

Building Church Series- FIVE functions of the church

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Today I will talk about the FIVE functions of the church, in the next few weeks we will expend this topic and have further studies on these topics.

After that, we will be sharing on 'What is the Church'. Well, amongst other things, the Church is a Home, the Church is a body, the Church is an army, the Church is a school, the Church is a hospital, the Church is the Bride of Christ.

What are the 5 functions of a church?

Let's start our consideration of this by looking at what the Bible has to say about the church in Jerusalem.

【Acts 2:41-47】 ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

When the Holy Spirit descended upon the people on the day of Pentecost, there was a resulting loud noise which attracted many of the residents of Jerusalem as well as the people who had come from other places to celebrate the festival. Peter and the apostles boldly proclaimed to them: Jesus is the Christ, He was crucified, but He has risen. The people were convicted when they heard the message. V41 recorded that about 3,000 people received the message and were baptized, and the Jerusalem church was established. And when such a body becomes established, some sort of structure was needed to keep the church going.

Today's passage tells us what functions a church should have. And if we look carefully, we will see five such functions. So then, what are the 5 functions of a church?

1. One of the functions of the church is that it should teach

Acts 2:42 ⁴² They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

What happened when the people were saved? We see that the apostles started to teach the people on the scriptures. These people had just been set free from a life of sin and did not know how to change their lives, indeed their lives needed changing. They had to learn the commandments that the Lord Jesus had taught the disciples on how to be a follower of Christ and on the principles of God's kingdom.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 "...teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This tells us that one very important function of the church is in teaching how believers are to live their lives.

It is very important that people know the truth. There are so many temptations and wrong doctrines around today and these untruths will try to lead us away from the Christian life and cause us to lose our faith.

In fact, without teaching and preaching, the important task of discipleship cannot take place. It is through constant teaching and preaching and application of that Word that we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. It is how we bring about a spiritual harvest (Mark 4:20) and do the good works that God has prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10).

Illustration

Bible study in the Young Adult's meeting

God's sweet presence was there when we read through the scriptures. Jesus is the Word, when we read 'Jesus' then He will be there.

2. Another function of the church is that it is a place for Fellowship

Acts 2:42 ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Secondly, we see that these new believers came together and had fellowship. The word fellowship comes from the Greek word *koinonia*. *Koinonia* can be defined as "holding something in common" and is specifically used 20 times in the New Testament. It just shows how important fellowship is. *Koinonia* describes the unity of the Spirit that comes from Christians' shared beliefs, convictions, and behaviours.

When those shared values are in place, genuine *koinonia* (biblical fellowship) occurs. This fellowship produces our mutual cooperation in the way that we worship God, do His work, and work towards ensuring that His will is done in the world.

It is important to note that through fellowship we can bear one another's burden and help to meet each other's needs.

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

For these new believers, their close fellowship made them willing to share what they had in order to help those in need.

Fellowship is an important component of being a part of the Body of Christ. One of the reasons for happy homes is positive relations with members of the family and in the same way, we need to have these positive relationships in the church.

Yes, there will be times when there are disagreements, but the church is the place where we learn to face and work through our differences and weaknesses. It is in fellowship that we learn to forgive one another, to accept one another, and to love one another. Most of us think that we are faultless, that is we think we are faultless until we are with others. People may start to point out our problems and weaknesses. God wants to work in our lives through other people so we can be more like Jesus.

Hebrews 10:24-25 “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another.”

As we learn and grow in the Lord, we are not called to do it alone but rather to journey with one another. This fellowship takes place through times of praying together and stirring each other on towards greater love and good works.

3. The third function of the Church is that it is a place of Worship

Acts 2:42 ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the **breaking of bread and to prayer.**

⁴⁶They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God

From the context of verse 42 the breaking of bread is partaking in the Lord’s Supper.

The question here is why would these Christians be devoted to the partaking of the Lord’s Supper? Why should Christians be devoted to the simple act of eating a little piece of bread and drinking the juice of grape together?

In the Old Testament, a covenantal meal was eaten following the sealing of covenantal promises made by two parties. God instituted a covenant meal following the Exodus from Egypt and Israel’s promise to be obedient to God.

Exodus 24:7-12

⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”

⁸ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

¹² The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.”

Then on the night Jesus was to be betrayed, Jesus said, “This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt. 26:28).

What are we to remember? It is a remembrance of how Jesus led the way in offering Himself as a sin offering so that we can follow His pattern and also be the perfect offering of our bodies to God. **This is an act of worship.**

Worship is not just what we often think it is, like singing songs in a church service. Worship is the time for us to show our gratefulness of what Jesus Christ has done for us, and because of what He has done, we come and submit to His Lordship. We are also remembering that we must say, "Not my will, but Yours be done." Worship is when we determine to live and offer our bodies to the Lord just as Jesus did. Every week we are **devoted to remembering** that we are to offer our **whole person**.

The believers in Jerusalem did not only have one mass worship in the temple, but also met, in one accord in groups and in their own individual worship lives. They commemorated and worshiped Jesus by breaking bread at home. Therefore, the Church in Jerusalem was a church full of glorious worship!

As for the location of worship, it is important to come and worship the Lord together in the church and in a life group.

For church on Sunday, we come together in one heart from different nationalities, different languages, different cultures and different backgrounds. This coming together pleases the Lord. As the Lord Jesus said the temple is to be a house of prayer for all nations.

In a Life group, we can worship the Lord in a more intimate atmosphere. We can worship the Lord with the people you know better, with people you care for. In a smaller group people can share their personal life situation more easily and support one another.

How devoted were they? ⁴⁶ "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." They were so devoted that they met every day. There was hunger for God's word, hunger for fellowship. Why? I believe Holy Spirit draws them together. Before the Holy Spirit came, they met together to wait for Holy Spirit to come. They were there because they were told by Jesus to be there. But when the Holy Spirit came, people came to learn, to have fellowship and worship the Lord together even they were not told to do that.

1 Chronicles 16:29 "Give to the LORD the glory He deserves! Bring your offering and come into His presence. Worship the LORD in all His holy splendour" (NLT).

Wouldn't it be good to see that we want to come to church on Sunday? Not because we have to or doing a religious duty, but because we want to hear God's word, we want to fellowship with one another and worship the Lord together, because we know that there is the sweetness of God's presence.

4. The fourth function of the church is to Serve

⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Their love for one another and oneness was so strong that they acted on the needs of others. They were willing to sell what they had to help the need of others. This is true act of serving others. The

essence of serving is, how can the other person be blessed through me. The emphasis is not me but others.

1 Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

Peter tells us that the church should **serve**. Church is the place that we can serve one another and live out the love with what God has given to us, to build one another and build the church. What kind of gift do we you have? Wouldn't be wonderful to see everyone in our church involved in something?

5. The fifth function of the church is to Evangelise

⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The Church in Jerusalem was good at evangelism, Peter and the apostles often preached the gospel. There was also power evangelism, v43 says "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles." Gospel message can be experienced, people are healed, people are delivered from demons, people are raised from the dead.

There was caring, serving evangelism, "having favour with all the people.", so, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

When churches have all these functions, we will experience growth and maturity in our spiritual life, we will experience practical love among us, we will experience God's presence and see miracles among us. People will want to be where God is and non-believers will come and be saved. The Lord will add to our daily number those who were being saved.

The reason why the church in Jerusalem has developed so rapidly is that the church fully obeyed the "Great Commandment" and "The Great Commission".

Jesus said that the greatest of the commandments is: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." And the second is "Love your neighbor as yourself." (See Matthew 22:37-39)

Loving the Lord and loving our neighbours can be said to be "worshipping the Lord" and "serving the Lord".

And the great commission issued by Jesus is: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20). These could be "mission", "fellowship", and "teaching".

Therefore, the church must focus on the construction of the five functions of "worship, fellowship, teaching, service, and mission" and truly realize the purpose of each function. This is the real building of the church!