



HEBRON

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Dr. Landon Dowden

WHAT IS A HEALTHY CHURCH?

LESSON 1

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

I. WHAT/WHOM IS THE CHURCH?

- a. *Ekklesia* – the assembly of those called out
- b. Grudem: The church is the community of all true believers for all time. That is, the church is made up of all the men and women who have been, are, or ever will be true believers in Jesus.
- c. Christ will build His church. (Matt. 16:18)
- d. In the New Testament, the word “church” is used to describe different types of groups of believers: a small house church (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19), the church in an entire city (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1), the church in an entire region (Acts 9:31), and the church throughout the entire world (Eph. 5:25; 1 Cor. 12:28).
- e. As Christians, we are not only reconciled to God but also to other believers.
 - i. Dever: It’s impossible to answer the question *what is a Christian?* without ending up in a conversation about the church; at least, in the Bible it is...Except for the rarest of circumstances, a true Christian builds his or her life into the lives of other believers through the concrete fellowship of a local church...We demonstrate to the world that we have been *changed*, not primarily because we memorize Bible verses, pray before meals, tithe a portion of our income, and listen to Christian radio stations, but because we increasingly show a willingness to put up with, to forgive, and even to love a bunch of fellow sinners...The church gives a visual presentation of the gospel when we forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us, when we commit to one another as Christ has committed to us, and when we lay down our lives for one another as Christ laid down his life for us. Together we can display the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way we just can’t by ourselves.
 - ii. Dever: A healthy church is not a church that’s perfect and without sin. It has not figured everything out. Rather, it’s a church that continually strives to take God’s side in the battle against the ungodly desires and deceits of the world, our flesh, and the devil. It’s a church that continually seeks to conform itself to God’s Word...***A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God’s character as his character has been revealed in his Word.***



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- f. Metaphors used to describe the church: a family (1 Tim. 5:1-2; Eph. 5:32; 2 Cor. 11:2), a body (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col. 2:19), new temple (1 Pet. 2:4-8), a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), branches on a vine (John 15:5), an olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24), and a field of crops (1 Cor. 3:6-9).
 - i. We should consider each metaphor a different perspective on the church, something that tells us a little more about the community of which God has allowed us to be a part.
- g. The church is supposed to minister to God, to its members, and to the world.
 - i. Ministry to God is done through worshipping Him. (Col. 3:16; Eph. 1:12)
 - ii. Ministry to its members is done through nurturing and building them up so that the church can “present everyone mature in Christ.” (Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:12-13)
 - iii. The church’s ministry to the world is done through preaching the gospel to all people in word and in deed. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8)
 - 1. Each church should be involved in evangelism, ministry to the poor and oppressed (Gal. 2:10; Jam. 1:27); caring for each other’s needs (Acts 11:29; 2 Cor. 8:4; 1 Jn. 3:17), and doing good to everyone (Gal. 6:10).
- h. Three major marks that every church should exhibit:
 - i. Clarity on, gratitude for, and going with the gospel.
 - ii. Faithful preaching from the Bible.
 - iii. Faithful administration of the ordinances, which are baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

II. THE CHURCH MATTERS TO GOD AND IT SHOULD MATTER TO US

- a. The Father planned the church – Eph. 1:3-12; 3:10
- b. The Son purchased the church – Eph. 2:11-17
- c. The Spirit powers the church – Eph. 1:13-14; 2:18-22
- d. Paul prayed for the church – Eph. 1:15-23; 3:21
- e. We participate in the church – Eph. 4:1-16

III. THE GOSPEL CHANGES HOW WE RELATE TO OUR FAITH FAMILY (Romans 12:3-13)

- a. The Gospel changes how we think about ourselves (12:3)
- b. The Gospel changes how we think about each other (12:4-8)
 - i. United in Christ (how we are the same)
 - ii. Diverse in Gifts (how we are different) – unity but not uniformity
 - 1. God has designed His body so that we need each other



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- Piper: God intends to create and perfect a people for Himself not ready made as immediately perfected individuals; rather He intends to create and perfect a people for Himself by having them use their gifts toward each other so that they join God in the process of helping each other grow in knowledge and faith and hope and love.
2. No one person church and no person that has all gifts.
 3. God distributes the gifts.
 4. Gifts are given for the common good – Rom. 12:7
 5. Gifts are for using not just having.
 6. Gifts are best identified through use and not just a spiritual gift inventory.
 - Is their joy when I serve in this way?
 - Is someone helped in Jesus when I serve in this way?
 - Is anyone affirming the gift they see in me?
- iii. Individually Members One of Another
1. Koinonia = fellowship – but even better “common” “sharing” “participation”
 - We are the community of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) in community with the Son (1 Cor. 1:9) – sharing our lives (1 Thess. 2:8), sharing our property (Acts 4:32), sharing in the Gospel (Phil. 1:5; Philemon 6), and sharing in Christ’s suffering and glory (2 Cor. 1:6-7; 1 Pet. 4:13).
 2. We have responsibilities to one another:
 - Spur one another on (Heb. 10:24-25)
 - Remind each other of sin’s deceitfulness (Heb. 3:12-14)
 - Restore one another after sin (Gal. 6:1)
 - Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2)
 3. Not just about what I can get, but what I can give.
 4. Maximizing being individuals but members of one another:
 - Happens best in small groups and not just Sunday morning attendance.
 - Happens best when you commit to a group and not just hop church to church based on preferences.
 - Makes “leaving” more difficult - People too easily leave because their feelings get hurt.



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- c. As we live the Gospel, Rom. 12:9-13 should be true of us (These are vital signs of the Gospel community):
- i. We are the community who loves genuinely (without masks).
 - ii. We are the community who hates evil.
 - iii. We are the community who clings to what is good.
 - iv. We are the community who loves one another with brotherly affection.
 - v. We are the community who seeks to outdo one another in showing honor.
 - vi. We are the community who is zealous rather than lazy.
 - vii. We are the community who is fervent in the Spirit.
 - viii. We are the community who serves the Lord.
 - ix. We are the community who rejoices in hope.
 - x. We are the community who is patient in tribulation.
 - xi. We are the community who is constant in prayer.
 - xii. We are the community who contributes to the needs of the saints.
 - xiii. We are the community who seeks to show hospitality.

IV. COMMITMENTS OF PASTORS/MINISTERS/ELDERS:

- a. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we commit to the following:
- i. We commit to lovingly care for the members and seek their growth in Christ. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12).
 - ii. We commit to provide teaching, preaching, and counsel from the Scriptures that spans the whole counsel of God's Word. (Acts 20:27-28; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18)
 - iii. We commit to helping our faith family at all times, but especially in times of need. (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; Jam. 2:14-17)
 - iv. We commit to consistently strive to meet the criteria assigned to you, as a pastor, in the Word. (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
 - v. We commit to pray for the members of Hebron regularly, particularly when they are sick. (Jam. 5:14)
 - vi. We commit to be on guard against false teachers. (Acts 20:28-31)
 - vii. We commit to exercise church discipline when necessary. (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1)
 - viii. We commit to help our faith family become equipped to serve Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)
 - ix. We commit to seek God's will for our church family to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit. (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)
 - x. We commit to set an example and join our faith family in fulfilling the duties of church membership. (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12)



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V. COMMITMENTS OF MEMBERS:

- a. Dever: *You* and all the members of your church, Christian, are finally responsible before God for what your church becomes, not your pastors and other leaders – *you*. Your pastors will stand before God and give an account for how they have led your congregation (Heb. 13:17). But every single one of us who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will give an account for whether or not we have *gathered* together regularly with the church, *spurred* the church on to love and good deeds, and *fought* to maintain a right teaching of the hope of the gospel (Heb. 10:23-25).

- b. THE PURPOSE OF MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENTS
 - i. To join the Holy Spirit in forming an authentic church community that reflects the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit (Eph. 2:22; Gen. 1:27)
 - ii. To clarify the ongoing blessings and responsibilities of each member.
 - iii. To encourage consistency, accountability, and loving unity within the church family.
 - iv. To accomplish God's call for the faith family.
 1. This agreement does not imply that we will never fall short of the goals, but that the desire of our hearts is to fulfill each of the responsibilities stated to the best of our Spirit-empowered abilities. With the commitment to a local church family comes both individual and corporate blessings as we follow Christ in obedience and seek to see the Gospel advance in us and through us.

- c. MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENTS
 - i. With the guiding help of the Holy Spirit, I commit to the following with my brothers and sisters in Christ:
 - ii. Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him as the LORD, Savior, and Supreme Treasure of our lives, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully enter into commitment with each other.
 - iii. We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as we biblically welcome and test instruction from the Scriptures, seeking to grow toward biblical unity in the truth. We will refrain from causing division by teaching or following doctrine that contradicts God's Word. (Heb. 12:14; Eph. 4:1-3; Acts 17:11)
 - iv. We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require. (Eph. 4:1-3; Gal. 6:1-2, 10; Col. 3:16; Rom. 12:10)



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- v. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others. We will use our spiritual gift(s) for the building up of the church. (Heb. 10:24-25; Col. 4:2; Rom. 12:3-8)
 - vi. We will endeavor to bring up those who may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example seek the salvation and sanctification of our family and friends. (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 4:1-8)
 - vii. We will rejoice in each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows. (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 12:15)
 - viii. We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, being just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior; to avoid all gossiping, backbiting, and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from all practices which bring unwarranted harm to the Body or jeopardize our own or another's faith; to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life. (Rom. 6:1-14; 12:1-2; Eph. 4:25-32; 5:1-2, 15-21; Phil. 2:14-16)
 - ix. We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, striving to advance Christ's kingdom as we sustain our church's worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will submit to biblical authority in resolving conflicts within the church according to Matthew 18:15-20. We will contribute cheerfully, sacrificially, and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations. (Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor. 8-9; Matt. 28:18-20)
 - x. We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word. (Heb. 10:24-25)
 - xi. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.
- d. Current responsibilities of Hebron members listed in Hebron's By-Laws: Members are expected to be faithful and obedient in all areas of the Christian life, to faithfully attend the worship services of this church, to give tithes and offerings to its support and to participate in its ministries.



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VI. PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH

- a. To Him be glory in the church (Eph. 3:20-21)
 - i. Is this what we are praying?
 - ii. How often do you pray for Hebron?
 - iii. How often do you systematically pray for the members of Hebron using a directory or some other member list?
 - iv. How often do you pray for our church staff?
 - v. How often do you pray for sister congregations in our city?
 - vi. The most important question is not “What do we want out of church?” but “What does God want His church to be?”
 - vii. The church’s primary responsibility is to glorify God
 - viii. How do we glorify God?
 1. By delighting in Him and doing what He says.
 2. As we delight in Him and do what He says, we will display Him to a lost world.
 - ix. Dever: Friend, what are you looking for in a church? Good music? A happening atmosphere? A traditional order of service? How about: *a group of pardoned rebels whom God wants to use to display His glory before all the heavenly host because they tell the truth about Him and look increasingly just like Him – holy, loving, united?*

VII. TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

- a. Feb. 27th – Expository Preaching (Dever) and Expository Listener (Anyabwile)
- b. March 6th – Biblical Theology (Dever) and Biblical Theologian (Anyabwile)
- c. March 13th – Biblical Understanding of the Good News (Dever) and a Healthy Church Member is Gospel Saturated (Anyabwile)
- d. March 20th – A Biblical Understanding of Conversion and Evangelism (Dever); A Healthy Church Member is Genuinely Converted and a Biblical Evangelist (Anyabwile)
- e. March 27th – A Biblical Understanding of Membership and Church Discipline (Dever); A Healthy Church Member is a Committed Member and Seeks Discipline (Anyabwile)
- f. April 3rd – No class on this night – Spring Break
- g. April 10th – Biblical Discipleship and Growth (Dever); A Healthy Church Member is a Growing Disciple (Anyabwile)
- h. April 17th – Biblical Church Leadership (Dever); A Healthy Church Member is a Humble Follower and a Prayer Warrior (Anyabwile)