

THE CHURCH AND MISSIONS

WEEK 2: THE CENTRALITY OF THE CHURCH AND MISSIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- The goal of this six-week class is to zero in on the mission of the church from a Biblical perspective.
- Our schedule will look like this:
 - Week 1: What is our mandate?
 - **Week 2: What is the church's role in missions or the centrality of the church?**
 - Week 3: What was the Apostle's Paul's strategy for missions?
 - Week 4: Kyle Baker sharing his personal call to missions.
 - Week 5: How has the church historically accomplished missions?
 - Week 6: How should church members be involved in missionary work?

WHAT IS A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH?

- Before talking about the centrality of the church and what the church is supposed to be doing with regards to missions, it is important to rightly define *who is the church*.
- The word *ekklesia* is where we get our word *church* from. This word literally means *the called out ones*.
- The first time we see in in the Bible is **Matthew 16:18** “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
- In the New Testament Scriptures, the word “church” is used to denote both the “universal” church and the “local” church. The universal church refers to all peoples in every age and geographic location that have been redeemed through faith in God and the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.
 - In contrast, the local church refers to an individual congregation of believers in a specific time and geographic location in the world. It is a visible manifestation of the church universal and is to be governed in its leadership, ordinances, conduct, ministries, and methodologies by the commands, precepts, and wisdom of the Scriptures.¹
- From this word *church*, we can understand what the basic qualities of the church are supposed to be as we look throughout the New Testament:²

¹ <https://heartcrymissionary.com/doctrine-in-life/article-35-the-centrality-of-the-church-in-the-great-commission/>

² George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, p. 200.

- **The church is a called-out people.** This means that the church is formed when Christ calls men and women to Himself and they are born again; thus, making a *new man*.
 - **The church is a people of a special kind.** These people are now part of the body Christ.
 - **The church is full of people who are called out and now together for a specific purpose.** God has placed order in the church and given the church specific tasks to accomplish.
 - **The church is a place where people act in accordance with their common love for Christ and for one another.** They put their own needs behind the needs of their fellow called-out ones.
 - **The church is a people who are uniquely related to God and His mission.** The called-out ones are part of the family of God, know God's will and are empowered to accomplish it.
- Each of these qualities are what make up the church and the people who are called-out to be part of it. Understanding the make-up of the church will help further our understanding of the mission of the church.
 - As we said last week, the mission of the church is to accomplish the mission of God. We are to share the gospel with the lost, baptizing them and teaching them Christ's commands so that they will be reconciled back into a relationship with God.

How can we apply the characteristics of the church with distinct outward marks of the church?

- The local church is made up of members who have been baptized and are growing in their faith of Jesus Christ. A command Christ gives and what we see as common practice in the NT is baptism.
- In a local church, we should see a community of people who are actively worshipping God.
 - This is not a specific call to music, but the entire worship service. From the opening prayer, the playing of songs, the teaching of the Word and anything else that takes place. The entire Sunday morning service is to bring glory to God.
- The body of believers are in order and unified around one common goal.
 - The church is not a free for all on Sunday morning. There is needed structure in the service.
- The church is a place where structured and informal discipleship is taking place.
 - In other words, one another ministries are taking place between the church members. There are people who are growing in grace, people who are dying to sin and people who are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ is boldly and rightly proclaimed. The true church will never shy away from sharing the most essential news in the history of the world.
 - If that ever happens, it ceases to be a Biblical church and becomes nothing more than a country club for Sunday mornings.

HOW MISSIONS AND THE CHURCH ARE ESSENTIAL TO ONE ANOTHER

- “Missions is not an imposition upon the church for it belongs to her nature and should be as natural to her as grapes are natural to branches that abide in the vine. Missions flows from the inner constitution, character, calling and design of the church.”³
- “In our assertion that the Great Commission is the work of the church, we are making specific reference to the local church with its leaders and congregation as opposed to the church universal, “parachurch” organizations,³ mission agencies, cooperative programs, or individual Christians. This does NOT mean that these other entities are outside the will of God or have no use in the advancement of the kingdom. We are simply seeking to put things in their proper order, and that order places the responsibility for the Great Commission upon the shoulders of the local church and its leadership.”⁴
- “Because the church is God’s unique creation and not the result of historical and natural processes, and because she is God’s unique possession through Jesus Christ, it is to be expected that she has been designed for a unique purpose and mission”⁵
- As we read last week, Christ gave the Great Commission in **Matthew 28** and then the direct marching orders in **Acts 1**. How is the church to accomplish this great task? It is through the church.
- **Ephesians 4:11–12** “And He [Christ] 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...”
- It is of particular interest to see the decline in Biblical literacy and the normal proclamation of the Word falling alongside the drift of missions into social justice and rank liberalism.
 - Because the church and her mission is inseparable, as the church goes off into trying to make society equal, the missionaries that the church sends out will be laboring towards that same end.
- As the church if fulfilling its mandate found in **Ephesians 4**, there is going to be, naturally flowing out of its work, people sent as missionaries.
- As those who are pastors and teachers in the church are doing what they are called to do (namely preach the Word and shepherd the flock), the members of the church are going to be equipped for their service.
- As Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:2** “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”
 - This is Paul’s charge to Timothy and by implication, to all who are pastors and teachers. For the church to do what Christ has commanded, there must be the teaching of the Word.

³ George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*. p. 200.

⁴ <https://heartcrymissionary.com/doctrine-in-life/article-35-the-centrality-of-the-church-in-the-great-commission/>

⁵ George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*. p. 208.

- As the Word is being taught, the people will be built up in sound doctrine. What is the effect? Notice what Paul says in the Ephesians passage...*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*
 - Note that it is the equipped saints that are ready for service **and** the equipped saints who are to be building up the body of Christ.
 - What is this work of service? It is the building up of the body of Christ, or the church. As men and women are built up in the church, they are then sent out to do the same thing somewhere else.
 - This phrase that Paul uses has almost a dualistic meaning. It can be those who are serving the church in a fulltime capacity and those who are serving the church by serving others in a more informal way through the normal one another ministries.
 - While he has two kinds of people in mind, there is one overall purpose...maturity of the believer which brings stability in doctrine (vv. 13–14).
- God is still calling pastors and teachers to go and do the work of baptizing, teaching Christ's commands.
- This is the ultimate reason for the centrality of the church regarding missions.
- God is equipping men to be pastors. Those pastors are trained in the local church, where they are also building up the local body of Christ.
- Some of those men will stay at the church and others will be sent out to do the same. Christ has given His authority to the church. Christ has promised to be the one who builds the church. The means by which we are to accomplish this *is the church!*
 - Not all believers are called to go away, not all believers are called to stay but all believers are called to be active in the local church fulfilling the mission of the God.
 - As you are serving in the church by building one another up, the Lord will put you in the place that He desires so that you can be fruitful and bring Him much glory.
- As men are being brought to maturity in the church, some are going to be recognized as having a pastoral gift and perhaps a calling to take the gospel somewhere else to start the process all over again. Thus, the church begins to duplicate through the Great Commission and the centrality of the church.
- If the church begins to drift in its mission, then all those who are affiliated with her are also going to drift with their mission. As Paul said in **1 Timothy 3:14–15** **“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know 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.”**
- If the church is not the *pillar and support of the truth*, then it is not going to be able to accomplish the mission of God. If it is no longer working towards accomplishing the mission of God, then it is nothing more than a humanitarian organization with good worldly intentions.