

5 Marks of a Church

The Most Effective Means for Reaching the World with the Gospel

Teaching Outline and Discussion Questions

“A local church is a community of true believers in Jesus Christ, established by God, who gather together regularly in order to make the glory of God visible through the Gospel, using biblical means and purposes, under recognized spiritual leadership, caring for and affirming each other’s salvation, and then are sent into the world to preach the Gospel (Ephesians 1:3-14, 10; 3:10-13).

[Ask these questions and continue to ask questions so that the team fully understands how to teach and communicate each point. Your role as leader is to keep the discussion going by asking good questions. You should spend time reading the texts, thinking about how you would answer each question. Each point necessitates the next, there is a logical progression.]

Devotion Session # 1

1. The church composed of true Christians who have been converted and placed into the body of Christ.

- God who gives life to the dead, sight to the blind, and the gifts of faith and repentance calls us to respond in obedience to the Gospel by repentance and belief (Eph. 2:5; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Acts 11:18; Romans 1:5).
- True Christians have believed and repented in response to the words of the Gospel (Mark 1:15).
- They are born-again (John 3:1-8) and know God (1 Peter 3:18; John 17:3).
- There are evidences that they have been truly born-again: confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9; Mark 8:38; 2 Timothy 1:8; 2:12; 1 John 4:15), is shown in the witness of the Spirit (Romans 5:5; 8:15-16; 1 John 4:13), a changed life (2 Cor. 13:5), a life of repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10), trust in Christ as Savior (1 John 5:11-12; James 2), love for Christians (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:20), burden for the lost (Matthew 9:34-36; 28:16-20), gathering with other Christians (Hebrews 10:24-25), perseverance (Matt. 10:22). They exhibit Gospel wakefulness in all of life.
- Being a Christian is not the same going to church meetings (Matthew 13:24-30).
- The church is the people, not the building (1 Peter 2:9-10).
- Christians, simply by converting, are placed into the Body of Christ, the church (1 Cor. 12:13), are unified (Philippians 1:27; 2:1-4), committed/bound to their church to worship, attend, love, serve and submit (Matt. 16:16-19; 18:17-19; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; 2 Cor. 2:6).
- The believers are openly and unashamedly spiritually transparent and authentic.

- Cell and house churches are the predominant church models in the world (Acts 2:42-27; 5:42; 8:3; 10:24-27; 12:12; 16:40; 20:20; 28:30-31; Rom. 16:3-5; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:5; Phil. 2)
- a. *What are some common misunderstandings of what it means to become a Christian?*
 - b. *Why is saying a prayer not consistent with the Bible's teaching on becoming a Christian?*
 - c. *What are the four elements of the Gospel? [God, Sin, Jesus, Response.] Why are they all essential?*
 - d. *Is it more dangerous to think you are a Christian and not be one, or to not be a Christian and know you are not one? Why?*
 - e. *Which of the following words and phrases are appropriate when sharing the Gospel? Why or why not? ask Jesus into your heart, believe, receive, trust, repent, pray this prayer, come forward and pray with me*
 - f. *Why do some people confuse the church with the church building?*
 - g. *What is the glue that holds the church together (1 John 1:1-5; John 17; Ephesians 4)? What aspects of American culture make the glue not work very well? How is community built?*
 - h. *How do you know you are a Christian?*
 - i. *How are believing and repenting related?*
 - j. *What does this mean, "The faith that saves is the faith that works"?*
 - k. *What is Gospel wakefulness?*
 - l. *Why is our highest priority of service to the other people in our fellowship assurance of salvation? How do we go about this practically?*
 - m. *How does God personally establish each individual church?*

Devotion Session # 2

2. **The church knows and listens to the voice of God as He makes Himself and His Gospel visible/known in the Bible by preaching, devotions, teaching (John 10:3-5, 16, 27; 15:7, 15)**
 - Preaching is regarded as central to listening to God's voice, central to our gatherings, and should be marked by passion, and be expository in nature (2 Timothy 4:1-8).
 - Scripture is the highest authority (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Thess. 2:13; Acts 2:14-47; 4:23-25; 7:1-53; 8:26-35; 13:13-43; 17:10-12;). Even when indigenous people do not have a complete written translation of the Bible in their language, this does not diminish the authority of God's Word.
 - The church must be vitally interested in doctrine – preaching, defending, teaching, the deposit which we must treasure (1 Timothy 3:15; 6:2-3, 20; 2 Timothy 1:13-14). Churches must never shy away from depth in doctrine.
 - Our fellowship comes from abiding in Christ which is almost synonymous with reading, studying, memorizing, meditating upon and listening to the Word of God (John 15:5, 7, 11; 1 John 1:1-3).

- True believers listen to and hear God's voice (John 10:3-5 4, 16, 27; Luke 11:34-35). The church is disciplined by teaching, training, and imitation (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Tim. 2:2; Phil. 4:9; Hebrews 13:7, 17).
 - The glory of Christ is the Gospel which reflects the glory of God (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4-6).
 - The Gospel made visible means....loving, serving, preaching, teaching, communion, baptism, discipling, giving, praying, caring...
 - God's Word works in us sanctification (John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1:5; Hebrews 4:12; James 1 - doers of the Word; John 15 vine branches, apart from me you can do nothing; Psalm 119).
- a. *How do we know the Bible is the Word of God? (2 Timothy 3:16; John 17:17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Exodus 3:4; Isaiah 41:21-24; 42:8-9; 1 Thess. 2:13)*
 - b. *Is the Bible our only authority? (The answer to this is no. We have other authorities in our lives but the Bible is the ultimate authority. Obey your elders, render to Caesar..)*
 - c. *Is it important to pray before reading your Bible? Why? (1 Corinthians 2:9ff)*
 - d. *Why should we memorize the Bible? (Psalm 119)*
 - e. *Why is our church fellowship so closely aligned with the Bible? (John 15:1-11; 1 John 1:1-3)*
 - f. *How do the church and individual believers defend the faith?*
 - g. *Have each team member share his/her favorite Bible passage.*
 - h. *Why does a true believer revel in the glory of Christ? Why isn't this true for a non-believer?*
 - i. *Discuss the verses in John 10 and 15 about knowing the sheep and the sheep hearing Jesus' voice. What about Christians who have no interest in the Bible?*
 - j. *What does the phrase "expository preaching" mean? Can topical preaching be expository?*
 - k. *What does the word doctrine mean? Why are many people afraid of this word?*

Devotion Session # 3

3. The church is under the spiritual authority of the pastors/elders.

- They provide teaching, discipline, leadership, direction, protection (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Eph. 4:11-16; Acts 20:27-29; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Tit. 1:9).
- The church must disciple by teaching, training, and imitation under the direction of the elders (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Tim. 2:2; Phil. 4:9).
- Local believers serve as leaders (Acts 14:21-23; 20:17; Titus 1:5). There were no outsiders involved in the leadership of any indigenous churches.
- Laity fill leadership positions (Rom. 16:3-16; 1 Cor. 16:15-18; Col. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:19-21; Titus 3:12-13). These lay leaders are typically bi-vocational.

- Leaders fulfill the requirements of 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, they have a high level of commitment and Christian character.
 - Leaders train and enable others, usually in teams, to do the work of ministry. They give freedom to serve. There is an openness to change and innovation.
- a. *Are we naturally inclined to obey our parents, government, teachers, elders?*
 - b. *What kinds of directives might we receive from church leaders that we must obey? That we should not obey?*
 - c. *Why are indigenous leaders more effective than non-indigenous leaders?*
 - d. *What qualifies someone for church leadership?*
 - e. *What are four types of church discipline? 1 - Conviction (sermons, SS class, home Bible studies), 2 - iron on iron (personal relationships), 3 - factious man, elder intervention (Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17) 4 - excommunication (Matthew 18)*
 - f. *What happens if the church ignores discipline? What happens if the church does not obey its leaders?*
 - g. *What does the word doctrine mean?*
 - h. *How are pastors and leaders recognized in the local church? What is ordination?*

Devotion Session # 4 (4A and B)

4. The church, by its very definition, is missional. The church proclaims the truths of the Gospel and manifests that truth through changed lives. Living things reproduce, Christians produce Christians and churches produce churches. The church is the most dynamic and foundational organization on earth. The church, by calling and necessity, becomes a church-planting church. By nature, God is the *sending* one who initiates the redemption of His whole creation. Jesus consistently spoke of Himself as being *sent* in John's gospel and subsequently commissioned His disciples for this same purpose (John 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25). As the sent people of God, the church is the instrument of His mission (John 20:21).

4A. Jesus is the only way; there is no other way. The church is commanded to proclaim this truth. Church planting is urgent! More churches mean more evangelism.

- The central mission of the church is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20; John 17:18; 20:21; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8).
- The early church planted churches (Acts 13).
- Evangelistic preaching dominates the preaching narrative in the book of Acts.
- Jesus is the only way to God and He is the controller of all history (Revelation 5; Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 4:12; John 14:6).
- Reproduction of churches must be done urgently and rapidly (Acts 2:41; 2:47; 4:4; 8:4; 13:49; Matthew 9:36-38).

- The unevangelized are accountable and will be judged and go to hell (Romans 1).
- Church planting and evangelism are god-like acts of mercy, grace and compassion (Jonah 1-4).

- Can Jesus save people who remain as followers of Buddha?(Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Romans 1:18-31)*
- Can you trust in Jesus plus something else just to cover your bases and get to heaven?*
- Are the unevangelized going to heaven? Hell? Why?*
- Why are new churches the most effective way to spread the gospel?*
- Why do the unevangelized go to hell according to Romans 1? Is this fair?*
- Why must the Gospel be proclaimed? What is the difference between living the Gospel and preaching the Gospel?*

4B. Everyone in the church must live by the Gospel and proclaim the Gospel always and everywhere, especially to the distressed and downtrodden – those we picture as least likely to make good Christians.

- The gospel is sowed abundantly (Philippians 1-2; 1:27; Luke 16:31; 24:44-49; Acts 4:12-20; 2 Cor. 9:6). The gospel is proclaimed abundantly through a variety of media (parable of the sower in Mark 4).
 - Jesus had compassion because He had eyes of compassion and saw the outcasts, downcast, and downtrodden (Matthew 9:36).
 - The Gospel is powerful to save, unleash it! (Romans 1:16).
 - The church must know and love the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-25; 1 Cor. 15:3-4).
- Is gospel witness an important part of the Christian life? Are we commanded to witness? (Matthew 28:16-20; Matthew 4:19)*
 - Should every Christian learn to share his faith? What would you tell someone who says they are a Christian but is not interested in sharing his faith?(Luke 9:26)*
 - What kinds of resources does God give us in witnessing? (Matthew 10)*
 - If you never share the Gospel can you be a Christian? Does the willingness to share the Gospel give assurance of salvation? Should it bring joy? (Mark 8:38; 2 Timothy 2:12)*

Devotion Session # 5 (4C and 4D)

4C. Churches must pray about planting in order to plant—God acts when we pray! Planting is God's work and must be done in reliance upon Him.

- Prayer: foundational and fervent (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:23-31; 6:6-7; 10:1-48; 12:5; 13:3; 14:23; 16:11-15; 16:25-34; 20:36; 21:5).
- Paul asked for prayer to share the Gospel with boldness (Eph. 6:18-19).
- Jesus instructed us to pray for workers for the harvest (Matthew 9:36-38).
- [When you present this truth, stop and have several pray. If no one responds by praying for planting, repeat the teaching and then ask several to pray; repeat until they pray.]

- a. Look up the texts in the first bullet point and comment on the prayer. What do they pray for?*
- b. Paul asks for boldness in preaching. Why? What fears do we have in sharing in Orange versus India? Why are they different?*
- c. In Matthew 9 Jesus says the harvest is plentiful. The problem is harvesters. Is that true in Orange? India? Is the harvest plentiful in Orange?*
- d. Jesus sees people differently; He sees them as distressed and downcast. Do you see them as He sees them?*

4D. Churches must plan to plant.

- We must infuse this vision into every new church (I Thess. 1:6-8).
- Church planting only happens when it is intentional (Isaiah 32:8; Acts 13:1-4; 2:42-27; 13-20).
- Believers must intentionally start new fellowships of believers wherever they go.
- New believers should be gathered for prayer, worship, study of God's Word, fellowship and outreach.
- When reaching new groups it is beneficial to find a person of interest/man of peace (Matthew 10:11).

- a. When is the best time for a church to talk about planting a church?*
- b. T or F We only do what we plan to do.*
- c. Who is the man of peace in Matthew 10?*
- d. What are the necessary requirements for church planting?*

Devotion Session # 6 (4E and F)

4E. Planting requires people who are disciples of Christ.

- The church must disciple by teaching, training, and imitation (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Tim. 2:2; Phil. 4:9).
- Pray for men and women, find men and women, challenge men and women, train men and women (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Planting requires men who will lead their families, love their wives, lead the church, take risks for the Gospel. Christ called 12 men and sent them out (Phil. 3—fellowship of His sufferings; 2 Cor. 4:1-18; 2 Cor. 11:23-33).
- Planting requires women who will provide leadership and assistance in ministry areas appropriate and available to women (1 Timothy 2).

- a. Are men more important than women? How about in a church plant? Can a woman plant a church without a man?*
- b. What does it mean to challenge someone? Why are some men hard to motivate? Why are some women hard to motivate?*
- c. What are some common excuses for not wanting to plant a church in Orange?*
- d. What might be some common excuses for not wanting to plant a church near Siliguri? How can we answer those objections?*

4F. Planting is dangerous, risky and uncomfortable. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Tertullian, 1st century AD

- There must be a willingness to let all of life's luxuries, friendships, family, money, comforts go...being well-thought of...inconveniences (Matthew 10:16-23, 34-39; John 15:18-21; 16:1-4; Romans 8:16-18; 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 12:9-10; Philippians 1:27-29; 3:10; Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:12-14; Revelation 6:9-11; 12:11.)
 - You have to be death defying, to cause you to trust God in new ways (Matthew 5:43-45).
 - Churches are open to cultural adaptations. There is a clear understanding of the difference in preferences and biblical principles.
- a. Read Matthew 10 as a group and list the witnessing principles, warnings, resources, etc.*
 - b. Read Philippians 3 and 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. What was going on in the life of Paul? What was he thinking? What were some internal motivations, spiritual truths that drove Paul to plant churches?*

Devotion Session #7 (4G)

4G. Church planting will be successful.

- We have a big God who promises His presence (Matthew 28:20).
- The church is His program for glory (Ephesians 3:10-13).
- We should not be discouraged in trouble (Ephesians 3:10-13).
- Announcing the Gospel is powerful (Romans 1:16). Our confidence should be in the Gospel, not ourselves, not in money, big meetings, success, music, etc.
- All the nations will have representatives in heaven so ethnic ministry can only succeed (Matthew 24:13).
- All authority has been given to Him in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18).
- He has promised us His presence, as He promised Moses, (Exodus 33:14-16).
- The feet of those who proclaim His reign are beautiful (Isaiah 52:7).
- God is gracious and merciful even when we are disobedient to His call. He eventually will get His work done (Jonah 1-4).

Devotion Session # 8

5. The church comes together regularly for the biblical purpose of making the Gospel visible through biblical means and disciplines: teaching and preaching, worship, prayer, the Lord's Supper, baptism, training in evangelism, Gospel fellowship, care, respect, encouragement, discipline, rebuke, counsel, love for each other. The visible Gospel ministers to the believer and this visible Gospel ministry actively supports the mission - #4 above.

- Aim at ministry; you never get mission. Aim at mission, and you get ministry—ministry is the means by which you support and do mission. Rally around what you do outside the church (1 Thessalonians 3:1-13; 5:14-22, Philippians 4:10-23; Acts 2:42-47; 2 Corinthians 1; Philippians 4).
- The church gathers together regularly (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Community fosters a fuller understanding of the Gospel (Philemon).
- Gospel community forms in the context of ordeal and mutual love. It could kill you, but if it doesn't, it makes you stronger (2 Corinthians 1; John 13:34-35).
- Community is formed in the context of Christocentric Bible exposition (Luke 24:27; John 5:39; 1 John 1:1-3; John 15:1-11). Our fellowship with Jesus because of our sonship enables us to fellowship with each other around Him.
- Community is formed in the context of multi-generational, missionally oriented, teams.
- Ministry is the means of doing mission. You have to do ministry along the way. You have to be loving, serving together to achieve your mission. If not, then the Gospel becomes a civil religion that affirms my lifestyle. We use family to "resolve" the tension (Philippians 4).

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- Every member contributes to the health of the body using a variety of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14).
 - Every member ministers to encourage and work together for the holiness of the church (1 Thess. 4:1-8).
 - There are four elements of discipline necessary in the church. (Matthew 18:5; Titus 3:10; Ephesians 4:1-8; Proverbs 27:17)
 - Worship includes: prayer, preaching, giving, singing, Lord's Supper, baptism reading the Scriptures. Worship is not synonymous with singing, but includes singing.
- a. What spiritual gift has God given you to build up the body of Christ?**
- b. Why does ministry come after mission?**
- c. Why are each of the following important in the church: forgiveness, self-control, love, joy, peace, patience, obedience. Why?**
- d. What are some character traits that need to be eradicated from the church?**
- e. What should the church do with a person who has no interest in mission, church planting, or sharing his faith?**