</sup>And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup>And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

NO SMALL SIDE NOTE — People misunderstand and misrepresent the “Spirit-Led” and “Spirit-filled” life. Jesus is the perfect example of what the “Spirit-filled” life looks like. If you want to know what “Spirit-filled” and “Spirit-led” looks like — simply look at Jesus.

**THE BIG LESSON** — The mission of Jesus was begun, empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. There is no genuine Christian life, there is no fruitful life and ministry apart from the person and power of the Holy Spirit. WE need to be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, and we need the Holy Spirit to direct us and empower us in our mission. Real ministry is God’s work accomplished in God’s power.

**Luke wrote another book — The Book of Acts.**

**Acts 1:1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,**

The first book was his account of the life of Jesus — the Gospel of Luke. “*Theophilus*” means “lover of God.”

**<sup>2</sup>until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.**

So the Gospel of Luke was about the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit until he died, rose, and ascended back into heaven.

**<sup>3</sup>To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”**

Jesus did NOT rise from the grave and go straight back to heaven. He ***stayed with them***. Not just over night, but for 40 days. During those 40 days Jesus tells them — *I lived, I died, I rose, I’ve fulfilled My mission on earth. Now I’m sending you — just as the Father sent Me. I have told you to “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. But before you GO — WAIT! Wait for the Holy Spirit to lead and empower you even as He anointed Me, so that you can continue the ministry that I’ve begun.”*

**<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup>He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” <sup>9</sup>And when he had said these things, as they were**

## looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight

The earthly ministry of Jesus concludes — Jesus hands off the mission to His people — *who are to come into culture like Jesus did — filled with the Holy Spirit, in constant prayer to the Father, saturated with the truth of Scripture, humble in our approach, loving in our truth, and serving in our deeds.* <sup>1</sup>

### Look at Acts 2

#### **<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost arrived,**

Pentecost was one of the major feasts in the Jewish calendar. Jews from around the world would pour into Jerusalem from different nations and tribes and languages and cultures.

**They were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. <sup>5</sup>Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.**

Through the power of God the Holy Spirit these men begin to speak in a language that was unknown to them — but each of these ethnic groups heard what they were saying — not just in their own languages — but in their specific dialects!

#### **<sup>7</sup>And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all**

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<sup>1</sup> Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods (Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears)

these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language.....<sup>11</sup> we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” <sup>12</sup>And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

<sup>13</sup>But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

I’m sure that in your pre-Jesus days a number of you discovered that getting drunk doesn’t make you bilingual. This is a supernatural capacity given by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven,

**THIS IS HUGE** — This is the same Peter who denied Jesus three times the night before Jesus was crucified. NOW he is standing up and telling the city (that yelled for the Jesus to be crucified) to listen to him! THAT is the power Jesus had promised! The power of the Holy Spirit is not to entertain us — but to empower us to be witnesses. Old train technology — the steam was not there to blow the whistle but to drive the train.

lifted up his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words..

Let’s jump down to the close of what he declared

<sup>36</sup>Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him (that’s Jesus) both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Jesus is God become a man. Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He lived **without** sin. He died **for** sin. We killed him. He rose three days later. He’s Lord, God, and Savior.”



**<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup>And Peter said to them, “Repent**

With this one word Peter defines what it means to be a Christian. There is sin and there is Jesus. You can't go in the direction of sin AND at the same time be moving in the direction of Jesus. You have to turn your back on sin in order to move in the direction of Jesus. **Repent** literally means “change of thinking.” It speaks of a change of heart regarding sin — a change in the way you think about sin — a change in your desires and choices — a change in the direction of your life concerning sin. You turn your back on sin and you turn your face towards Jesus and you walk to him.

Everybody in this room, along with the rest of humanity, is going one of two directions. You are either headed towards sin or you are headed towards Jesus. You are either facing sin as a friend or you are facing Jesus as a friend. You are either turning your back to sin as an enemy or you are turning your back to Jesus as an enemy. Repentance says — “I'm walking away from sin. Repentance says that I want to spend my life facing Jesus — pursuing Jesus — knowing Jesus — loving Jesus — serving Jesus — being with Jesus.

**and be baptized**

Jesus died and rose. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward reality. It says to the world that our lives are identified with the death and resurrection of Jesus — we have died to the old life lived after the flesh — and now we live in the newness of life in the Spirit.

**every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

What an amazing promise — the stain of sin removed — the penalty of sin paid — a NEW LIFE with Jesus. (Get CREDO study: The Cross)

**<sup>39</sup>For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who**

are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”  
<sup>40</sup>And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”<sup>41</sup>So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

3,000 men and women turned their back on sin and faced Jesus. All 3,000 of these men and women are now brought into fellowship with Jesus. They now are alive in Jesus. Like branches in the vine they derive their life from Jesus and Jesus is going to produce His fruit through them. **This new life in Jesus is worked out IN their lives and expressed THROUGH their lives in what is called THE CHURCH.**

*F.F. Bruce — 3,000 people believed the gospel, accepted baptism in Jesus’ name and became members of the new community which confessed him as Lord and Messiah. <sup>2</sup>*

We are going to get to this in a bit, but I want to plant a little seed right here. At THAT moment in time ALL of the Christians on the planet were gathered together as a “local church.”

**HUGE STUFF** — The Church is NOT some Christian tradition or some religious organization. The Church is the gathering together of men and women who by the power Holy Spirit have received a new life **with Jesus** and **his people** — that’s the church. In the very beginning of the Church there was no such thing as Christians living out their life in Christ apart from other Christians.

**HERE IS A CORNERSTONE PASSAGE for us**

<sup>42</sup>And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers

**FIRST** — Christians are devoted people.

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2017). *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Ac 2:37–47). Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books.

**devoted** = “to persist obstinately in”<sup>3</sup> — *attach oneself to; be faithful to; busily engaged in; hold fast to, continue in, persevere in*

They persisted obstinately, attached themselves to and were faithful to, held fast and persevered in Jesus **and** (as we see in the verse) the Scriptures and in relationship with the other men and women who had come to believe in Jesus.

**They devoted themselves to “the apostles’ teaching.”** The very first believers were devoted to being taught. Even though there were a ton of miracles happening in the early Church, they understood that their relationship with Jesus, and to one another, had to be rooted and grounded in the truth. The *apostles’ doctrine* ultimately became the New Testament. So they were essentially devoted to studying the Bible, not because they **had** to but because by virtue of their new life in Jesus they were **hungry** for the Word of God.

**They devoted themselves to “fellowship.”** Fellowship in modern church culture has been reduced to hanging out together. It means much more than that.

I believe it’s important to note that Luke, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses the definite article. That causes me to believe that they were devoted to something more than “fellowshipping.” *THE fellowship* is reference to a specific thing. As for the meaning of this word *fellowship*.

BDAG — Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich’s *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*

**Fellowship** — close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship, generosity*<sup>4</sup>

**SEE ADDITIONAL NOTES (pg. 39): “The Fellowship”**

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<sup>3</sup> Liddell, H. G. (1996). *A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English lexicon* (p. 692). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 552). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

They were devoted to living out their new life in Jesus in close relationship with the other men and women who had come to Jesus. They were devoted to sharing their common experience and participation in the life of Jesus. They were devoted to being generous in the cause of Jesus.

David Guzik —

*We share the same Lord Jesus.  
We share the same guide for life.  
We share the same love for God  
We share the same desire to worship Him.  
We share the same struggles.  
We share the same victories  
We share the same job of living for Him.  
We share the same joy of communicating the gospel.<sup>5</sup>*

That doesn't look like modern church culture at all! For most people, a real committed Christian is someone who attends services more than once a week and maybe on top of that serves at church. In modern church culture that is the rare believer. Nonetheless, that is still less than [Acts 2:42](#). For most others church is going to a church service once a week and maybe having lunch with some friends after service.

**They were devoted to “[the breaking of bread](#).”** That would be communion, and also shared meals in homes

**They were devoted to praying WITH and FOR** each other.

This is not normative in most of modern Christianity today. That's why I said that tonight is going to one of the most important studies we've had because it is **FORMATIVE** — it shows us **BIBLICAL** Christianity. For most churchgoers today this is **EXTREME** and **RADICAL** Christianity. This was the **ONLY** Christianity the first Christians knew. And according to the Holy Spirit it wasn't drudgery!

**[<sup>46</sup>And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking](#)**

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<sup>5</sup> Guzik, D. (2013). *Acts* (Ac 2:42). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

**bread in their homes, they received their food *with glad and generous hearts***

The believer is saved FROM something and TO something. We have been saved FROM the power and penalty of sin, delivered FROM the wrath that is to come. And we are saved TO relationship with Jesus and to THIS LIFE — this thing called the Church. The Christian life is a “life together.”

**<sup>43</sup>And awe came upon every soul,**

Why did that happen? How did that happen? Because this thing the Holy Spirit calls *The fellowship* was **the expression** of genuine fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

**and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.**

This fits so well with what we learned yesterday about Jesus giving the disciples power and authority as they were sent to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.

**<sup>44</sup>And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup>And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.**

*That relationship (the fellowship) brought a certain sense of responsibility to one another.* <sup>6</sup>

They became generous! Not by human constraint — but they were constrained by the love of Jesus. They were generous — sharing with those in need. Generosity is proportionate to your understanding of grace. Writing in the context of giving Paul said

***2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 7b; 9* We want you to know, brothers, about the**

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<sup>6</sup> Peterson, D. G. (2009). *The Acts of the Apostles* (p. 161). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

*grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,  
<sup>2</sup>for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their  
extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.  
<sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond  
their means, of their own free will, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the favor of  
taking part in the relief of the saints— <sup>5</sup>and this, not as we expected, but  
they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us....  
<sup>7</sup>....see that you excel in this act of grace also.....<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace  
of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he  
became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

The more you understand grace the more generous you are with your time, talents and treasures.

#### **<sup>46</sup>And day by day, attending the temple together**

Corporate gatherings, like tonight.

#### **and breaking bread in their homes,**

Community Groups. Eating together; sharing what God is teaching you in the Word; praying for each other and for the success of the Gospel in that neighborhood/community. They were devoted to it!

#### **they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God**

**The church was devoted to worship** (our next CREDO study). Worship is the response to who God is and all that He has done for us in Christ. Worship is more than singing. Worship is expressed in two ways —

**QUOTE:** *It is both proskuneo, literally to fall down and kiss Jesus' feet in an expression of one's allegiance to and adoration for God, and latreia or leitourgeo, which is ministering, or doing work and service in the*

*world in the name of Jesus.*<sup>7</sup>

**47 ... and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

So there is the Church in its infancy! Even as the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, empowered and led Him in His ministry; Jesus sends the Church. He returned to heaven. The Holy Spirit descends on the believers so that we would be empowered and directed in the mission Jesus gave to them.

- I. We need to see the Church as Jesus sees it.
- II. We need to understand that the Church has been SENT by Jesus.

### **III. We need to understand the NATURE of the Church**

As we look at the nature of the Church we want to be clear about the relationship of the Church and the Kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? Well, it is best defined as the *rule of God*. Where is the Kingdom of God? *The kingdom of God is present wherever God is reigning*. What is the relationship of the Church to the kingdom?

**QUOTE: Lloyd-Jones, D. M.** (1998); *The Church and the Last Things* (4). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books — Surely it is this: the Church is an *expression of the kingdom but is not to be equated with it. The kingdom of God is wider and bigger than the Church*

Lloyd- Jones makes another important observation about the nature of the Church in relationship to the world.

**QUOTE: DML-J** *Authentic Christianity* p. 77 (1st U.S. ed.) (77). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books — *The World is essentially Human beings trying to organize themselves and their lives without God. The Church is made up of men and women who have been taken from the world, though they still live in it, and are joined to this other body of people whom they*

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<sup>7</sup> *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears)

*resemble in most essential respects— the Christian church.*

The Greek word which is translated 'church' is the term **ekklesia** = 'those who are called out' — 'called together'. In Greek culture this word was not used exclusively of Christians. It was used to speak of those called out of society for some particular function and purpose.

We can translate **ekklesia** by the word 'assembly' (**Acts 19:41**).

**REMEMBER** — The Holy Spirit did not just inspire thoughts — He breathed out the very words to be used in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit chooses this word to **identify** and **speak of** those **called out** of the world to **be the EXPRESSION** of the rule of God in a world that is totally outside of that rule.

**HUGE** — The **ekklesia** is a people who are no longer trying to organize themselves **without** God and **against** God, but they are organized **by** God and **for** God!

So we have this GREAT DIVISION — the **ekklesia** and **the world**

#### **IV. The Church Universal**

**Eph. 1:22-23** And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

That is the **Church universal**. It is the whole number of the redeemed who look to Christ as their life and their authority. In this sense there could never be such a thing as *churches*. There is only "*one body*" (Ephesians 4:4) — thus there is only **ONE Church**. Within the Church Universal **ALL** are on level ground **BEFORE** Christ and **IN** Christ.

#### **V. The church local**

**Philippians 1:1** To all the saints in Christ Jesus **WHO ARE IN PHILIPPI**

They have a spiritual position — they are men and women who are *in*



*Christ*. But they have a geographical address. These people — gathered OUT of the world — placed INTO Christ — were placed into communities.

**CRUCIAL:** The word "church" in the NT never refers to a building or a place — It always refers to **a people**: Either the total number of those who have ever been born again ([Eph 1:22-23](#) and [1 Cor. 12:28](#)); or a **local group** of those believers **in a particular city** and/or **in a particular house**.

[Acts 11:22](#) refers to the "*church in Jerusalem,*"

[1 Corinthians 1:2](#) refers to the "*church of God which is at Corinth,*"

[1 Corinthians 16:19](#) says, "*The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.*"

In [Colossians 4:15](#) Paul sends greetings "*to Nympha and the church in her house.*"

Paul's letter to [Philemon](#) is also addressed to "*the church in your house.*"

So — we have THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL — the universal body of Christ — the *saints IN CHRIST*.

**THEN** — we find the CHURCH LOCAL — Christians associated because of their geographic togetherness in a city, sometimes so few in number that they could all meet in one home. Each local church is an expression of the whole Body of Christ.

**CRUCIAL INSIGHT:** A lot of professing Christians want to opt out of the design of God for gathering; organizing; loving; and growing His people within a local church. A lot of professing Christians want to opt out of the fact that God wants them to be devoted to a local gathering of saints. They opt out by saying that they belong to the Church universal and because of that they can flit here and there.

As you **read** and **study** the New Testament you see the clear distinction

between the church universal and the church local. You cannot miss the fact that **the expression of the nature and the mission** of the **Church** universal lies solely with the local church.

You might ask, *How do you know that?* I mentioned this earlier — but I'll bring it up again here. When the Church was birthed on the day of Pentecost ALL of the Christians in the entire world were a part of a local church. When 3,000 people came to faith in Christ in [Acts 2](#) they lived out their new life in Jesus in the very first local church. They were **devoted** to Jesus. They were **devoted** to being taught the Scriptures; **and** to sharing their life in Jesus with the other men and women who had come to believe in and love Jesus. The only life they knew in Jesus was in the context of the local church in Jerusalem. Though they were a part of the Church Universal they expressed that relationship as a family of believers in the first local church.

Before moving on — a few more thoughts on the nature of the church.

There is what theologians call the **Invisible Church** and the **Visible Church**. The early Church Father Augustine was the first to speak in these terms. The **invisible church** is the church **as God sees it**. All people past, present, and future, saved by grace through faith and love Jesus. The **visible church** is the church **as we see it**. We see people who come together for services, but even in this service not everybody's a Christian. Only God knows who truly belongs to His Church. Only God knows who in this visible church truly is a part of the **invisible** church. It's our great desire that every man and woman here this evening would leave belonging to the Invisible Church.

So there is the Invisible Church and the Visible church. There is the Church Universal and there is the local church. The local church exists in two forms — the **church gathered** and the **church scattered**. At this moment, we're gathered to grow together in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, to worship our redeemer and love our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we finish tonight, we will be scattered within our geographical community to live as missionaries. But even scattered we are still the family of believers called Metro — in the same way that a family is still a family even when Dad, Mom and kids leave the house for work, errands and

school. We still belong to each other in Jesus, and we're still supposed to pray for one another and love one another and serve one another and care for one another, even when we're not meeting.

## **VI. The Relationship of Jesus to the Church**

**ECCLESIOLOGY** — which is the theology of the nature, structure and function of the church — begins with a proper **CHRISTOLGY**.

**Jesus Christ is the apostle** who planted **THE** Church and who plants local churches.

*Hebrews 3:1 ESV Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,*

Every single faithful, fruitful gathering of believers has been planted by Jesus. The Lord put it on our hearts to plant this church almost 8 years ago. But it is Jesus who planted Metro. Apart from Jesus, no Metro.

**Jesus IS the HIGHEST AUTHORITY.**

**Colossians** and **Ephesians** repeatedly say that Jesus is the **head** over the Church. He's the head of all local churches, including Metro. That speaks of governance —intelligence that directs and moves —that which directs the members of His Body in action and task. Whenever a church fails to recognize Jesus as Head — it is about as functional as a chicken with its head cut off.

In **1 Peter 5:4** Jesus is called *the Chief Shepherd*. The elders and pastors of a local church are men chosen by Jesus, doing what Jesus, *the chief shepherd*, is telling them to do!

**Jesus is PRESENT with the church.** In Matthew 28, after His resurrection, Jesus gives the great commission to the church.

*Matthew 29:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy*

*Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

### **Jesus BUILDS the church.**

Jesus said — **Matthew 16:18** *I will build MY Church*. Church growth is the work of Jesus. Evangelism is the work of Jesus. Drawing men and women to a local church is the work of Jesus. Jesus said —

*When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. (John 12:32)*

The Goal of Metro was NEVER to merely plant a church. The goal was to EXALT Jesus — in worship — in the teaching and preaching of His Word — in telling the world about Jesus! **When Jesus is exalted** you get a church. **When Jesus is lifted up** — Lives get changed; people get saved; people gather together to live out their life in Jesus.

### **Jesus also shuts down local churches.**

In the Book of Revelation we find Jesus saying to one local church that if they don't repent He will literally turn off the lights — *“removes their lampstands (Rev. 2:5)*. Jesus did remove the witness of the church of Ephesus because they never repented of leaving their first love.

And I will add this — churches have been torn down by divisive behavior.

In order to have a proper understanding of the nature of the local church — We MUST understand that it is Jesus Christ who

**Plants** the church

**Leads** the church

**Grows** the church

**Disciplines** the church — And if need be — **closes down** the local church

ALL of that is done by Jesus. The Church is OF Him and BY Him. Jesus is and should always be the object of our affection; the focal point and exalted One of every sermon; the point of every area of ministry; and the focus of every individual in the local church.

Jesus is preeminent. It's always, only, and absolutely ALL ABOUT JESUS! The Church is HIS — not ours! Every local church is HIS — not ours.

*Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

*Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

We must NEVER have a lower view of the Church than to see it as the blood bought possession of Jesus — the Bride of Christ. IF we do — the result will inevitably be that we dishonor Him and devalue His purchased possession. We will play church and make the church our play-thing — the inevitable result will be that we supplant Jesus as the One doing that work and we will act as if the *ekklesia* is somehow the result of our work — ours to do with as we please.

MAY THE CROSS ALWAYS REMIND US that the Church/church is the Lord's. It is HIS to govern — to gift — to call — to direct. It's about HIS story and HIS Glory.

## **VII. What Defines the Local Church**

What is it that CONSTITUTES a local church? Here's a great definition drawn from [Acts 2](#). But before we read it I want you to think of this. The early church had to debate, defend and define some of the great doctrines of

Christianity. One issue it never had to debate was what constitutes the church.

**QUOTE: Vintage Church;** Timeless Truths and Timely Methods (Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears) — *The local church is a community of **regenerated believers** who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. In obedience to Scripture they **organize under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship, observe** the biblical sacraments of baptism and Communion, are **unified** by the Spirit, are **disciplined** for holiness, and **scatter** to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission as missionaries to the world for God’s glory and their joy.*

**By definition** — Para-church organizations; or even home gatherings that do not possess these essentials; do not constitute **God’s ordained economy** of the local church. Believers should **never be content** with participation in any of these groups **while neglecting** the regular life of the local church.

### **Let’s walk through it**

*The local church is a community of **regenerated believers** who confess Jesus Christ as Lord.*

Regenerated — I’ll give you the personal version of the theology — what that looked like in my life. *“I didn’t love Jesus, now I do. I didn’t care about the Bible — I knew nothing about it, now I love the Bible and teach the Bible and want others to love it. I used to take pleasure in sin, and now I want to stop.”* That is regeneration. Made a new person by God. Not perfect — but you’re being changed from the inside out and you’re becoming more like Jesus. To be a member of the **Church** and be a member of Metro you need to be born again.

If you’re here and you’re not a Christian — we are so glad to have you here with us tonight. You’re welcome in community groups; you’re welcome to Bible studies, we encourage you to ask questions. But to be a member of the **Church** and a member of this church you’ve have to be a born-again Christian.

Being a member of the church is not like membership in a health club or some organization. It's described by the apostle Paul in terms of the human body. We are members in the Body of Christ. We are not only connected to Jesus — we are connected to each other. We have a reason for being where we are in the Body. We are there by God's choice — we are in the Body of Christ where He wants us to be ([1 Corinthians 12:18](#)) for our edification and for the Divinely ordained job He has for us to do.

*In obedience to Scripture they **organize under qualified leadership,***

In His economy — Jesus has done, and is going to do, everything we just mentioned (plant, lead, grow, discipline His Church) through a man! A local church cannot be successfully planted and expect to survive if it is not led by a man who obediently **follows God** as **God speaks through Scripture** and **leads through the Spirit**.

This man — and those that will be raised up in leadership alongside of him — is referred to in the NT in the terms *ELDER* and *PASTOR*. Both are referring to the same person. The word "**Elder**" = presbytuos — refers to the maturity of the officer. The word "**Bishop**" = epi - skopus = to oversee/watch over (as a shepherd oversees the flock).

ELDER is his TITLE and BISHOP is his TASK.

The qualifications for the elder/pastor are in [1 Timothy 3](#) and [Titus 1](#)

**The main role** of the elder/pastor is to feed and lead/rule

*[1 Timothy 5:17](#) The **elders who rule well** are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.*

*[1 Thessalonians 5:12](#) But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have **charge over you in the Lord** and **give you instruction**.*

*Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

*Acts 20:28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

THAYERS Greek Dictionary **Shepherd** =

- > to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep
- > to rule, govern
- > to furnish pasture for food
- > to supply the requisites for the soul's need

*Rom 12:6; 8 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them....<sup>8</sup> ....the one who leads, with zeal*

**LEADS** = proistemi (pro-is'-tay-mee) – to stand before, i.e. (in rank), to preside, be over, rule.

*1 Cor 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating*

**administrating** = kubernesis (koo-ber'-nay-sis) - steer; pilotage, i.e. (fig.) directorship (in the church):--government.

**SUMMARY** — ELDERS / PASTORS then are **MEN**,

**Appointed** by the Chief Shepherd — **Anointed** by the Holy Spirit

By **their office** and **gifts** they **LEAD** the local church — **STEER** the local church; keep it on course in God's plan for exalting Jesus in worship, teaching and missions within that specific local assembly.



**DON'T MISS THIS** — There is no local church in the New Testament without Divinely appointed and clearly defined leadership. This office is so CRUCIAL to the essence of the local church **that**

> Paul **commanded** Titus to **appoint/ordain** leaders in every city.

> In [Acts 14](#) Paul and Barnabas returned to the very place where Paul was stoned and left for dead to **ordain /appoint elders in every church**

WOW – Serious stuff! He could have said – *Lystra – Been there! Done that! Just send a memo telling them “whatever and whoever”*

Paul’s actions tell us that a church without elders was not optional! WHY? Because the work of God in, and through, a local church is not a democracy. The work of God in and through the local church can never be accomplished by congregational rule. BECAUSE – If you have TWO Christians you will have THREE opinions!

*We should be doing this*

*Why aren't we doing that*

*I think that so and so should be doing this....*

**The second office** is that of deacon. In [Acts 6](#) we see the **primary leaders** within the church in Jerusalem appointing **secondary leaders**. These were essentially “pastor assistants.” They were appointed to do the work that had now become too burdensome for the senior leaders in the church... and was infringing upon their need to be *given to prayer and the Word*. (Refer to Sunday Morning study: God’s Work – God’s Way Acts 6:1-7)

We find the qualifications for the deacon in 1 Timothy 3. They are almost exactly the same as those for the PASTOR with ONE exception — The ability to teach! They needed to be theologically sound (<sup>9</sup>*They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*).

The ELDERS' ministry is primarily with their MOUTHS while the DEACONS ministry is primarily with their HANDS. Elders PREACH and TEACH — Deacons DEAC . **This doesn't mean** that **when called upon** they can't get the bat on the ball — so to speak. Stephen, who was a deacon — just before he was murdered — preached one of the greatest sermons of all time.

Paul is clear as to who they must BE in character — but when it comes to the specific duties of the deacon the Bible does not tell us what the deacon is supposed to do! We have no JOB DESCRIPTION for the deacon **other than SERVE**. I believe that the deacon is a pastoral assistant. As the elders do ministry and they get too much on their plate, they appoint deacons to be pastoral assistants to work along side of them; and they delegate to the deacons whatever is distracting them from the duties of the elder. SO --- WHAT do they do? Whatever the Elder needs done! Trustworthy — godly — sound in the Word — **Assisting** the pastors in what needs to be done.

**CAN A WOMAN BE A DEACON?** I do take the position that women can be deacons.

We absolutely believe in: the headship of the man in the home — strong male leadership in the church — Only MALES serving as elder/pastors. But I believe that **1 Tim 3** speaks to the woman as deacon as well as the man.

So this second tier of leadership consists of godly men and women who love God and meet criteria and are gifted in helping to lead the church.

*In obedience to Scripture they **organize under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship,***

Here at Metro we place a HUGE emphasis on the teaching of the Word of God. Paul told Timothy to **“preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2)**. We began on the first Sunday “gathering” of Metro on Jan 4, 2004 in **Acts 1:1** and studied through the entire book. We studied the book of

Revelation. Then we studied the Gospel according to Matthew. Then we studied 1 Thessalonians. We did a series titled Defining Metro and then we began our study in the Gospel according to John. Beginning on the first Monday of January 2004 we started in [Genesis 1:1](#) and we have studied consecutively through the Old Testament through [2 Kings](#) before starting the Credo Series. That would be regular.

We believe that when we gather the Redeemed should be encouraged and led in the worship of the Redeemer. AGAIN — In the New Testament worship is expressed in two ways

Proskuneo — literally to fall down and kiss Jesus' feet in an expression of one's allegiance to and adoration for God  
(My experience with Danny in Bradford, England.) We also worship in the giving of tithes and offerings.

Leitourgeo — which is ministering, or doing work and service in the world in the name of Jesus.

***observe the biblical sacraments of baptism and Communion,***  
***are unified by the Spirit***

Open hand / closed hand issues. We have been studying the doctrines that are non-negotiable — Closed-handed issues: Trinity; the Bible; Creation; Sin; Incarnation; the Cross and Resurrection. These are the points of our unity. There are other issues that are in the open hand that we might debate (i.e which of the 6 Biblical views of creation do you hold to, the rapture [pre-mid-post]). But we're not going to divide over them. The whole point of the CREDO series is to define our points of unity. We're unified around the things that are big to the Holy Spirit — we can have grace and flexibility in the open handed issues **as long as** they are not used to create division.

**I also believe that we must be able to DEFINE UNITY.** Jesus PRAYED for it. Paul APPEALED to it. This unity begins within leadership.

**UNITY is THEOLOGICAL – WHAT do we BELIEVE**

**UNITY is MISSIOLOGICAL – WHAT are we DOING**

**UNITY is PHILOSOPHICAL – HOW do we do it**

**UNITY is RELATIONAL – We love each other.**

**QUOTE: Vintage Church** — *In addition to Bible rules, the church family, like all families, also has house rules about how they do things. We call this a ministry philosophy, and it in many ways is the cause of a particular and primary cultural style in a church. Without common agreement, a church quickly divides into factions that criticize one another and unify only in the cause of killing the church.*

are **disciplined** for holiness,

Leadership in a local church is going to be involved in dealing with sin, often times in the face of intense emotions. In fact — those raised up by Jesus to shepherd the flock of God have been given a tremendous responsibility. Above all they are concerned for the reputation of Jesus. They've also been given by Jesus tremendous responsibility regarding assembly of believers that they serve.

**Hebrews 13:17** *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping **watch over your souls**, as those who will **have to give an account**.*

Leadership within the local church must pursue the protection of the name of Jesus and the reputation of the Gospel as well as the spiritual well being of the whole of the local assembly, not just the interests of individuals. So out of love for Jesus, and love for those redeemed by Jesus, leadership will address sin, false teaching/doctrinal error, and divisiveness.

**Biblical discipline is, first and foremost, training.** Discipline and disciple are from the same root word. Simply put, to be a disciple of Jesus means to live a disciplined life and humbly receive discipline as needed.

*Proverbs 12:1 “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”*

This means if you’re a member at Metro and the Lord brings to our attention that you are in sin, someone will come to you to address the need to repent. We will do it more than once.

The entire point of church discipline is restoration. In every type of discipline, whether it is gentle correction, admonition, rebuke, or asking someone to leave Metro — our great desire is to see the restoration of the offender. THAT is what it means to make disciples and present everyone mature in Christ. THAT is BIBLICAL living. THAT is why Jesus plants a church and places you in it.

What is amazing is that the average Christian is SHOCKED if they are living in known sin and the church takes steps to DISCIPLINE them. Usually the response is to divert and deflect and tell leadership how unloving and mean and controlling they are.

**HUGE** — If a man or woman keeps pushing back against or ignoring correction — the last resort is to remove him/her from fellowship in Metro — but it is not to destroy him/her. We love that person(s). We want that person(s) to walk with Jesus and with us. If that person(s) is willing to change we want to walk with them — but until they repent they are spiritually sick and toxic. They are affecting this family of believers in a tangibly negative way. Until that person(s) want to change, they can’t come back into Metro and enjoy fellowship.

**Here is a list of things that will warrant loving discipline within Metro**

When a Christian sins against another Christian, and it cannot be overlooked in love.

**Proverbs 19:11** *Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*

**Matthew 18:15-22** *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” <sup>21</sup>Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.*

When a Christian who professes faith lives in sin without repentance.

**Galatians 6:1-5** *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. <sup>5</sup>For each will have to bear his own load.*

**1 Corinthians 5:1-13** *God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”*

**2 Corinthians 2:5-11** *<sup>5</sup>Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. <sup>6</sup>For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, <sup>7</sup>so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup>So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>9</sup>For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. <sup>10</sup>Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, <sup>11</sup>so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.*

When a Christian continually blasphemes God.

**1 Timothy 1:18-20** This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, <sup>19</sup>holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, <sup>20</sup>among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

When someone encourages or promotes false doctrine.

**Acts 20:25-31** And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, <sup>27</sup>for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup>Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.

**Galatians 1:6-9** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup>not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

**1 Timothy 1:3-7** <sup>3</sup>As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup>nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. <sup>5</sup>The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup>Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, <sup>7</sup>desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

**1 Timothy 4:1-8** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup>through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup>who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God

*created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup>For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup>for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. <sup>6</sup>If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. <sup>7</sup>Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup>for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

When a Christian is a habitual doctrine debater.

**2 Timothy 2:14-26** <sup>14</sup>Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. <sup>15</sup>Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, <sup>17</sup>and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup>who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. <sup>19</sup>But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." <sup>20</sup>Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. <sup>22</sup>So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. <sup>23</sup>Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. <sup>24</sup>And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup>correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

When a Christian will heed only false teachers.

**2 Timothy 4:1-5** *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete*



*patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup>As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

When a Christian is sincere but deceived.

***2 Corinthians 11:3-4; 13-15** But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough..... <sup>13</sup>For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

When a teacher is in moral sin or doctrinal error.

***James 3:1** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*

When an elder is in moral sin or doctrinal error.

***1 Timothy 5:19-21** <sup>1</sup>Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.*

When a Christian appoints himself or herself to leadership.

***3 John 9-10** I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. <sup>10</sup>So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.*

When a Christian is divisive.

**Titus 3:10-11** *As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup>knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

When a Christian is an idle busybody.

**2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11** *Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us....  
<sup>11</sup>For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.*

When a Christian promotes legalism.

**Galatians 5:7-15** *You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup>This persuasion is not from him who calls you. <sup>9</sup>A little leaven leavens the whole lump. <sup>10</sup>I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. <sup>11</sup>But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. <sup>12</sup>I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! <sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

**Philippians 3:2-3** *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—*

When a Christian refuses to obey civil laws.

**Romans 13:1-7** *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup>Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. <sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup>for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not*

*bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup>Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup>For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

When an alleged offended Christian seeks legal recourse.

***1 Corinthians 6:1-8** When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? <sup>2</sup>Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! <sup>4</sup>So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? <sup>5</sup>I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, <sup>6</sup>but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? <sup>7</sup>To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? <sup>8</sup>But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!*

When a Christian has repeatedly rejected counsel by a church elder.

***1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, <sup>13</sup>and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.*

***2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. <sup>15</sup>Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.*

***Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

When a Christian is not consistently in community.

*Colossians 3:16* Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

*Hebrews 10:24-25* And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

When a Christian leaves the church to pursue sin or heresy.

*1 John 2:19* They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

*Are unified by the Spirit, are disciplined for holiness, and scatter to fulfill the Great Commandment*

We gather and then we scatter into our homes and neighborhoods and places of work and education. In a way, we scatter from this place so we can gather into smaller community groups. There we live out before the world the commandment of Jesus to *love one another (John 13:35)*. Church is about people loving one another. **Get in a community group.**

By the way — You can love people you don't like. You can love people that you have little in common with. But you love them because Jesus loves you and Jesus loves them. Remember — if we love Jesus we will love what He loves. Most people love people who are like them. We call that affinity. Community is you loving people that are not necessarily like you.

**LASTLY** — the local church is to **scatter to fulfill.... the Great Commission as missionaries to the world for God's glory and their joy.**

## **CLOSING**

I have to tell you that my grasp of the church has grown more immensely since planting Metro. I love Jesus and love the church more than ever. As we studied the subject of God's Covenant love I was so humbled by His relentless, passionate pursuit of sinful man for the purpose of relationship. I

was so in awe of how God was so careful to progressively DEFINE the terms of that relationship. And finally, He established the New Covenant — relationship with God by way of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Every Christian is a member of that Covenant Community. The local church is the place that we live out our Covenant relationship with God.

It seems inconsistent that God would be so clear in defining the terms of covenant relationship with Him, yet our relationship within a local church could be without definition. Remember how learned that *without a covenant, a relationship has no definition. It lacks substance, and meaning, and backbone. Covenant defines a relationship. It adds stability.* I have come to see the radical importance of defining one's relationship to the local church and to those within that local church — and the local church defining its relationship to its members.

Here's how that looks at Metro: There comes a point when a person, or a married couple is certain that God has led them at this time in their life to live out their relationship with Jesus and live on mission for Jesus in this unique community called Metro. They no longer see themselves as merely "attending" Metro, they see themselves belonging to this specific community of believers. They want to serve their brothers and sisters and they want to serve the mission of Jesus in and through Metro. Though we don't have formal "membership" we ask them to sign a "Servant's Covenant." This servant's covenant does not define a person's saving relationship with Jesus — it defines a person's relationship with this community of believers called Metro Calvary. At the same time the pastors of Metro are covenanted to serve those who belong to this community; to love and lead, provide counsel and aid, and pray for, teach, and guide them. (The Servant's Covenant is included at the end of the notes posted with the media for this study.)

## **CLOSE**

**One of the most deadly things in modern church culture** is consumer Christians. Consumer Christians are the takers. They don't give. They don't serve. They just take. They're served. They consume the time and resources

of the church and those serving within it. They have their needs met. But they give nothing of their time, talent or treasures.

If you're not a Christian — don't give. We love you. If you're a brand new Christian, Jesus is putting your life together. But there must come the time when you contribute to the family life of the local church.

We also understand that some of you are genuinely looking at Metro and asking God if Metro is the place where God wants you to live out your relationship with Jesus — we understand that as well.

There's no shortage of believing men and women who pride themselves on not belonging to a local church. They go from church to church to church. THAT is not what we see in the Book of Acts or anywhere in the New Testament.

In the New Testament the local church is the place where men and women were discipled and trained to serve — where they grew into ministry — some into grew into leadership.

Before we ever had our first Bible study in our home on Cherry Ridge Circle it was in my heart and my wife's heart to train up men and women who are devoted to the story and glory of God. Men and women who actually believe that Jesus lived a perfect life, died a brutal death and rose again triumphing over sin and death — and because they believe that happened, they believe it has implications on their life. Men and women who believe that because of the Cross of Jesus their sin could be forgiven — and they could have a new identity — and that they could be sent on a mission with this God who is on mission.

**QUOTE: Vintage Church** — *In every way, the church is the people who have benefited from Jesus' work on the cross, live in light of it, and gladly proclaim it.*

It's time for us to see the beauty of the church — time to see it as Jesus sees it. It's time to see yourself, Metro and the Church around the world as being sent by Jesus on mission. It's time to see yourself as belonging to a

local church — even as the first believers in Jerusalem saw themselves as belonging to that family of believers.

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES

*From a section of a paper submitted by myself and John Hwang titled THE REGULAR PRACTICES OF THE EARLY CHURCH: A TEMPLATE FOR THE MODERN CHURCH*

### THE FELLOWSHIP

ACTS 2:42; 46-47

*Richard Cimino*

“The subject matter” of the fifth book of the New Testament “is the life and growth of the earliest church.”<sup>8</sup> Within the divinely inspired selective history of this fifth book of the New Testament we see certain “Regular Practices” of the Early Church that were essential to that “life” and “growth.” As such, those “Regular Practices” are essential to the “Life and growth” of the Church of our Lord in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*“Acts is relevant for people in all situations and cultures insofar as it provides godly examples ... We may learn a great deal from Acts about how to live our own lives in a Christian way, but we should do so by taking the book and its author’s intentions seriously...”<sup>9</sup>*

**Acts 2:41 (ESV) So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.**

In a single day the church grew from 120 to over 3,000. Martyn Lloyd-Jones asked this question and makes this observation —

*So what sort of people were they? Well, as we have said, here is the authoritative description of what a Christian is like and of what it means to be a Christian.<sup>10</sup>*

Those who believed with their hearts Peter’s proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 2:22-40) didn’t see their faith in Jesus as a one and done exercise of faith securing their ticket to heaven. Neither did they see faith in Jesus as an addition to their lives. Their lives were

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<sup>8</sup> Gempf, C. (1994). Acts. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1066). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>9</sup> Gempf, C. (1994). Acts. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1068). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>10</sup> Lloyd-Jones, M. (2000). Mind, Heart, and Will. In *Authentic Christianity* (1st U.S. ed., Vol. 1, p. 62). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

literally transformed by their living faith in their living Savior and Lord. Jesus was their everything — and that changed everything!

Agreeing with Gerry Breshears, J.B. Polhill (New American Commentary) notes that *those new converts were incorporated into a new community of men and women who believed in Jesus*.<sup>11</sup> A significant portion of contemporary church culture sees Christianity as the practice of going to church once a week a week, and if you're a really devoted Christian, twice a week. But the book of Acts shows us that the very first Christians understood that Christianity is life in Christ, and that life in Christ is a life together. F.F. Bruce explains:

*3,000 people believed the gospel, accepted baptism in Jesus' name and **became members of the new community** which confessed him as Lord and Messiah.*<sup>12</sup>

Beginning in the book of Acts we find that those who were *devoted* to Jesus *devoted themselves* to four practices in their new life together. In his first section John Hwang wrote in depth about the first regular practice of the church in Jerusalem: *devotion to the apostles' teaching*. My first contribution to our paper examines their *devotion to fellowship*.

#### • DEVOTED

Acts 2:42 (ESV) And they **devoted themselves to** the apostles' teaching and **the fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Whatever “*the fellowship*” is, the first community of believers saw it as something absolutely essential to their new life in Jesus; so essential that they *devoted* themselves to it!

**Devoted** — *To persist obstinately in*<sup>13</sup> — *hold fast to, cling to, persevere in* (AC 1:14; 2:42); followed by ἐν and a place *spend much time in, continually be in* (AC 2:46)<sup>14</sup>

#### • A DEFINITION OF THE FELLOWSHIP

So, what is this thing that to which they were so deeply and passionately devoted? Luke tells us that they *devoted themselves to... the fellowship* (*tē koinōnia*). I believe it's important to note that Luke, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses the definite article. That causes me to believe that they were devoted to something more than “fellowshipping.” *THE fellowship* is reference to a specific thing.

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<sup>11</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 118). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2017). *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Ac 2:37–47). Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books.

<sup>13</sup> Liddell, H. G. (1996). *A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon* (p. 692). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>14</sup> Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 334). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.



As for the meaning of this word *fellowship*.

BDAG — close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship* <sup>15</sup>

R. Kent Hughes —

*“The root idea is “commonness” or “commonality.” ...*

*Every time this word is used in the New Testament, it denotes some kind of sharing — either sharing something with someone (for instance, in 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13 where it means an offering, collection, or contribution) or sharing in something someone else is experiencing.”*<sup>16</sup>

David Guzik —

*We share the same Lord Jesus.  
We share the same guide for life.  
We share the same love for God  
We share the same desire to worship Him.  
We share the same struggles.  
We share the same victories  
We share the same job of living for Him.  
We share the same joy of communicating the gospel.*<sup>17</sup>

#### • THE THEOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

In the first volume of his commentary on Acts Martyn Lloyd-Jones essentially says that *the fellowship* is something that men and women experienced because they held in common the new life that is in and from Jesus.

*The first indication of new, divine life is a drawing together of people who have this life in common.* <sup>18</sup>

J.B. Polhill sheds light on the scope and expression of idea by saying that *the fellowship* of the early believers was the expression of genuine fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

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<sup>15</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 552). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>16</sup> R. Kent Hughes; “Acts” — iBooks

<sup>17</sup> Guzik, D. (2013). *Acts* (Ac 2:42). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

<sup>18</sup> Lloyd-Jones, M. (2000). *Continuing Steadfastly*. In *Authentic Christianity* (1st U.S. ed., Vol. 1, p. 92). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

*For the Christian community, fellowship and unity of purpose are salutary only when rooted in fellowship with Christ and in the unity of his Spirit. The structure of Acts should remind us of this—the unity of the Christian community derives from and is guided by the gift of the Spirit that lies at the heart of its life together.<sup>19</sup>*

And indeed, at the end of the first century the apostle John (one of the apostles present in the newly birthed church in Jerusalem) leans heavily into this truth as being at the heart of *the fellowship*.

**1 John 1:1–7 (NLT)** *We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. <sup>3</sup>We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy. <sup>5</sup>This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. <sup>6</sup>So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. <sup>7</sup>But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.*

#### • THE SCOPE AND EXPRESSION OF THE FELLOWSHIP

D.G. Peterson gives us a sense of the scope and the expression of *the fellowship*. (This has particular relevance when we consider *the love and generosity* practiced in the early church.)

*The koinon - words in Greek normally mean ‘to share with someone in something’ above and beyond the relationship itself, or ‘to give someone a share in something’. The sharing in this case could simply refer to material blessings, as described in vv. 44–45, where we are told that the believers had everything in common (koina). **Yet this sharing was clearly a practical expression of the new relationship experienced together through a common faith in Christ** (cf. vv. 38–41)..... That relationship (the fellowship) brought a certain sense of responsibility to one another. The sharing of goods came to include the distribution of food to the needy in their midst (cf. 6:1–2) and was certainly not restricted to formal gatherings of the believers. It may be best, therefore, to give koinōnia its widest interpretation in 2:42, including within its scope*

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<sup>19</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1992). Acts (Vol. 26, p. 121). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

*'contributions, table fellowship, and the general friendship and unity which characterized the community'.<sup>20</sup>*

C.K. Barrett adds —

*The fellowship, thus based upon common acceptance of the apostolic message, came into action in charitable use of its material resources.<sup>21</sup>*

The depth of shared life in Christ, and devotion to living *in* that shared life and living *from* that shared life, is further described in the way they were devoted to the *breaking of bread and the prayers*.

*The key may be to see the terms “breaking of bread” and “prayer” in apposition to “fellowship.” The meaning would then be that they devoted themselves to a fellowship that was expressed in their mutual meals and in their prayer life together<sup>22</sup>*

The ways in which the early church *practiced* their devotion to the fellowship is seen in Acts 2:44

*The word koinōnia is not used, but other terms express the same reality. First, they are said to have been “together” (epi to auto). This Greek phrase .... seems to depict the gathered community, with a strong emphasis on their unity. This unity is further expressed by their holding “everything in common” (which is described in v. 45 as selling their goods for the benefit of others whenever a need arose).<sup>23</sup>*

*Yet this sharing was clearly a practical expression of the new relationship experienced together through a common faith in Christ (cf. vv. 38–41). This is affirmed in 4:32, where a similar statement about having ‘all things common’ (hapanta koina) is prefaced by the words ‘All the believers were one in heart and mind’. That relationship brought a certain sense of responsibility to one another. The sharing of goods came to include the distribution of food to the needy in their midst (cf. 6:1–2) and was certainly not restricted to formal gatherings of the believers. It may be best, therefore, to give koinōnia its widest interpretation in 2:42, including within its scope ‘contributions, table fellowship, and the general friendship and unity which characterized the community’<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> Peterson, D. G. (2009). *The Acts of the Apostles* (p. 161). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

<sup>21</sup> Barrett, C. K. (2004). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the acts of the Apostles* (p. 164). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

<sup>22</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 119). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>23</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 120). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>24</sup> Peterson, D. G. (2009). *The Acts of the Apostles* (pp. 160–161). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- **THE FELLOWSHIP AND THE UNDERSTOOD DEPTH OF COMMUNITY**

This *devotion to the fellowship* was such a regular practice and such a real expression of new life in Jesus that it shaped the way they understood their relationship to one another, even in the context of suffering, grief and trials.

**Acts 4:23 (CSB)** *After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them.*

**KJV** — *they went to their own company.*

Peter and John made their way to other men and women that they belonged to in a special way! In a very unique and personal way; to the exclusion of the rest of the world; they understood they belonged to those who had come to saving faith in Jesus and who were now being organized by God and for God.

- **THE FELLOWSHIP IN THE EPISTLES**

From the beginning of the church the believers *persisted obstinately* in “the fellowship.” They *held fast to* “the fellowship.” They *clung to* and *persevered* in “the fellowship.” So much so, that we see the New Testament letters presuming the reality of that shared life. We see this especially in Paul’s letter to the Philippians written at least two decades after Acts 2.

In Philippians 1 Paul reflects upon *the fellowship* he and the Philippians had in proclaiming the Gospel.

**Philippians 1:3–4 (NKJV)** *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,*

In Philippians 2 Paul presumes upon this *devotion to the fellowship* in his appeal to unity.

**Philippians 2:1–2 (NKJV)** *Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup>fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

In Philippians 3 Paul uses the word to describe his *sharing* in the sufferings of Jesus.

**Philippians 3:10 (NKJV)** *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

I am particularly struck by the way Paul, the author of Hebrews and Peter presume upon the *devotion to the fellowship* decades after Acts 2 by their references to “*brotherly love.*”

**Romans 12:10 (CSB)** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.

**1 Thessalonians 4:9 (ESV)** Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,

**Hebrews 13:1 (ESV)** Let brotherly love continue.

**1 Peter 1:22 (CSB)** Since you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth, so that you show sincere brotherly love for each other, from a pure heart love one another constantly,

I say that they presume upon the *devotion to the fellowship* as a foundational fixture in first century Christianity because the one word that delivers the core meaning of *koinōnia* is the word, “*shared*.” Again, D.G. Peterson —

*The koinōn - words in Greek normally mean ‘to share with someone in something’ above and beyond the relationship itself, or ‘to give someone a share in something’<sup>25</sup>*

Like biological siblings, the sibling love of brothers and sisters in Jesus involves shared intimacy, shared resources and shared transparency. Timothy Keller put it like this

*If you grew up with brothers or sisters a few years younger than you, you have an idea of the kind of intimacy and transparency wrapped up in brotherly love. If you were four or five years older you wiped noses and wiped bottoms, or else at least you saw those things being wiped. That kind of intimacy and transparency has consequences! You can’t put on airs anymore. You know who they are and they know who you are. If you’re a girl, your siblings have seen you without make-up! They know what you are. They know who you are.*

As we live out our relationships with Jesus together, we’re going to be more fully known — which demands a devotion to *the fellowship*; devotion to *brotherly love*.

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## **SERVANT’S COVENANT**

Belonging to the community known as Metro Calvary Church is really about being part of a family. Metro is made up of disciples of Jesus, unified by their identity in Christ. This

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<sup>25</sup> Peterson, D. G. (2009). *The Acts of the Apostles* (p. 160). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

unity is expressed in the way they collaborate in loving God, loving fellow Christians, and loving non-Christians. Though we have no official “membership” at Metro, those who believe God has called them to be a part of this community enter into a “Servant’s Covenant.” This servant’s covenant does not define a person’s saving relationship with Jesus, it defines a person’s relationship with this community of believers called Metro Calvary. At the same time, the elders and deacons are covenanted to assist, to love and lead, provide counsel and aid, and pray for, teach, and guide for those who belong to this local church.

*“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace...” -[1 Peter 4: 8-10](#)*

### **What is a covenant?**

A covenant is a promise by which we obligate ourselves to one another in such a way that the obligation of one party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other ([Ezek. 20:44](#); [36:22](#); [Ps. 76:11](#); [Hos. 2:19-20](#); [3:1](#); [2 Tim. 2:13](#)). The Metro Calvary Church Servant’s Covenant includes a statement of faith, a statement of biblical doctrine, the obligations of Metro Calvary Church to those who belong to Metro, and the obligations of those who belong to this community to Metro Calvary Church. This covenant is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to his glory and his bride, the church ([Eph. 5:25](#)).

### **Statement of faith**

- I am a Christian saved from the eternal wrath of God by faith in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, through his death and resurrection, by which I am assured of eternal life ([John 3:16-18](#); [Rom. 3:23-26](#)).
- I believe Jesus Christ is exactly who he claimed to be ([Isa. 53:6](#); [Matt. 26:64](#); [Mark 14:62](#); [Luke 22:70](#); [John 4:25-26](#); [6:29](#); [8:58](#); [11:25-27](#); [14:6-7](#); [15:5](#)).
- I have repented of my sins and have been made a new creation in Christ ([1 John 1:9](#); [2 Cor. 5:17](#)).
- In obedience to Scripture, I have been baptized to personally identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and to publicly demonstrate my commitment as a disciple of Jesus ([Col. 2:12](#); [1 Peter 3:21](#)).

### **Statement of biblical doctrine**

- I agree with the core beliefs of Metro Calvary Church, which are founded upon historic creeds (e.g. [Apostles’ Creed](#) and [Nicene Creed](#)) and expressed in the doctrinal statement.
- I understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace; I will adhere to Metro Calvary Church’s position on primary theological issues, and I will not be divisive over secondary issues ([Eph. 4:1-3](#); [Heb. 13:7, 17](#)).

- I agree that the sixty-six books of the Bible are the ultimate doctrinal authority on all matters ([Is. 55:11](#); [1 Cor. 15:3-4](#); [2 Tim. 3:15-16](#); [Heb. 4:12](#)).
- I understand that Metro Calvary Church doctrine is also communicated and specified through various channels, such as sermons, published materials, and other writings distributed by Metro Calvary Church.

### **Obligation of Metro Calvary to the men those within this community**

- We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures ([1 Tim. 3:1-13](#); [5:17-22](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#); [1 Peter 5:1-4](#)).
- We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit ([Acts 20:28](#); [1 Peter 5:1-5](#)).
- We covenant to care for you and seek your growth as a disciple of Christ, in part by equipping you for service ([Eph. 4:11-13](#)) and praying for you regularly, particularly when you are sick ([James 5:14](#)).
- We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture ([Acts 20:27-28](#); [Gal. 6:6](#); [1 Tim. 5:17-18](#)).
- We covenant to be on guard against false teachers ([Acts 20:28-31](#)).
- We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary ([Matt. 18:15-20](#); [1 Cor. 5](#); [Gal. 6:1](#)).
- We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of those who belong to this local church ([1 Cor. 11:1](#); [Phil. 3:17](#); [1 Tim. 4:12](#)).

### **My obligation to Metro Calvary**

- I have read and understood the Metro Calvary [doctrinal statement](#) and will not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace ([Eph. 4:1-3](#); [Heb. 13:7, 17](#)).
- I covenant to submit to the authority of Scripture as the final arbiter on all issues ([Ps. 119](#); [2 Tim. 3:16-17](#)).
- I will maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines. My relationship will be evident through my participation in weekly worship services, communion, Metro Calvary community, service, and a life that glorifies Jesus ([Ps. 105:1-2](#); [Ps. 119:97](#); [Acts 2:42-47](#); [Heb. 10:23-25](#); [2 Peter 1:3](#)).
- I will steward the resources God has given me, including my time, talents, and treasure ([Prov. 3:9-10](#); [Rom. 12:1-2](#); [Gal. 5:22-26](#); [Eph. 4:1-16](#); [5:15-18](#)). This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary ([Rom. 12:1-8](#); [2 Cor. 8-9](#); [12:7-31](#); [1 Peter 4:10-11](#)).
- I will not function in leadership or as a member in another church family ([Heb. 13:17](#)).
- I covenant to submit to discipline by God through his Holy Spirit, to follow biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, to submit to righteous discipline when approached biblically by

brothers and sisters in Christ, and to submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise ([Ps. 141:5](#); [Matt. 18:15-17](#); [1 Cor. 5:1-5](#); [2 Cor. 2:5-8](#); [Gal. 6:1-5](#); [1 Tim. 5:20](#); [2 Tim. 2:25](#); [Titus 1:9](#); [3:10-11](#); [Heb. 12:5-11](#); [Rev. 2:5-7, 14-25](#)).

- I agree, by God's grace, to walk in holiness as an act of worship to Jesus Christ, who has saved me from my sin that I could live a new life ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)); I will practice complete chastity before marriage and complete fidelity in heterosexual marriage by abstaining from practices such as cohabitation, pornography, and fornication ([Job 31:1](#); [Prov. 5](#); [Rom. 13:12-14](#); [1 Cor. 6:9-7:16](#); [Heb. 13:4](#)); I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, and other sinful behavior as the Bible, my pastors, and my conscience dictate ([1 Cor. 8:7](#); [Gal. 5:19-21](#)). Should I sin in such a manner, I agree to confess my sins to Christian brothers or sisters and seek help to put my sin to death ([Rom. 8:13](#); [Col. 3:5](#); [1 John 1:6-10](#)).