

INTRODUCTION
TO
ECCLESIOLOGY

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH?
“Strengthen the Believer for the Work of Ministry”

QUESTION: What is the greatest threat to the church today?

Eph. 2:1 ¶ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

Eph. 2:2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

Eph. 4:14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Eph. 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1Tim. 4:1 ¶ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,

1John 4:6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

2Cor. 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

2Cor. 11:14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

2Cor. 11:15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Phil. 3:17 ¶ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Phil. 3:18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Phil. 3:19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

2Pet. 1:21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2Pet. 2:1 ¶ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

1John 4:1 ¶ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Phil. 3:2 ¶ Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

2John 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,

2John 11 for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

John 13:27 Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”

Luke 22:1 ¶ Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.

Luke 22:2 And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

Luke 22:3 ¶ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.

Luke 22:4 He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them.

Matt. 13:37 He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

Matt. 13:38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,

Matt. 13:39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

Matt. 13:40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

Jude 3 ¶ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Rev. 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

MARKS OF A BIBLICAL CHURCH

1. Preaching/Teaching of the Word

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

Romans 10:14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

2. Fellowship (Weekly Local Assembly)

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

Heb. 10:25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Heb. 13:17 ¶ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:42 ¶ And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 20:7 ¶ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

Eph. 4:15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Eph. 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

3. Sacraments

Matt. 28:19 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,

1Cor. 11:23 ¶ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,

1Cor. 11:24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

1Cor. 11:25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:42 ¶ And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

4. Officers (Elders / Deacons)

Ephesians 4:11-13 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

1Pet. 5:1 ¶ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

1Pet. 5:2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

1Pet. 5:3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Heb. 13:17 ¶ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

5. Discipline

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Titus 3:10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Romans 16:17-18 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

6. Prayer

Heb. 4:16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Eph. 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

1 Tim. 2:1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,

1Tim. 2:2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Universal / Global People of God

1. The catholic—that is, universal—church may be called invisible with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace. It consists of the full number of the elect who have been, are, or will be gathered into one under Christ her head. The church is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.¹

¹[Hebrews 12:23](#); [Colossians 1:18](#); [Ephesians 1:10](#), [22](#), [23](#); [Ephesians 5:23](#), [27](#), [32](#)

2. All people throughout the world who profess the faith of the gospel and obedience to God through Christ in keeping with the gospel are and may be called visible saints,² as long as they do not destroy their own profession by any foundational errors or unholy living. All local^a congregations ought to be made up of these.³

^a*particular* (rendered “local” throughout this chapter)

²[1 Corinthians 1:2](#); [Acts 11:26](#). ³[Romans 1:7](#); [Ephesians 1:20–22](#).

When is a church no longer biblical?

3. The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error.⁴ Some have degenerated so much that they have ceased to be churches of Christ and have become synagogues of Satan.⁵ Nevertheless, Christ always has had and will have in this world to the very end a kingdom of those who believe in him and profess his name.⁶

⁴[1 Corinthians 5](#); [Revelation 2](#); [Revelation 3](#). ⁵[Revelation 18:2](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:11](#), [12](#). ⁶[Matthew 16:18](#); [Psalms 72:17](#); [Psalm 102:28](#); [Revelation 12:17](#).

Who has authority over the church?

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. By the Father’s appointment, all authority is conferred on him in a supreme and sovereign manner to call, institute, order and govern the church.⁷ The Pope of Roman Catholicism cannot in any sense be head of the church; rather, he is the antichrist, the man of lawlessness, and the son of destruction, who exalts himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God. The Lord will destroy him with the brightness of his coming.⁸

⁷[Colossians 1:18](#); [Matthew 28:18–20](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#), [12](#). ⁸[2 Thessalonians 2:2–9](#).

Biblical churches are local in practice

5. In exercising the authority entrusted to him, the Lord Jesus, through the ministry of his Word, by his Spirit, calls to himself out of the world those who are given to him by his Father.⁹ They are called so that they will live before him in all the ways of obedience that he prescribes for them in his Word.¹⁰ Those who are called he commands to live together in local^a societies, or churches, for their mutual edification and the fitting conduct of public worship that he requires of them while they are in the world.¹¹

⁹[John 10:16](#); [John 12:32](#). ¹⁰[Matthew 28:20](#). ¹¹[Matthew 18:15–20](#).

Biblical churches are communal by nature

6. The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly displaying and demonstrating in and by their profession and life their obedience to the call of Christ.¹² They willingly agree to live together according to Christ's instructions, giving themselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God, with the stated purpose of following the ordinances of the Gospel.¹³

¹²[Romans. 1:7](#); [1 Corinthians 1:2](#). ¹³[Acts 2:41, 42](#); [Acts 5:13, 14](#); [2 Corinthians 9:13](#).

Churches, not individuals, receive Christ's authority

7. To every church gathered in this way, conforming to Christ's mind as declared in his Word, he has given all power and authority that is in any way necessary to conduct the form of worship and discipline that he has instituted for them to observe. He has also given them commands and rules to use and carry out that power rightly and properly.¹⁴

¹⁴[Matthew 18:17, 18](#); [1 Corinthians 5:4, 5](#); [1 Corinthians 5:13](#); [2 Corinthians 2:6–8](#).

The Biblical work and authority of officers

8. A local^a church, gathered and fully organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members. The officers appointed by Christ are overseers or elders, and deacons. They are to be chosen and set apart by the church called and gathered in this way, for the distinctive purpose of administering ordinances and for carrying out any other power or duty Christ entrusts them with or calls them to. This pattern is to be continued to the end of the age.¹⁵

¹⁵[Acts 20:17, 28](#); [Philippians 1:1](#).

9. Christ has appointed the way to call someone prepared and gifted by the Holy Spirit to the office of overseer or elder in a church. He must be chosen by the collective vote of the church itself.¹⁶ He must then be solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer. The body of elders of the church must lay hands on him if there are any already in place.¹⁷ A deacon must be chosen by the same kind of vote and set apart by prayer and laying on of hands as well.¹⁸

¹⁶[Acts 14:23](#). ¹⁷[1 Timothy 4:14](#). ¹⁸[Acts 6:3, 5, 6](#).

10. The work of pastors is to give constant attention to the service of Christ in his churches in the ministry of the word and prayer. They are to watch over the souls of church members as those who must give an account to Christ.¹⁹ The churches to whom they minister must not only give them all due respect but also must share with them from all their good things according to their ability.²⁰ They must do this so their pastors may have a comfortable living without having to be entangled in secular matters²¹ and so they can show hospitality to others.²² This is required by the law of nature and by the explicit command of our Lord Jesus, who has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel.²³

¹⁹[Acts 6:4](#); [Hebrews 13:17](#). ²⁰[1 Timothy 5:17, 18](#); [Galatians 6:6, 7](#). ²¹[2 Timothy 2:4](#). ²²[1 Timothy 3:2](#). ²³[1 Corinthians 9:6–14](#).

11. Although overseers or pastors of churches must be engaged in preaching the word as a function of their office, yet the work of preaching the word is not totally restricted to them. Others who are also gifted and prepared by the Holy Spirit for it and approved and called by the church may and should preach.²⁴

²⁴[Acts 11:19–21](#); [1 Peter 4:10, 11](#).

Church membership

12. All believers are obligated to join themselves to local^a churches when and where they have the opportunity. Likewise, all who are admitted to the privileges of a church are also subject to the discipline^b and government of it, according to the rule of Christ.²⁵

^b*censures*

²⁵[1 Thessalonians 5:14](#); [2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15](#).

13. Church members who have been offended and have performed their duty concerning the person by which they are offended, should not disrupt any church action or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church or administration of any ordinances because of the offence at any of their fellow members. Instead, they should look to Christ in the further action of the church.²⁶

²⁶[Matthew 18:15–17](#); [Ephesians 4:2, 3](#).

Partnering with Local Churches

14. Every church and all its members are obligated to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all churches of Christ in every place.²⁷ They must also—at every opportunity within the limits of their stations and callings—exercise their gifts and graces to benefit every church. Also, when churches are raised up by the providence of God, insofar as they enjoy opportunity and favorable circumstances for it, they should have fellowship^c among themselves for their peace, growth in love, and mutual edification.²⁸

^c*communion*, implying formal association

²⁷[Ephesians 6:18](#); [Psalms 122:6](#). ²⁸[Romans 16:1, 2](#); [3 John 8–10](#).

15. Cases of difficulties or differences—doctrinal or administrative—may arise, touching on the peace, union, and edification of all churches in general or an individual church. Other cases may occur when a member or members of a church are injured in or by disciplinary action that is not in keeping with truth and order. In such cases, it is according to the mind of Christ for many churches having fellowship^c together to meet through their messengers to consider and give their advice concerning the issue in dispute and to report their advice to all the churches concerned.²⁹ Nevertheless, these assembled messengers are not entrusted with any church authority, strictly speaking. Neither do they have any jurisdiction over the churches themselves, to exercise any discipline either over any churches or individuals or to impose their decision on the churches or officers.³⁰

²⁹[Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 25](#). ³⁰[2 Corinthians 1:24](#); [1 John 4:1](#).

NEXT CLASS Project:

Write 2000 words explaining biblical discipleship