

**Five Hallmarks of a Biblical Church**  
**Five Hallmarks of A Biblical Church, Part 4**  
**Selected Scriptures**

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Well, this morning, I want to go back to the series that we're sort of in the middle of. We started before Good Friday and Easter. And obviously, we wanted to really focus our attention there on those great events. But I want to back today, to our study in Five Hallmarks of a Biblical Church. A couple of weeks ago, I read a story about a man who plays the bagpipes; we experienced that over Easter. This particular man plays his bagpipes in a variety of venues. And one day, he was asked by a local funeral director to play his bagpipes at a funeral service. Specifically, it was a graveside service, held for a homeless man who died without any family or friends. The service was to be in a pauper's cemetery in the back country of Kentucky. Sadly, on the way to the service, this man got lost in the maze of the back roads there in the hills of Kentucky. And, when he finally arrived, it was almost an hour after the service was to be held. The funeral director had already left. Only the grave diggers were still there; and they had stopped to eat their lunch. He quickly apologized to them for being late; and walked over to the side of the grave. And as he looked down in the hole that they were in the process of digging, he saw that there was no coffin. Instead, it was already covered with a vault lid. Not knowing what else to do, he took out his bagpipes and began to play. It wasn't long before the workers, who were there eating lunch, had put down their lunches and had come over to the graveside. And this lone bagpiper, there in the back hills of Kentucky, played out his heart for this poor homeless man. And as is tradition, he finished with the haunting melody of "Amazing Grace." As he played, the workers who'd gathered round began to weep. And he began weeping, as well. When this emotional scene had finally come to an end, he...he packed up his instrument. And he started walking back to his car with a full heart. That's when he heard one of the workers break the silence for the first time. And.....frankly, he was surprised by what he heard. He said, "I ain't never seen nothing like that. And I've been digging septic tanks for twenty years." Think about that a moment. The setting and the environment had given this man every indication that this was, in fact, the funeral. But, as he learned, that didn't mean that's really what was going on, over in that piece of land. Appearances can be very deceiving.

Now, as I thought about that story and decided to relate it to you, it was because it occurred to me, that the same thing is often true when it comes to church. You can have the right setting. You can have the right environment. People can come and do the normal activities that are typically done in a church, and yet still not really have a church. It can look right. It can smell right. It can be everything that a church looks like it ought to be, and yet, still not really be what

it appears to be. You can also have what purports to be a biblical church; and yet, that not be the reality. It's absolutely imperative, then, that we understand what a biblical church really is.

For the last few weeks, we've been considering the Hallmarks of a Biblical Church. I've taken that word, "hallmarks" from the Goldsmiths' Hall in London. There, when a piece of precious metal is tested and it proves genuine; when it's purity is at a certain level, then the Goldsmiths' Hall puts its mark on that piece of metal. That mark of genuineness came to be called the "hallmark." Today, we use that word, "hallmark" to refer to those things which mark something as genuine: those marks that show that it is, in fact, genuine. We are examining the genuine marks of a biblical church -- the hallmarks of a biblical church.

I invite you to look, again, at 1 Timothy, chapter 3. This is where we began, and...and are sort of spreading our study through the pastoral epistles. But we began here in 1 Timothy 3:14. Paul writes

I am writing these things to you [this first letter, Timothy] hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, (and I think Paul anticipated that he would be; that's why he wrote this letter), I write so that you will know, [Timothy] how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

Paul wanted Timothy to know the principles by which he should conduct himself in the life of the church. Christ has told us how to do church. And we must conduct the church in that way. The church must have what we could call a "biblical philosophy of ministry." That is, a set of non-negotiable principles that guide its decisions and its ministry. We find those biblical principles woven throughout the three letters in the New Testament that were written specifically to pastors to tell them how to conduct themselves in the church of God. That's 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. In these three letters that Paul wrote to young pastors, we find at least five essential hallmarks of a biblical church. Let me just review them for you.

The five hallmarks are these (and we're working our way through each one of these).

First of all: a high view of God, a transcendent view of God. Secondly: a high view of Scripture. Thirdly: a biblical view of man. Fourth: a biblical view of the church; And fifthly: the central place of Christ and the gospel. Those hallmarks are always present wherever you have a truly biblical church.

Today, we come to the fourth of those hallmarks. And, by the way, I would encourage you, if this is your first time, or you've missed some, catch-up. Go online and listen; because they sort of build on each other. But today, we come to the fourth hallmark. And that is, a biblical view

of the church. A biblical view of the church. I want to begin, as we have with each of them, by asking, “What does that mean?” “What does it mean to have a biblical view of the church?” Let me define it for you. To have a biblical view of the church means that the leadership intentionally structures church life to reflect what the Bible teaches. The leadership intentionally structures the life of the church to reflect what the Bible teaches the church should be. That’s what it means to have a biblical view of the church. I wanted to drill down a little further, though, on this and be a little more specific. If a church is to reflect what the Bible teaches a church should be, then several things will be true.

First of all, it must be a church, versus just a simple Christian gathering. It must be a church. If it’s going to be a biblical church, you obviously have to start with the reality that it is a church! The Greek word for “church” is “ecclesia.” It simply means, “assembly.” So the church, then, is not a building. This building is not the church. If this building, God forbid, were destroyed, then, the church, that is Countryside Bible Church, would still exist. This property is not the church. We talk about “coming to church”; but in reality, we’re the church on the way to meet. The church is, in fact, the gathering, the assembly of Christians. But this raises a question: Christians often get together in various ways and in various groups. We get together for fellowship. We get together for prayer. We get together for worship. We get together for other distinctly Christian activities in various size groups; and we don’t typically call all those gatherings “churches.” Why not? What distinguishes a church? What are the fundamental differences between, say Christian concerts and home Bible studies, and Sunday School; organizations, like BSF or Christian Businessmen’s Association, on the one hand, and the church, on the other? Those are all gatherings of Christians, but they’re not the Church. Why not? Well, theologians, scholars through the 2,000-year history of the church, have identified three distinguishing marks of a of a church versus a Christian gathering. Where these marks are, you have a church. Number one: a mutual commitment to BE a church. There has to be a mutual agreement to join together as a local manifestation of the universal church. In other words, one of the distinctions of a church is the express purpose of meeting together to fulfill the role of the church: intentionality: “We are going to be a church.” That’s the first distinguishing mark of a church.

The second distinguishing mark of a church is the regular corporate worship on the Lord’s Day. Throughout the New Testament, throughout church history, what made the church distinct from other Christian gatherings was the commitment to come together for corporate worship on the Lord’s Day to be a church. It’s what bothers me about churches that intentionally try to keep Sunday free for you to do whatever you want and let you come whenever you want. What frames up a church in New Testament times and in church history has been that commitment to meet on the Lord’s Day for worship.

Number three, the third distinguishing mark of a church is the consistent practice of the ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper - the consistent practice of the ordinances. In fact, Wayne Grudem writes, in his *Systematic Theology*, "Once an organization begins to practice baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is a continuing organization, and is attempting to function as a church. By contrast, groups who do not administer baptism and the Lord's Supper signify that they are not intending to function as a church. If a local Bible study began baptizing its new converts and regularly participating in the Lord's Supper, these things would signify an intention to function as a church. And it would be difficult to say why that Bible study should not be considered, then, the church." So, it must be a church versus a simple Christian gathering. It must have those distinguishing marks: the intentionality to be a church, the regular corporate worship on the Lord's Day, and the consistent practice of the ordinances. If it's going to be a biblical church, it has to start by being a church, and those things are reality.

Secondly, it must be a true church versus a false church. Not only must it be a church; but it must be a true church, as opposed to a mere shadow of the true Christian faith. And this is absolutely crucial. I remember the first time Sheila and I flew into Dallas, when we were coming here to meet with the search committee, the first time we came to consider coming to Countryside, some seven or eight years ago, now. And we were flying in, and I was paying careful attention, as we flew in. I guess it probably over the Southlake-Grapevine area. And it's like there were churches and steeples to be seen everywhere. And my wife's question was, "Why do they need another...church and pastor? They've got a bunch of 'em!" But you quickly discern that not every place that calls itself a church is, in fact, a true Christian church. Just because it has the word, "Christian" in its charter; just because it has the word, "Christian" on its sign; just because it makes that claim, doesn't mean it IS. There are true churches of Jesus Christ and there are false churches. To be a biblical church, it must be a true church. So the question then, is, "How do you know?" How do you know the difference between a true church and a false church, if they're both claiming to be Christian, if they both use the same lingo, if they both say they believe the same Bible? How do you know? What is the great divide? And there is a great divide between a weak, disobedient, doctrinally corrupt, true church on the one hand, and a false church on the other? It comes down to this: It's a false church when it denies the truth about Jesus or the gospel. It becomes a false church when it denies the truth about Jesus or the gospel. Let me show you this. I'm going to take you and this all groundwork for where we're going, ultimately, back to the pastoral epistles. But, I want you to go with me to John 1 John chapter four. There're a lot of places I could take you in John to show you this. We'll just look at this one: 1 John 4:1:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Don't believe everything you hear. Don't believe everything that says it's Christian. Don't imagine, for a moment, that everything that says it believes and loves Jesus

Christ actually does! That's what he's saying! "By this, (verse two) you know the Spirit of God..." Here's how you know if it's the real deal: "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now is already in the world.

You hear what John is...saying, here? He's saying, "When you take the label, Christian;" when you take the label, "followers of Christ," understand that there're two different things going on under that label. There are those who are following the true Christ. Ssee, it's distinguished here by those who have accurate doctrine of Christ. They understand. They're not denying His deity. They're not denying His humanity. They're not denying anything that's important to the person of Christ. They're following the true Christ. And then you have those who *seem* to be following Christ, say they're following Jesus, say they love Jesus, but in fact, they are embracing the spirit of antichrist - opposed to Christ. So understand this reality: when a church that claims to be Christian denies the truth about Jesus Christ, either His deity, His humanity or any other key part of His Person or work; mark it down, that is not a true church. That is a false church! It is not FOR Christ. It is ANTI Christ. You see the same thing in 2 John. Turn over the second letter. And here, he's very explicit: verse 7. He says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh." Now understand, that in the first century, the touchstone of orthodoxy about the person of Jesus Christ: There were those who denied that He was really human; that He came as a human being. Now there're all kinds of aberrations you have to be on the alert for; but in the first century, that was it! But his larger point, here, is: if somebody's wrong about Christ, if they have the wrong Christ, then understand, (verse 7):

This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Guard yourself (verse 8). Be careful (verse 9): Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the correct teaching of Jesus Christ does not have God; the one who abides in the [correct] teaching [about Christ], he has both the Father and the Son.

Here's how serious it is (verse 10):

If anyone comes to you (remember, now, this is a person claiming to be a Christian, claiming to be a brother, sister)....If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, (this correct teaching about Jesus Christ), do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deed.

In other words, don't accept him as a brother. Don't say, "God bless you. We're both serving the same God. Everything's wonderful. You're a fellow...believer." Don't treat them that way!

Be kind. Be gracious. But don't act like they're your Christian brothers and sisters. They have embraced the spirit of antichrist. So a true church becomes a false church when they deny the person of Jesus Christ.

A true church becomes a false church, not only by denying the person of Christ, but also by denying the means of salvation; the way a person becomes right with God. Look at Galatians 1. In Galatia, the churches there, there were Judaizers. These were Jews who had believed in Jesus ostensibly. Everything looked great. If you were to sit down next to a Judaizer in the first century, you would have thought he was one of you. You would have thought he was just like you. Everything was the same. He said he believed in Jesus, loved Jesus, celebrated the cross, talked about His resurrection, all those things. But here was the problem: The Judaizers added one thing. They said, "In order to be right with God, you not only had to believe the gospel, you also had to keep the law. You had to be circumcised and keep the law. That's how you're made right with God." And Paul said this about it in verse 6:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are distorting the Gospel of Christ." And then he says in verse 8: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, [let him be damned!] let him be accursed! [Let him go to hell!]

Verse nine:

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you have received, let him be accursed! [anathema; let him be damned].

Paul goes on in chapter two to say that those Judaizers who claim to be Christians (remember, now, you're talking about those who claim to be an expression of genuine Christianity), Paul utterly disagrees. He says their denial of justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, made them the enemies of the gospel. Look at verse 4 of chapter 2: they are "false brethren." They don't belong to the church. Let me make this very clear. If a church embraces a false Christ and/or a false gospel, it is a false church. Now, for example, that would include all the cults. For example, the Mormons, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints; they embrace a different Jesus than the biblical Jesus. They have a different gospel; a different means of being right with God that is works-based. That is not the true church. That is a false church. The same thing would be true of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny the deity of Christ. Not a true expression of Christianity, a false church, "the spirit of antichrist," according to John. It would be true of the Roman Catholic Church. At one point, the Roman Catholic Church was a true church. But today, it's a false church. Why? Because it denies, not

the person of Christ (they're right on the person of Christ), but because it denies the means of being right with God: the gospel, Galatians 1. There are many genuine believers in that vast Roman Catholic system. But they are NOT believers if they understand what the Catholic church teaches about salvation, and believe it Liberal protestant denominations and churches are not true churches, but false churches, because they don't believe in the Christ of the Bible. They don't believe in the Bible, itself, in many cases. They don't believe in the Gospel of grace alone, by faith alone. Wayne Grudem writes, "When there is an assembly of people who take the name, *Christian* but consistently teach that people cannot believe their Bibles--indeed, a church whose pastor and congregation seldom read their Bibles or pray in any meaningful way, and do not believe, or perhaps even understand the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone, then how can we say that this is a true church?" The obvious answer is We can't.

To be a biblical church, first of all, it must be a church, as opposed to a simple Christian gathering. It must meet those criteria. And it must be a true church, instead of a false church.

Thirdly, to be a biblical church (and this is really where we've been heading), it must follow the scriptural pattern for church life versus some man-made pattern. It must follow the scriptural pattern for church life versus some man-made pattern. That, essentially, is what Paul is saying in 1 Timothy 3:15. He's saying Christ has a particular way He wants the church to function. And you must follow that, Timothy. But that raises the question: "What are the elements that make up that biblical pattern? How do you live that biblical pattern out? What are the key components, the essential elements of that scriptural pattern for church life?" Let me give you several of them.

First of all, if you're going to be a biblical church, following the scriptural pattern, then you must understand the purpose of the church. One of the key ways in which a church begins to lose its focus is when it goes wrong on the question of why does it exist. If you want to survey the literature about the church today (and I have a number of books in my office which I have surveyed) and you looked for the answer to this crucial question: "What is the purpose of the church?" you get a wide variety of answers. Now I'm going to sort of paint with a broad brush, here; I understand that. But let me just give you some sweeping answers to that question, from different parts of the contemporary, evangelical world, and in otherwise. The seeker-sensitive church says that the church exists to involve the unchurched in the weekly life of the church; obviously, with the ultimate goal of seeing them come to faith in Christ. But that's the purpose the church exists. On Sundays, on the weekends, we want the unchurched to become involved in what's going on in the church. The emergent church movement, such as it still is (it's kind of become amorphous now) - they would say that they exist to engage the culture- the culture of the world. We're here to engage the culture and thereby, to win friends, influence people, make changes. The religious right would say that the church exists to change the culture through political action... The typically liberal church exists for what we call the "social gospel." What

we mean by that is they're not teaching the message of salvation, the biblical message of individual rescue from the wrath of God. But rather, they're teaching Christianity as a mechanism, a means to affect a change in people's earthly circumstances. Get rid of poverty. Let's feed them. Let's educate them. Not to say those things aren't, in and of themselves, admirable; but that's not the true gospel. Today, even among evangelicals, you read CT, or other publications like that, you can see a low, increasing rumble beginning that the church, in fact, exists to champion social causes, such as abortion, and the environment, poverty, and other social issues. Again, not to say that we shouldn't speak out on those various issues; but those things are not the reason the church exists. They're not the purpose of the church.

The question is: "What does the bible say is the purpose of the church?" Look at 1 Timothy 3:15. Here it is.

I write [to you] so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God.

Underline "in the household of God." That is the point! The church is intentionally, by God's design, His household, His family. The church, then, is to be the community in which God's adopted children grow and flourish. That's the purpose of the church. It is the household of God! It's God's house! It's God's home not this building, you, the people of the church! We are the household of God! We're the family of God! And the church is to be the community of God's adopted children, growing together in love with one another, and following and loving their Father. That's the church. But notice, he goes on in verse 15 to add something else, "the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." The word, "support" is used only here in the New Testament. It describes a foundation. He says, "The church is like a foundation and pillars for the truth of God." The church is to support the truth of God; that is, the Bible. This is why the church exists. Understand this. Get this into your mind. The church is, by God's design, a community of people who've been adopted by Him, who are learning to grow together as a family and toward Him as our Father. Yes, we exist to worship. We exist to pray, to have Bible studies, to evangelize, to sing and to have fellowship together - all of those things that are essential to the life of the church. But the end, the big picture is: the church is the community of the redeemed. It's the community of God's people and to support the truth of GOD - that's the purpose of the church. A biblical church understands that and will live that out in reality.

Another essential element of a scriptural pattern that we need to follow, if we're going to be a biblical church, is install the right leadership for the church. Install the right leadership. Now we understand, and nobody would deny this, that ultimately, the leader of the church is Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 5, Paul says, "Christ is the head of the church." Go to Revelation 1, 2 and 3 and you see Christ, not only as the head of the universal church, all the church; but Christ is the head

of individual, local churches, as He confronts each of those seven churches there in Asia Minor. So Christ is the head of His church. There's no question about that. But in each local church, Christ has delegated that authority to qualified leaders. And if we're going to be a biblical church, we need to install those qualified leaders in leadership. You say, "How do you recognize qualified leaders in the church?" Well, the pastoral epistles lay down the criteria. First of all, they must be men. They must be male. Now, I know that I have just gone where "angels fear to go." But, let the Bible speak. All right? Look at 1 Timothy, chapter 2; right here in the pastoral epistles, Paul couldn't make it any clearer. He begins chapter 2 by saying he wants prayers to happen when the church gathers. And men are to lead that (verse 8). And then he says, "Let me talk about the women" (verse 9). "[When the church gathers,] Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly..." By the way, let me just underscore, ladies, that you have a responsibility. While you're not ultimately responsible for what goes on in the hearts of men, you ARE responsible to take the proper steps not to be a stumbling block. You're to dress modestly and discreetly. That is, you're not to dress, when we come together for the church in a way that intentionally calls attention to yourself, as the object of attention. And he gives some examples of how that happened in the first century. Instead, you're to adorn yourself "with good works, as is proper for women making claim to godliness." And then he touches on the role of women in the church, verse 11: "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness." Now on the face of it, that seems like a sort of negative thing. And, of course, in some regards, it can be perceived that way. But understand that in the first century, neither among the Jews nor the Greeks were women really thought to receive instruction. Here, Paul is saying, "Listen! Women have a right to learn and to grow, and to be exposed to the teaching of Scripture. They're to receive instruction. But let them do so with a submissive spirit." Don't take that and run with it. And, verse 12, specifically, "I do not allow a woman to teach, or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." In the life of the church, I don't want women teaching men. And I don't want women exercising a role of authority over men. That is, a woman is not to be in a place of leadership in the church, to which men are accountable to her. That's what it says. It's very plain, very clear. I understand the arguments people make against this. You know, there are "evangelical feminists" who would say, "Well, yeah, but that was sort of the cultural situation, the cultural milieu there in first century Ephesus." Well, notice what basis Paul uses for arguing for this. He uses two. Neither of them have anything to do with what was going on in the first century. They both go back to the beginning. Look at verse 13: first, the created order. "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve." God made man, and then He made woman, as a complement. That doesn't demean the woman. It's simply the reality of the created order. And Paul uses that to argue for why there should be male leadership in the church. The second reason he gives is the Fall: verse 14: "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." So the created order and the Fall is the basis for which he argues this practice in the church. And by the way, verse 15, he says, that even though women bear the stigma of having been deceived;, Eve being deceived and, and then convincing Adam to eat with her, that stigma can be removed by, instead of leading

people into sin, by leading a godly offspring into faith in Christ. He goes on in chapter 3 to make this equally clear. Notice in verse 2: “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife.” That same command is repeated in Titus, chapter 1. It’s hard for a woman to be “the husband of one wife.” So it’s very clear. The leadership in the church must be male. That doesn’t mean women are second-class citizens. Doesn’t mean, frankly, they aren’t in some cases, more capable than men. It’s just what God has established. In fact, I often tease that, if it weren’t for this passage, my wife would probably be the pastor of this church.

In a biblical church, not only will the leadership be male. There will also be a plurality of male leadership in the church, a plurality. You see this, here, as well. Look at 1 Timothy 5. Remember, now, Timothy’s serving in one local church, the church in Ephesus but there are elders who rule in the church. By the way, you see the same thing at the beginning of it, the letter to the church in Ephesus, in Ephesians. The elders who rule well are to be paid and he makes that point in verse 18. And then he says, in getting into church discipline in verse 20, that if there are elders who need to be disciplined, they are to be “rebuked in the presence of all, so that the rest [of the elders] also may be fearful of sinning.” So there were, in this one church, a plurality of godly men leading the church. You see it in Titus, chapter 1. Paul writes to Titus, who served on the island of Crete, that little island in the Mediterranean. He says to him in verse 5: “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders (plural) in every city (singular) as I directed you.” Those little cities on the island of Crete; each had one church, not like in our day, where there’s a church on every corner. And he says I want you to appoint a plurality of elders in every one of those churches in each of those cities. In a biblical church, the leadership is male, and it’s plural. And those men will meet the biblical qualifications.

You say, “Well, what are the biblical qualifications for church leadership?” Well, they’re listed both in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Let me show you in 1 Timothy 3. There’re essentially four basic qualifications given for leaders if they’re going to serve in the church, if they’re going to be overseers, pastors, elders (all the same office). First of all, they must be characterized by (and just to keep it straight in my own mind, I’ve used Cs through the years), so they must have craving...Craving, verse 1: “desire”; “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man *aspires*...” (that means to reach out after something; to lean forward; to try to grip something, grasp something); “If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he *desires*” (and that word, “desires” is the word which means to set one’s heart upon; to crave; to desire). So the first qualification to be in biblical leadership in the church is you have to want to be in biblical leadership in the church. If we have to come to somebody and drag him kicking and screaming into church leadership, he’s not qualified. There has to be a desire. And by the way, notice - he desires (verse 1) both the office (the position) and the work of being a pastor: the study, the counseling, the praying, the dealing with the issues in people’s lives - he has to desire both. So there’s craving. To be qualified, this plurality of men must have craving.

Secondly, they must have the right character. Here, in 1 Timothy 3, as well as in Titus 1, there are lists of character qualifications: some 18 different character qualifications, when you put the two lists together, that must describe the man, not in perfection. None of us meet them in perfection; but in direction. Can the people in his life (and can he) genuinely and sincerely say, “Those qualities describe him in the direction of his life.”? So there must be craving. There must be character.

Thirdly, there must be capacity. If the man’s going to be qualified, he has to have certain capacities; specifically, to serve as an elder, two capacities. He must first of all (notice verse 2): “be able to teach.” Keep your finger there, and turn over to Titus 1 and look at verse 9. Here’s how Paul puts it to Titus. Verse 9 says, “so that he will be able (here it is) both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” Now go back to 1 Timothy 3. I like the balance those two give because Timothy implies the elder has the skill to teach; he must be able to teach. Titus - there, Paul implies he must have the knowledge, both to teach God’s people and the knowledge to rebuke and confront and correct error. So there has to be both the skill to teach and the necessary knowledge to teach the Word of God. So you must have the capacity to teach.

There’s another capacity that he has to have. He must be able to manage. Notice verses 4 and 5 in 1 Timothy 3; he manages his own household. To qualify as an elder, a man must be able, not only to teach, but able to lead, able to manage. And how does he demonstrate that capacity to manage? Verses 4 and 5 say in how he manages his household; both the people in his house and the stuff in his life. You want to know whether or not a man is qualified to serve as an elder, look at how he manages the people that are in his home and look at how he manages the stuff in his life. Go look in his dresser drawers. Go look in his garage, and ask yourself, “Does he know how to manage? Does he know to organize? Does he know how to lead? Do the people in his life follow him?” And if so, then he has this capacity.

There’s one other qualification given here in 1 Timothy 3 for these men, these male leaders of the church in plurality. Not only craving, and character, and capacity: but confirmation is the fourth C. They must be confirmed by the church. Look down, under the deacons, in 1 Timothy 3:10; .it says “These men [the deacons] must (watch the word, “also”) *also* first be tested.” What does that imply? The elders, the one who just came before, also have to be tested. In other words, the congregation has to affirm; the elders and congregation have to affirm that the man has the other three: that he has the desire, the craving; that he has the character, he meets the character qualifications; and that he has the capacity to teach and to manage. And when the elders and congregation confirm that; when he meets that test, then the elders can present him publicly as an elder in the church. So Christ mediates His rule of the church through men, through a group of men, and through a group of men who are biblically qualified. So a biblical

church will have a biblical view of the church's purpose. It'll have a biblical view of the church's leadership.

Thirdly, it will follow the right plan for the church. It will follow the right plan for the church. You say, "What's the right plan?" Well, I was going to take you through and show you that plan in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. It's here. But it is more spread out. And so, in the interest of time, I'm going to take you away from the pastoral epistles to the most concise expression of it in the New Testament. Look at Ephesians 4. And I challenge you to go back to the pastoral epistles, sometime this week. And you will find this plan there. But, as I said, it's not as concise as it here in Ephesians 4. Let me show you two verses: verses 11 and 12. Here is Christ's plan for how the church works: verses 11 and 12. He gave gifted men to the church. "He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets." Those were in the early days of the church, who gave us the revelation. Those offices are not in place anymore. "And some as evangelists, and some as pastor/teachers." Pastor/teacher is simply a title for the office of elder. That's the title, if you look at my business card, or when I sign my letters, I'm "Tom Pennington, Pastor/Teacher." And so could every other elder. It is the office of shepherd, or elder or overseer. It is "shepherd/teacher," is literally what it says. He is a shepherd/teacher. Now, he goes on in verse 12 to say, these gifted men have been given to the church "for the equipping of the saints"; that's you. So we exist to equip you "unto the work of service." In other words, it's not the elders doing the work of service. It's us equipping you to do the work of service. And that results in the "building up of the body of Christ." So let me just simplify it for you. Here is Christ's plan for the church. Let me give it to you in four points. Here's the right plan.

Number one: Christ appoints the leaders of the church. You see that in verse 11 here. He gives evangelists (missionary types) and He gives pastor/teachers.

Secondly, the leaders equip the members of the church. You see that? "For the equipping of the saints," verse 12 says. I exist, the elders exist in this church, not to do all the work of the church, but to equip *you* for the work of service. The leaders equip the members of the church.

Thirdly, the third part of the plan is members accomplish the service of the church. Notice, "unto the work of service." And then, finally, verse 12 ends with the outcome will be the growth of the church. When this happens, when Christ appoints the leaders, the leaders equip the members, the members do the service, the church grows. "The building up of the body of Christ." Listen, folks! That has always been Christ's plan for His church; in every time and in every place. And a biblical church will understand this and will follow this plan.

Now that brings us to one final element in this scriptural pattern. If we're going to be a scriptural church, following the scriptural pattern for the church, we must preserve the purity of the church. How do you do that? How do we preserve the purity of the church? We do it in a couple of

ways. First of all, we do it by confronting false teaching. And Paul does this throughout the pastoral epistles. Let me just show you a couple of examples. Look at 1 Timothy 4:1. He says, “Timothy, I just want you to know that the Spirit is explicitly informing me that in the later times (that’s the times from, from Christ until His return) some will apostatize; some will fall away from the faith.” They’ll connect to the church. They’ll look like they’re part of the church. They’ll look like they’re believers. But then they’ll abandon all of that. How does that happen? “Paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines” that have their sources “in demons.” False teaching. And it comes to us; the demons don’t directly tell us. They, instead, prop up hypocritical liars, who’ve been “seared in their conscience,” who will teach these false doctrines to undermine the professed faith of some. And then he gives an example in verse 3 of what was going on, then. He says, for example, “men who forbid marriage,” which God has given us to be enjoyed; “and advocate abstaining from certain foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.” In other words, he’s saying, “There’s a kind of aestheticism; this was probably connected to the Ascenes of the early century of the church. But there was an aestheticism that looked like it was the real deal - looked like it was Christianity. And Paul says, “No. It’s false teaching. It’s doctrines originating in demons.” By the way, can I just pound on my soapbox, for a moment? Notice that in this specific case, what the doctrine of demons had to do with, was abstaining from foods God made. I know it’s well-intentioned. But listen! Don’t have anything to do with Christians going around saying, “Don’t eat this and don’t eat that, that God made.” I can understand if you’re talking about some process, something like a chicken nugget; who knows what part of a chicken that is? Or, or a Twinkie! But, if it’s something if it’s something God made, then, listen to what it says I mean, it’s very clear: verse 3: “It’s to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For EVERYTHING created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude.” Just pray over it and enjoy those ribs. Now, the church is to confront false teaching. You see that here. You see Paul doing it again, over in 2 Timothy 2 Timothy, chapter 3. He goes through, in the beginning part of that chapter, verses 1-9, confronting what false teaching is coming. “In the last days savage seasons will come” to the church. And he describes false teachers there, and what they’ll be like (verse 5). “holding to a form of godliness,” but they’ll deny the true power of Christianity. Avoid these kind a guys. They’re after (verse 6) sexual favors from women. They’re “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” So he’s pointing out false teachers. And by the way, he commands us to do the same. Look at Titus 1:13. After talking about false teaching that was present on the island of Crete, he says this to Titus (verse 13): “This testimony is true. For this reason, reprove them severely, so that they may be sound in the faith.” Deal with that false teaching straight on! Confront it. Address it. And that’s what we must do, too, if we’re going to preserve the purity of the church. Of course, let me just say we’re to do this in the right balance. We are not going to become a church that is known for polemics, for being “against.” That’s not right; that’s not what we should do. And there are churches that are known for that. As Martin Lloyd-Jones said in his book, “Preachers and Preaching,” “You (by polemics, by an “anti” ministry), you can raise

money. You can build a crowd. But what you can't do," he said, "is really build a church." To build a church requires the teaching of the truth, week in and week out. At the same time, there must be an addressing of error. So we must preserve the purity of the church by addressing false teaching.

But we also have to preserve the purity of the church by practicing church discipline. Again, Paul makes this point, here: first of all, when it comes to members in the church. Look at 1 Timothy 1:20: Paul tells Timothy, "You know, I want you to fight the good fight" (in verse 18). I want you to keep the faith. And I want you to preserve a good conscience (that is make sure you're not sinning against what you know to be true), because "some reject a good conscience and suffer shipwreck in regard to their faith." By the way, can I just say when you see a man who, all his life, has taught the truth, and he's taught the truth clearly and accurately; and at some point, he veers into some odd, anti-Christian belief; he wavers on one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, invariably, this will be true. Something has gone on. He has given up a clear conscience. There is something in his moral life that has caused him to abandon the faith. And then he says (and this is shocking; I mean if you never read this before, and you were sitting there in the church, and maybe Timothy not only read this, himself; but maybe read it and shared to the church in Ephesus), these two guys names are mentioned. These were two guys in his church. Do you understand that? "Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan," (That's the same language Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 5 about the incestuous man that he disciplined.) "I've disciplined him! So that he will be, they will be taught not to blaspheme." Paul practiced church discipline. And by the way, he urged Timothy to do the same, even with elders who were unrepentant of sin. Look at 1 Timothy 5:19. He says, "Don't receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses"; because anybody can make an accusation. Listen - somebody could stand up here and accuse me of anything. So he says don't be quick to believe; there needs to be evidence, investigated. Make sure justice is done. But if there is sin, and if they won't repent (verse 20), even an elder continues in sin, "Rebuke that elder in the presence of all, so that the rest will be fearful of sinning." Church discipline is to be carried out across the board. And he goes on in the next verse to say, "And make sure you don't do this with any kind of impartiality." Don't respect the person. If there's unrepentant sin, practice church discipline. This is so important that many of the reformers argued that without church discipline, you don't even have a church.

So when we say that a biblical church has a biblical view of the church, we mean that it meets the criteria to be a church, as opposed to just a gathering. It meets the criteria to be a true church, as opposed to a false church. And it meets the criteria of following the scriptural pattern laid out for the church in those areas we've discussed. That's what it means to have a biblical view of the church.

Now, we need to ask a second question, very briefly. How is it demonstrated in the church? How does this biblical view of the church manifest itself in the normal functioning of church life? How can you see that a church has this hallmark? You visit a church. You go to a church. You've moved out of this area. You're visiting with family and friends. You're wondering what kind of church they're part of. How do you determine whether or not it has a biblical view of the church? Let me give you just a few criteria, very quickly.

Number one: Does it meet the criteria to be a church, instead of a Christian gathering? Is there the intention to be a church? Is there the gathering for worship on the Lord's Day? And do they practice the ordinances: the Lord's Table and Baptism? By the way, can I just say, this means that home fellowships, Sunday school classes, BSF, those are no substitute for the corporate worship of the church. None of them have the intention of being a church.

Number two: It will meet the criteria to be a true church instead of a false church. Does that church articulate the truth about Jesus Christ and His Person, and the true, saving Gospel? Find out what they believe about Christ, and what they believe about the Gospel; because if they're wrong on either of those, it's a false church.

Number three: The primary attenders will be believers because it is, after all, the household of God. It's God's family. It won't be primarily composed of unbelievers.

Number four: It will take seriously its responsibility to guard the truth. Does it have a doctrinal statement? Can you find one anywhere, in any of its writings, and its, on its website? Listen! If a church is hiding its doctrinal statement, that's a very bad sign! It means it really doesn't love the Truth. And is that doctrinal statement clear? And are all the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith there and clearly stated?

Number five: There will be a plurality of male leadership that meets the biblical qualifications. A plurality of male leadership that meets the biblical qualifications. If you go into a church and the preaching pastor is a woman, she may be a wonderful person. But she is walking contrary to the principles Paul laid down for how the church is to be conducted. It's not a biblical church.

Number six: The elders will focus their ministry on leading, teaching the Bible and prayer; leading, teaching the Bible, and prayer. They will do those things, instead of being CEOs. They will be shepherds, instead of corporate executives and entrepreneurs, who jet here and there on their corporate jets. They will be people who care for the flock, rather than CEOs of corporate organizations.

Number seven: The focus of the corporate gathering will be on worship and equipping the saints; worship and equipping the saints: mutual edification. It won't be about, primarily,

evangelism. That doesn't mean there can't be evangelism that takes place; can't mean on special occasions that's the focus. But as a rule, week in and week out, it's not going to be a biblical church, if all you ever hear is a gospel message every week (and I've attended churches like that) - that's well-intentioned, but that's not a true, biblical church. It's to build up, to equip the saints for the work of service.

Number eight: A large percentage of the membership will be using their spiritual gifts. A large percentage of the membership will be involved in service. Remember? That's the plan! The elders equip the saints to do the work of service. So, where there's a biblical church, there aren't a lot of people sitting around, watching the pastors do everything. Instead, the membership of the church will be looking for ways to use their gifts in the life of the body. They understand the image of a body: that every part has a role to fill. And in Christ's body, the same is true: that they have a role to fill. And you'll see that play out.

Number nine: The church will consistently confront false teaching and false teachers, both publicly and privately. If you're in a church for six months or a year and you never hear one negative thing said about false teachers or false teaching, that's not a biblical church. You can't read Paul's epistles and come to that conclusion; because you cannot love the truth and not hate error.

And finally, number ten: It will consistently practice church discipline. It will consistently practice church discipline. Very briefly, (and I'm sorry I've gone long, this morning), let me ask you: "Do you personally have a biblical view of the church?" Do you have a biblical view of the church? Let me just ask you a series of questions. Just test yourself. Do you understand, and are you committed to the biblical priority of centering your life in the church? Think about the things you're involved in right now. Think about all the activities and organizations that fill your time. Let me ask you: "Do you understand that what happens in the life of the church is THE most important thing in that list?" Ask yourself, "Which of those activities is, are going to deepen your knowledge of God and His Word?" Ask yourself, "Which of those activities are going to build the greatest character into your life and the lives of those in your family?" Which one of those activities is eternal? Which one of those activities has God commanded you to be involved in? Which one of those activities is Christ's highest priority in the world today? The church should matter to you. It should be a priority to you, because it matters to God. Do you regularly attend the corporate worship? Do you faithfully use your natural and spiritual gifts in the body? Are you serving? Or are you just sitting? Do you personally practice Matthew 18? When you know of sin in somebody's life, do you go and follow the process our Lord has outlined: privately confront them and urge them to turn from their sin? And do you determine the church you will attend, based on its following this biblical pattern we've looked at this morning? Or do you tend to choose a church based on things you like? "You know, I really like the style of music over there." "I really like ..." Listen! Make the things matter to you that

matter to God, that mattered to the apostle, Paul, in the life of the church. Don't ever forget that one of the hallmarks of a biblical church is a biblical view of what the church is and how it should function. The verse that always comes to my mind, when I think about the church is Ephesians 3:21. We looked at it when we worked our way through that epistle. Listen to what it says: "To God be the glory" (How?) "In the church and in Christ Jesus," (That's how God's going to get glory to Himself. For how long?) "In all generations and forever and ever!" That's what the church means to God!

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for this whirlwind study this morning of what the church is to be and to do. I pray that some of what we've studied will stick; that we, first of all as a church, would be committed to this scriptural pattern. Father, may the elders and I carefully evaluate ourselves, continually, as we do against this standard. May we always be asking what we need to do. Father, I pray for us as individuals, that we would individually be committed to this biblical view of the church, and carry it out in our own lives. Father, we pray that we would, in the end, reflect what you have revealed so that You would receive the glory, in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout the generations and forever and ever.

We pray in Jesus' Name,  
Amen