

**“THE THREE-FOLD MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH”**

*“I will build my church .....” (Matthew 16:18)*

**WHAT IS THE CHURCH?**

(1) *It is a local assembly of Christians.*

This is a visible assembly of believers who have been baptized upon a credible confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and voluntarily banded together for worship, work and the world-wide proclamation of the Gospel of the grace of God.

(2) *The Church is a living organism.*

It is repeatedly called a “body” in the New Testament. I Cor. 12:27 is a good example: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” A body, unless it is sick or dead, is active, it functions. The local church is part of the Body of Christ.

(3) *It has organization.*

It has organization with specified leaders and a specific purpose for existence. It has stated functions, services and ministries to carry out.

Jesus said that He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). And, He said, “As the Father sent me, so send I you.” Therefore, the Local Church should be organized to carry out that same mission and ministry.

**WHAT IS THE CHURCH’S MINISTRY?**

(1) *First, stated negatively the ministry of the church is not:*

- a. A Social Club. We enjoy “socializing” or, as we say, “fellowshipping”, but that is not the primary ministry of the church.
- b. A For Profit Business. The New Testament church of Jesus Christ has nothing to sell.
- c. A Government Agency. The true church of Jesus Christ has no political agenda. It should not be silent in reference to the moral issues of the day but the church should not be partisan.
- d. An Environmental Agency. I read of a church that dismissed its Sunday morning Worship Service in order to go to a nearby lake and clean up the debris. While we should give a hoot and not pollute, it is not the ministry of the church to clean up the world and make it a nicer place in which sinners can sin.

(2) *Secondly, the ministry of the church stated positively is three-fold:*

- a. An Upward Ministry – A ministry to God – A ministry of Glorification;*
- b. An Inward Ministry – A ministry to the godly – A ministry of Edification;*
- c. An Outward Ministry - A Ministry to the ungodly – A ministry of Evangelization.*

## **THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY EXPLAINED**

### **A. The Upward Ministry Of The Church.**

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” (Acts 13:2) *The definition of worship is: “ministering to the Lord”. I wish all worshippers and Worship Leaders would keep that in mind. Worship is not to be a pep rally for pew people; it is not for the glorification of platform persons; it is not for what the participants can get out of it but what God get out of it!*

#### 1. The Example of New Testament Worship.

Acts 2:1 “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” *There was: (a) Locality (b) Unity (c) Simplicity (no elaborate rituals etc. (d) Continuity (everything was focused heavenward) (e) Perpetuity – “they continued...”.*

#### 2. The Elements of N.T. Worship.

Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” *There was (1) doctrine or teaching (2) fellowship (3) “breaking bread” – Communion or The Lord’s Supper and baptism v.41 (4) prayer (5) singing, in upper room they sang (Mark 14:26). Paul admonished the churches in Ephesus and Colosse about “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) almost as after thought! Singing is important, but the New Testament worship services were not all music.*

*Paul stated the initial purpose of the church as follows: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

### **B. The Inward Ministry Of The Church.**

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-12) *There are 3 facets of the Church’s Inward Ministry mentioned in the verses:*

1. *The Treating Ministry. “perfecting of the saints” (mending)*
2. *The Training Ministry. “for the work of the ministry”*
3. *The Teaching Ministry. “for the edifying of the body”*

### **C. The Outward Ministry Of The Church.**

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:42) *The ministry of glorification of the Lord leads to the ministry of*

*the edification of the saints which results in the ministry of evangelization of sinners. The evangelistic outreach is the real test of the maturity of any church. If there is no evangelism or very little evangelism there is weakness in the church's ministry to God and/or ministry to the godly. Evangelism will test:*

1. *The program of the church.*
2. *The power of the church.*
3. *The personnel of the church.*
4. *The performance of the church.*
5. *The priorities of the church.*

*How can we improve the "Outward" ministry? Take 3 steps:*

- a. *Concentrate your focus.*

*"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35) Churches patterned after the New Testament church example are by their very nature extroverted in their focus. We must not forget the "fields that are already white for harvest."*

- b. *Communicate your faith.*

*There are many ways to do outreach ministry: Bible Study evangelism, telephone evangelism, visitation evangelism, friendship evangelism, athletic event evangelism, literature evangelism, video evangelism, restaurant evangelism, prayer evangelism, bereavement evangelism, hospital evangelism etc. Outreach means = each, reach, out!*

- c. *Conserve your fruit.*

*Be a mentor, a discipler a nurturer. Open your home for Discipleship Lessons. Keep in touch with them via e-mail, phone, snail mail. I was a Lifeguard in college and our Lifeguard Manual said, "Once you have made contact with the drowning victim in the water, do not lose contact with them. They may slip away under water and you may not be able to find them again." How true that is with young Christians. Hold on to them. Introduce them to the church family in every way you can. Pray regularly for and with them.*

*If we pattern our churches after the pattern in the Book of Acts, our church ministries will be blessed by the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus, and such a church will be a blessing to the community in which it is located. Jesus Christ is building His Church through obedient believers. Let us cooperate with Him.*

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