

Matthew 16:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not laprevail against it.

(Growth Track 2025 – Community)

The Importance of the Local Church

B. Shaun Garing – November 2025

I. The Local Church

A. Jesus is Building *His Church*

1. **Matthew 16:18 (NKJV)** ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not laprevail against it.
 - a. I will build (3618. oikodomeó): In the Greek New Testament the verb translated “to build” occurs forty-one times and carries both its obvious architectural sense and its richer theological sense of establishing, strengthening and edifying. The narrative, didactic, and prophetic books alike show that what is built reveals the builder’s identity, intent and ultimate allegiance. (Topical Lexicon)
 - b. prevail against (2729. katischuó): The verb under consideration communicates an active, victorious strength that pushes through resistance until it gains the mastery. It is more than mere endurance; it pictures decisive, effectual power that achieves its goal, whether for good or for evil. (Topical Lexicon)
2. **Ephesians 2:19-22 (NKJV)** ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.
3. **1 Timothy 3:15 (NKJV)** ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and laground of the truth.
 - a. Why Jesus came.
 - b. What Jesus did.
 - c. What Jesus has made available for us today.
4. **John 8:31-32 (AMPC)** ³¹ So Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples.³² And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.
 - a. Free (1659. eleutheroó): **Cognate: 1659 eleutheróō** – properly, set free, release from bondage; (figuratively) to remove the restrictions of sin (darkness) because delivered by God into true spiritual liberty (growth) (HELPS Word-studies)
 - b. Free (1659. eleutheroó): The verb describes an act of decisive release—rescue from an oppressive power into a state of unhindered life with God. Scripture applies it to liberation from sin’s mastery, from the condemning power of the Law, and ultimately from the corruption that infects the created order. (Topical Lexicon)

B. The Church – A Place of Maturing

1. **1 Corinthians 2:6 (AMPC)** Yet when we are among the full-grown (spiritually mature Christians who are ripe in understanding), we do impart a [higher] wisdom (the knowledge of the divine plan previously hidden); but it is indeed not a wisdom of this present age *or* of this world nor of the leaders *and* rulers of this age, who are being brought to nothing *and* are doomed to pass away.

a. Milk

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV) Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow [a] thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

b. Meat

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (KJV) And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.³ For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

c. Strong Meat

- i. **Hebrews 5:12-14 (KJV)** ¹² For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.¹³ For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.¹⁴ But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

ii. I can stay at home and learn the Bible – Then why do we need schools?

2. **Hebrews 6:1-3 (MSG)** So come on, let's leave the preschool fingerpainting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ. The basic foundational truths are in place: turning your back on "salvation by self-help" and turning in trust toward God; baptismal instructions; laying on of hands; resurrection of the dead; eternal judgment. God helping us, we'll stay true to all that. But there's so much more. Let's get on with it!
3. **The Word of God is like a deep bucket full of paper bills with varying values.** If I allow you to take any one bill out of the bucket and keep it, will you settle for what is on the top or will you dig deep into the bucket to find the bill worth the most? YOU WILL DIG! That is what the Word of God is like. If I settle for only the Word I am offered in the message at church, I will be missing out on the value offered through God Word when I dig myself.
5. Community defined: Commonness; frequency. (Webster 1828 Dictionary)

C. What is a Pastor?

Ephesians 4:8, 11 (KJV) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors (4166) and teachers;

1. A Pastor Defined

- a. **Shepherd/Pastor:** (4166. poimén) Shepherd, one who generally cares for flocks. The spiritual guide of a particular church. [Z] [A derivative is 4165. Poimaínō; guiding, guarding, folding of the flock as well as its nourishment]
- b. A shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock; it involves tender care and vigilant superintendence. [V] [Other words translated *shepherd*: 750. Archipoímn: Jesus as the Chief Shepherd in 1 Pt 5:4]
- c. *The Greek word (4166. poimén) is translated in the English as “shepherd” 16 times in the New Testament and “pastor” once in Ephesians 4:11.*

2. The Pastor as He Relates to Other Ministry Gifts (Ephesians 4:8)

- a. Apostle: The apostle in a church planter. Once a church is established, the apostle will leave the congregation under the care of a pastor and move on to plant other churches. ***How will the work of the apostle remain if it is not placed in the capable hands of a pastor/shepherd?***
- b. Prophet: The prophet is one given to revelations from the Spirit of God. They will reveal what God is saying to the church right now. ***How is the church to discern and implement what God is telling them without a pastor to teach and direct their enthusiasm? And how are the sheep to discern false prophets if they have not been schooled in the scriptures? (Mt 24:11)***
- c. Evangelist: The evangelist is a soul winner. ***The greatest efforts of the evangelist may fail if the new converts do not have a pastor under whom they can be disciplined. (Acts 8:4-8, 21:8)***
- d. Teacher: The teacher will explain “hard to grasp” topics in such a simple way that anyone could understand. ***How can a sheep apply what they have been taught if there is no shepherd to train them in what they have been given by a teacher? How does one recognize a false teacher who has wrongly divided scripture if there is no pastor to offer oversight of the sheep? (2 Pt 3:16)***
- e. Pastor: Unlike other ministry gifts, the pastor does not leave when their work is done. Their place is with the sheep.
 - i. **NEVER MAKE THE MISTAKE OF CONFUSING A THERAPIST WITH A PASTOR!**
Society, in many instances, has tried to replace pastors with therapists, and we are now looking to counseling rather than the Word of God for our answers. Today we have more therapy than ever and more issues than ever. You cannot talk out what a person refuses to address, and you cannot talk out what needs to be cast out.
 - ii. 1 Peter 5:2, Matthew 25:32, and 1 Corinthians 5:13

3. Some Responsibilities of Your Pastor (shepherd)

- a. 1 Peter 5:1-5
- b. Acts 6:4 – devoted to the ministry of the Word & prayer
- c. Ephesians 4:11-12 – maturing the flock
- d. Colossians 1:28- warning and teaching
- e. Acts 20:20, 27-28, 30-32
- f. Proverbs 27:23 – knowing the condition of his flock
- g. Jeremiah 3:15 – fed with knowledge and understanding
- h. Jeremiah 23:4 – not fearful, dismayed or lacking

4. Benefits Available in *Your Pastor*

- a. **Matthew 9:36 (AMPC)** When He saw the throngs, He was moved with pity *and* sympathy for them, because they were bewildered (harassed and distressed and dejected and helpless), like sheep without a shepherd. (4166).
- b. **Ephesians 4:12-16 (AMPC)** ¹² His intention was the perfecting *and* the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church),¹³ [That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [a]full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ *and* the completeness found in Him.¹⁴ So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching *and* wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the prey of] the cunning *and* cleverness of [b]unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead.¹⁵ Rather, let our lives lovingly [c]express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way *and* in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).¹⁶ For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints *and* ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.
- c. **Jeremiah 3:14-16 (NKJV)** ¹⁴ "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.¹⁶ "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit *it*, nor shall it be made anymore.
- i. **A toolbox for an apprentice and expert are the same, but the apprentice must learn how to use the items in the toolbox.**
- ii. **When you are saved you have what a matured saint has but you must learn how to be skillful in those things. THAT is one of the reasons you have a Pastor.**
- d. **Jeremiah 23:3-4 (NKJV)** ³ "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. ⁴ I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.

5. How do I Pick a Pastor? ***YOU don't – GOD does!***

- a. Under the New Covenant
 - i. **Acts 20:28 (KJV)** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the 'which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed (4165 - shepherd) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

- ii. **1 Corinthians 12:28 (KJV)** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles (evangelists), then gifts of healings (evangelists), helps, governments (pastors), diversities of tongues.
 - iii. **Ephesians 4:8, 11 (KJV)** Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors (4166) and teachers;
 - iv. Old Testament Examples: Numbers 27:15-23, Jeremiah 3:14-16, 23:3-4
6. Other verses for study:
- a. How to **receive** your Pastor (Matthew 10:40-42)
 - b. Having the **right attitude** toward your pastor (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
 - c. How to **honor** your pastor (1 Timothy 5:17 & 1 Kings 17:8-16)
 - d. The Pastor sets the **pace and order** in the local church (Hosea 4:9 & Mt 15:14)
 - e. The Pastor is a **gift** to the local church (Ephesians 4:8, 11-13, 15-16 & Pr 17:8)
 - f. **Prayer and thanksgiving** helps us avoid being critical of your Pastor. (1 Tim 2:1-2)
 - g. Your Pastor helps to **watch out** for your soul (Hebrews 13:7, 17)
 - h. The Word ministered through your Pastor will **change your life**. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
 - i. **Stay** in your God-ordained place - even if corrective guidance is given. (Ecc 10:4)

V. Conclusion

Unity vs. Gathering

The House of God

There are *seven reasons* why we must build the House of God:

1. It is the place where sinners find mercy.
2. It is the place where Heaven is made real to mankind.
3. It is the place where God speaks to us in revelation knowledge.
4. It is the place where angels congregate in the earth.
5. It is the place where God gives us a vision and destiny for our lives.
6. It is the place where we join hands with God financially.
7. It is the place where the divine laws of increase begin to operate in our lives.

**Website page about GROWTH TRACK opens Monday, 11/10.
Membership & Helps Forms at our Welcome Center.**