

The Church – Part 3 - Core Responsibilities of the Church | 7/29/18

- Introduction
 - In this lesson we are going to focus on the core or foundational responsibilities of the church.
 - The modern church does many great things, though there are those that are foundational that the church must be doing to further the kingdom of God.
 - We are going to look at some of these and see why they are important.
 - In addition, some of these responsibilities we will look at later more in-depth.
- The church and its many programs and ministries
 - When we look at the modern church today there is a lot going on.
 - We see numerous programs and ministries which include, worship, preaching, small groups, bus ministry, outreach programs, church camps, VBS, men and women focused ministries, public service, tithes and offerings, prayer meetings and revivals etc.,
 - There is nothing wrong with having all these programs and ministries, they can certainly be used to further the Kingdom of God.
 - However, it is vitally important that we **do not miss out on what the core responsibilities** are for the church.
 - **It is possible to have so many programs and ministries that “seem” good, yet we can lose track of our primary purpose and responsibility.**
- Core responsibilities of the church (universal or local).
 - **There are several core responsibilities that the church must do to further the Kingdom of God, to build up the body of Christ.**
 - Christians (being the church), must be sure that regardless of what programs or ministries we have that we perform these vital and critical functions.
 - This applies to both the universal church (all Christians) and the local church (New Site).
 - These core responsibilities that we will study will be modeled after the early church from the Book of Acts.
 - Here in Acts is recorded several key things that were important and vital to the church from the very beginning after the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.
 - **When Christians truly live out the core of what God has called us to as a church the results will always be the lost coming to Christ.**
 - Acts 2:47b
 - “...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
 - **The church MUST preach and teach a proper understanding of the Gospel**
 - This might seem obvious, but as you look at the landscape of the various churches today you will find that many do NOT make it a priority.
 - The Gospel that is preached is watered down to a feel good, self-help program.
 - The focus is not put on bringing the lost to Christ but instead telling the world how you can live a good life and be happy.
 - **The focus is on keeping people entertained, not reaching the lost or growing the believer.**
 - **To preach the Gospel means to share the good news of Jesus Christ so that true faith can be cultivated in the heart of the lost.**
 - Romans 10:17
 - “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
 - **If faith can’t be cultivated from what is being preached or taught, then we have failed.**

- For this to be done there a few key things that must be preached, and it's not **"all your wishes will come true"**.
- Peter's early sermons highlights what must be taught in our church, to give us that foundational example of the Gospel message.
- **We must preach and teach WHO Jesus is so the lost may believe in Him. | Acts 2:22-24, 29-36**
 - Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. He died and was resurrected and sits at the right hand of God. This was a key teaching from Peter.
 - **Read Acts 2:22-24, 29-36**
 - **To be a Christian, to have faith and believe in Jesus Christ one must know exactly WHO Jesus is.**
 - To say you believe in Jesus but you say He is just prophet or a good man, is not truly believing in who He is.
 - Jesus is the Christ, He came from and is God.
 - He died for our sins and was resurrected.
 - **As Peter made clear who Jesus is, so must our pastors and teachers in our local church.**
 - We cannot miss the key truth of who Jesus is in our sermons, our small groups and our children programs.
 - The truth of who He is **MUST** be proclaimed.
- **We must preach and teach belief and faith in Jesus Christ. | Acts 3:12-16**
 - Once one knows just who Jesus is, they must also believe and have faith in Him.
 - Peter preached and taught this truth.
 - **Read Acts 3:12-16**
 - **We must be sure to show that faith is not just intellectual knowledge, but that it is to truly believe and put one's trust, faith and confidence in Jesus Christ.**
 - Ephesians 2:8
 - "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."
 - John 3:16
 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."
 - That there is no other name by which one can be saved.
 - Acts 4:11-12
 - "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
 - **Our church must preach and teach what it means to have truth faith.**
 - That we cannot get to heaven by simple head knowledge, checking a box or repeating a prayer.
 - That we truly in our hearts must believe in who Jesus says He is and fully put our faith, trust and confidence in Him.
- **Do you think churches today at times lose track of this key component of the Gospel? If so why?**
- **Can the teaching of this truth look different and come in various "packaging"?**
- **We must preach and teach true repentance**

- **To have true Faith and belief in Jesus Christ also means that one MUST acknowledge their sins.**
- Salvation does not come to one who believes they are sinless.
 - 1 John 1:8
 - “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
 - 1 John 1:10
 - “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
- **To acknowledge our sins before Christ is vital to our salvation, when we believe in who He is we believe he died for our sins. We therefore have to acknowledge them.**
 - 1 John 1:9
 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- Peter preached on this on numerous occasions.
 - Acts 3:19
 - “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,”
 - Acts 2:37-38
 - “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- **True repentance will come accompany true faith and belief in Jesus Christ.**
 - If we truly believe in who Jesus is and what He came here to do, we will then repent of our sins.
- **This truth must be taught in our churches, though it seems to be one that is glossed over.**
 - All too often the message of repentance and asking forgiveness of our sins is glossed over or watered down.
 - **Just because telling someone they have sinned isn’t “politically correct” does not mean it is not required by God.**
 - Christ came to turn us AWAY from our wickedness not towards.
 - Acts 3:26
 - “God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”
 - Jesus sought the sinners, He hung out with the sinners and He had dinner with the sinners. But He did so to turn them from their sins, to show them the way of salvation.
 - Jesus made this part of the great commission.
 - Luke 24:47
 - “and that **repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem.”
- **Why is repentance and sin difficult to talk about?**

- **We must preach and teach about baptism**
 - Baptism is not required for salvation, but it is an important external act done by a believer as an outward sign of the work that Christ has done within them.
 - Peter preached baptism
 - Acts 2:38
 - “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - Jesus was baptized
 - John 3:13-15
 - “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.”
 - All new believers were baptized
 - Acts 2:41
 - “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”
- **We must preach and teach about the Holy Spirit**
 - Peter and the apostles had just recently experienced the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - They knew of the importance of having Christ living within oneself and what that meant.
 - Acts 2:38b
 - “...and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - This includes the duties that are now upon the believer to live their lives to bring up the body of Christ.
- **We must preach and teach that the Gospel is for everyone**
 - We must not only think that the Gospel is for a certain group of people or class, but that the Gospel is for everyone.
 - Our church must seek everyone and not just those who “we” want to reach.
 - Acts 2:21
 - “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
 - Acts 2:39
 - “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”
 - **Are there people groups that we ignore? Are there people that we maybe “assume” don’t need to hear it? Do we truly look at the field of harvest as including everyone?**
- **The church must evangelize and spread the Gospel message.**
 - This goes well beyond just the pastor preaching a sermon on Sunday morning. This is a core function for every single Christian.
 - The church (all believers) are given this responsibility, the church must evangelize and seek the lost.
 - **A church who does not do this has turned their focus upon themselves and care more about their own well-being than the world.**

- This is not the example that Jesus Christ gave for us.
- The core message of evangelism.
 - Mark 15:15
 - “And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”
 - Luke 24:47
 - “and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
 - Matthew 28:19-20
 - “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- **The apostles obeyed this command by giving their testimony.**
 - Acts 4:33
 - “And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”
 - **This act of giving your testimony of what Jesus has done for you, is likely the most powerful (and simplest) method of evangelism available to us.**
 - It is simple because all Christians are not theologians, but we do know what Jesus has done in our lives, what makes it REAL to us.
 - It is powerful because when people hear the undeniable impact the Gospel has had on our lives, it is not something that can be dismissed. It has a real significant impact.
 - **The results of the apostle’s testimony led to thousands coming to salvation.**
 - Acts 2:41
 - “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”
- **Christians should share the Gospel because it is a command of God, and to put aside our concerns of what the world thinks.**
 - While we may find sharing the Gospel hard or are concerned about what others think, we must instead ask ourselves this:
 - Do we obey God, or man?
 - Acts 4:19-20
 - “But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard,”
 - **Why do you think Jesus made this a priority for Christians?**
 - **Do you think we evangelize as much as God has called us to?**
- **The church must devote themselves to growing in their faith through the Scriptures and fellowship.**
 - **A core responsibility of the church is to grow others (and themselves) in the faith.**
 - God did not call us to salvation to simply stop and never progress in our understanding of all that God has given us in His word.
 - **Christians must continue to read the Bible, to study His Word, to attend church and grow with other believers.**

- **The beginnings of the church in Acts did this very thing, they devoted themselves to growing in their faith.**
 - Acts 2:42
 - “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
 - Acts 2:46
 - “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.”
- These early believers devoted themselves to the Scriptures
 - There is no better source of truth than the Scriptures. The Bible is God’s Holy and inspired Word that He gave to use.
 - It is here that we learn more about the character of God and how we are to live out our lives.
 - God speaks to us through the Scripture, He uses it to draw the lost and to grow the believer through the Holy Spirit.
 - **Christians today MUST study the word on a consistent basis.**
 - We cannot go through life as a Christian and ignore the Bible.
 - We MUST read it, we must study it to continue to grow in our faith.
- These early believers devoted themselves to attending church and to have fellowship with other Christians.
 - **These early Christians understood the importance of the local church.**
 - It is biblical to come together as a local body of believers to worship God and to have fellowship with one another.
 - This is a significant source of our spiritual growth, to continually be with other believers and sharing the great and wonderful things that God has done for us.
 - Christians today MUST fellowship with other believers.
 - God did not call us to go through life on our own, we must embrace the local church.
 - To live out God’s calling in our life requires fellowship with other Christians, to share in a time to worship God as a body of believers.
 - The local church is vitally important in the Christian life.
 - **This is not a mandate for perfect church attendance of course, but it must not be neglected.**
 - Hebrews 10:25
 - “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some...”
- **By doing these things we must also fulfill our call to make disciples, help grow other Christians.**
 - Not only are we to bring the Gospel to others so that God can bring them to salvation, but we are to bring them up so that they can be stronger Christians.
 - **Not only are we to study and grow in His Word for our own benefit, but we are called to help others do this as well.**
 - When that new believer comes to Christ we **cannot simply say “good luck!”**, but it is vitally important that we help them understand the Scriptures and to grow in their faith.
 - We must learn so that we can teach and help others.
- **Can you speak to the impact that devoting yourself to the Scriptures and fellowship has had on your life? What is the difference to a time where this was neglected?**

- **If you think of your responsibility to help others become disciples and grow in their faith, how might this impact your desire to spend more time in the Scriptures?**
- **The church must devote themselves to caring for and serving others.**
 - One of the core responsibilities of the church is to care for others.
 - **We cannot think that we are only here to look after ourselves and to make sure that WE are taken care of.**
 - God has called us to serve and lookout for others in the world.
 - The early church did this through looking out for members, to be sure that they were not in need.
 - Acts 2:44-45
 - “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.
 - Acts 2:24-35
 - “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”
 - The early church understood the concepts of helping one another, with the concept of giving to the church so that the body can help others.
 - **They knew that ultimately everything belonged to God**, and that they needed to be ready to use what God had given them as He needed it.
 - **This is not a call for mandatory communal living among all Christians today, nor was it a call for them to do it then.**
 - They did as they felt God had led them to do, just as we do today.
 - But it is a core responsibility of the church to give and help others.
 - The church must lookout for others and give and help as we are called to do.
 - If we hoard everything we have and never give or help others, we are being disobedient to God.
 - James 2:15-16
 - “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed or the body, what good is that?”
 - 1 John 3:17
 - “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?”
 - The Church today must have a focus on serving and caring for others.
 - Our local church cannot exist only to please ourselves and take care of US.
 - We must reach out and show the world the love of Christ through love and service.
 - When we show love to others and care for them, the Gospel is proclaimed, and we are obediently following the will of God.
 - **Why do you think that caring for others and service is a core function of a Christian? Why does God use this?**