

BLUEPRINT FOR A CHRIST-HONORING CHURCH¹

Building a physical building is the easy part. But a church, *ANY church*, is not the building. That's why the Puritans used to call church buildings "Meeting Houses." They understood, as do we, that **the church is not the building, but a corporate body of believers united together for the purposes of worship, edification (through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God), discipleship & the fulfilling of the Great Commission. And THAT is a lot more challenging than simply building a building. The building is the easy part.** It's just a bunch of blocks and mortar. **But the church is US! We're the Temple!** (I Cor. 6:17-20). And... *we're also THE SACRIFICE!* (Rom. 12:1-2 cf. Leviticus).

We must beware of being enamored of Bethel i.e. "*The Place of God*" (Gen. 28).

We must always be consumed rather with El-bethel i.e. "*The God of the Place of God*" (Gen. 35)

BUT WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY! Are we content to merely "tread water" or are we determined to go forward boldly in the strength of our Lord?!

Ill: (Marine in Korea, who jumped on a hand grenade shouting: "*Marines, Let's go!*")

*****We're in the minority. Have you noticed? SO WHAT! All the better for God to do great things wherein He ALONE will get the glory!**

cf. Elijah (1 Kings 18); Daniel (Dan. 1:8); Jeremiah ("*I said I will speak no more in His name, but then His word was like a burning in my bones and I could not hold back!*"); Micah (I Kings 22).

The NT Church was quite simple really – Acts 2:42 (Fellowship; Doctrine; Lord's Supper & Prayer).

WHAT IS A CHURCH & WHAT ARE ITS PURPOSES & IDENTIFYING MARKS²

¹ Most of the main points & much of the content on pages 6-9 is taken directly from a message by Dr. John MacArthur which I heard approximately three decades ago. I found the content of it to very biblical & helpful. In addition, I have added additional scripture references, etc., supplementing those points. The material on pages 1-5 is almost all taken verbatim from two other sources: An address by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones titled "*Consider your Ways: The Outline of a New Strategy*" reproduced in "*Knowing the Times*" (The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, Scotland, 1989, esp. pp. 164-170 & 178-197) & comments & observations by Dr. Peter Masters (pastor for the past 40+ years of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England—Spurgeon's church) in his book "*Do we have a Policy?*" (The Wakeman Trust: London, England, 2002). Again I have added additional Bible verses and comments to that section of these notes. Finally, I in various places in these notes I've added quotes from several other additional sources which are referenced as well. – Mike Edwards, Greenville, SC. (revised January-February, 2014, Madison, Ohio & April, 2022, Greenville, SC)

² This entire section is taken verbatim from an address given by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones to the *Westminster Fellowship* "at their annual outing to Welwyn (Wales) on 19 June, 1963." It was later reproduced and titled "*Consider Your Ways – The Outline of a New Strategy*" in the book "*Knowing the Times – Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions.*" (The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, Scotland, 1989). All material in parentheses () appears as such in the original text. All underlining, bolding, items in brackets [] as well as most of the italicizing, has been added by me. –Mike Edwards

Explanatory Note: As usual, I found Dr. Lloyd-Jones' comments and observations wise, prescient and, most importantly, solidly biblical. The address was given nearly 50 years ago. However in light of the host of aberrant practices and movements currently plaguing the 21st century church I believe his observations couldn't be more timely. Such things as the "*Emerging Church*" movement, a plethora of para-church organizations and a host of inordinately influential but highly suspect mega-church pastors, churches &/or electronic media personalities and their suspect, "seeker friendly" methodologies have arisen and become immensely popular. Individuals such as Bill Hybels and his Willow Creek Church, Rick Warren and his Saddleback Church, Robert Schuller, Rob Bell, Mark Driscoll, Perry Noble & other "Mars Hill" type pastors & churches have introduced new and highly questionable practices. They unashamedly are seeking to totally change Christian worship and would even redefine the church itself. Consequently it greatly behooves us to rethink and reconsider even the most basic and fundamental questions, including what is the biblical definition of a church. I believe we have gotten far off track from what Christ instituted and that the Apostles initially led. In my opinion, a return to biblical New Testament patterns is desperately needed in our present day! –Rev. Mike Edwards (11 December, 2011)

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: (by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

“It seems to me that at least once a year it is a good thing for us to review our position. The danger with all of us is that we simply go on doing our work and become so immersed in it that we are in danger of missing the wood because of the trees. It is a good thing therefore, as far as we can, to stand aside for a moment and look at the whole situation, and particularly as we ourselves stand in relation to it. It was in order that we might do that that I asked Mr. Caiger to read us that first chapter of the book of the prophet **Haggai**.

“I do not propose to give an exposition of this chapter. I do not intend to do what I did last year, which was more or less entirely exposition.³ But I think that Haggai chapter one sets before us the present situation, as I see it, and that the words of verse 5, repeated in verse 7, are particularly relevant: **‘Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.’** The position as described by the prophet is very much the same as it is at the present time, a period of transition, of reconstruction, of new beginnings. Haggai addresses these people in that situation, points out to them their failure, indicates to them what they are doing, and what they are not doing, and in the midst of it there comes this great appeal, **‘Consider your ways’**. Now that is what I am hoping to do, but not, as I say, in the form of a verse-by-verse exposition. I am rather taking that general exhortation and applying it to our situation at the present time.

“Or to put it in a different form, I am going to try to ‘draw out’ in the Puritan manner, the lessons which come inevitably, as I would have thought, from what I was trying to say last year. All I was able to do then was to ask certain questions in the light of the exposition of the two passages, John 17 and Ephesians 4. Now I want to carry that a stage further and to enter into a little more detail. Present circumstances, as I see them, demand that we should ‘consider our ways’ in the light of our present position. There are certain unique features, I think, which compel us to do this and I am going to note some of them.

“One feature is that we happen to be living at a time when everything in connection with the church, her life, and her activity, once more seems to be in the melting pot. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the position in which we find ourselves is more similar to that which obtained at the time of the Protestant Reformation than anything that has happened since. I know there have been upheavals, there have been times of crisis, but I think I could demonstrate that there are features in the present situation which have not obtained since the time of the Reformation.

“What I mean is this: that until comparatively recently, the Reformation was taken for granted and, generally speaking, was accepted; it was not queried. There were these two great positions, the Roman Catholic and the reformed (using that term in its most general form). There they were, and everybody recognized them; but we are now in a position and a period when that is no longer the case. Everything is once more being queried. There is a kind of fluidity in the current situation such as has not been the case since the time of the Protestant Reformation. So if we had no other reason for considering our ways and examining the whole situation, this feature, I would have thought, is enough in itself. **With the ecumenical movement, and still more the new relationships between the Church of Rome and the other churches, and the whole changed atmosphere,** particularly in an emotional sense, we are a point when people obviously entertain the hope of something quite new. **The old landmarks are being taken down and everybody seems to be agreed that we have got to think anew and afresh, and take**

³ Lloyd-Jones gave his unsurpassed expositions of John 17 & Ephesians 4 [“The Basis of Christian Unity”] the previous year. Those addresses are masterpieces of biblical clarity and answers to the unbiblical emphasis on ecumenism that have remained unanswered by liberals and ecumenists to this present day. –mwe

nothing for granted. Very well, we are related to this situation, and therefore it behooves us to know exactly what our position is.

“A second feature which calls for consideration is that actual [ecumenical] unions are taking place between different sections of the Christian church... Whether we like it or not, many will be involved in movements for amalgamation of the denominations to which they belong...

“Then another and a very urgent matter, of course, is the blatant unbelief that is manifesting itself now in the official churches. We have known that it was there, **but this unbelief is now coming into the open, declaring itself with rejoicing and not hesitating to do so; and, attracting so much publicity, it has become a matter of great interest to the general public. We are related to this and we are called upon to say something. We cannot just stand by as if nothing were happening.**

“I would put under this same heading what seems to me to be **very real evidence of a subtle and yet rapidly increasing change in emphasis, even in evangelical thinking.** This is something which has been happening in the United States for a number of years... **the so-called ‘new evangelicalism’.** **The fact is that there is a...movement, which has been going for a number of years now, which, while still claiming the name evangelical, is adopting positions, and prepared to make concessions, which evangelicals, until ten years ago, were not prepared even to consider.** I must not go into this in detail because it will take too much time, but **we note their different attitude, for instance, towards the early chapters of Genesis, towards the flood, indeed, even towards the whole question of miracles.** The tendency now is to say that a miracle is purely a question of timing, in other words, that you can more or less explain miracles in terms of natural phenomena, and that what has happened is that God timed the natural phenomena to happen at a give point. But they still claim the name evangelical!

“...**Even the Southern Baptist Church in America...** has an acute problem arising in one of its colleges, and for the first time, they are having to fight liberalism coming right into the heart and centre of their denomination...⁴

“There is a tendency to be a little critical of the old emphasis upon doctrine, and one hears increasingly of people in evangelical circles saying, ‘*Well, is doctrine after all as important as all that?*’ **Now, when**

⁴⁴ Where is the Southern Baptist Convention today? Many would quickly point out that things in the SBC have changed since Lloyd-Jones made that comment. Southern Baptists (and even many who rather shockingly are now once more working together with them) would hasten to point out that Lloyd-Jones said this in the 1960s. They would tell you that the conservatives have succeeded in cleaning up the SBC seminaries which were full of theological heretics at that time. *However* the jury is still very much out in regard to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Yes they have gotten rid of many such liberals from their seminaries. But the leadership has no “say so” or power over the many SBC colleges & universities. Those are under the auspices of each state’s leadership, and a number of those schools are often anything but biblical. For instance Baylor University, an SBC university in Texas has posted on their website an unequivocal and strongly-worded statement avowing total belief in evolution. The statement bluntly declares that Baylor will tolerate no other “philosophical” alternative views (i.e. special creation by God, “Intelligent Design,” etc). Now if any fundamental Christian college taught evolution rather than creation by God, Bible-believers would be furious and wouldn’t touch them with a “Ten-Foot Pole.” Yet Northland International University, Piedmont International University (formerly Piedmont Baptist College), etc., have had SBC pastors or professors teaching courses on their campuses &/or their mission representatives recruiting on their campuses within the past two years (2010-2011), which is certainly cause for concern.

Another biblical issue that should definitely concern Bible believers regarding the SBC is the fact that blatantly disobedient Southern Baptists such as Billy Graham & Chuck Colson—both of whom have maintained solid ties with the Roman Catholic Church, who work together with them and eagerly use them in their ministries, who have engaged in papal visits and have highly praised various popes, continue to retain the highest standing among Southern Baptists. Having engaged in the above-mentioned unbiblical actions and associations, these men and others like them continue as Southern Baptist leaders without even a question being raised about such unbiblical behavior—let alone church discipline being brought to bear on them for their willful disobedience to biblical standards of ecclesiastical separation.

Other issues, such as the “moderate” section of Southern Baptists led by such men as former president Jimmy Carter, the lack of moral standards on various SBC college & university campuses, etc., give further reason to refrain from forming alliances with the Southern Baptist Convention. In light of all this, I would unequivocally maintain that Dr. Lloyd-Jones’ statement about the SBC is *not* out of date, thus I have included it here. *-mwe*

evangelicals begin to talk in that way, it is a very serious matter indeed. I do not think that anybody can dispute that... [The] whole tone is mildly [?] critical of what evangelicalism has always stood for. **There is also this tendency to gloat over scholarship.** I think it is part of the inferiority complex of evangelicals—**the great thing now is to prove that we are ‘scholars’... We are more concerned about getting a good word from so-called scholars who are not evangelical, than we are about our strict adherence to the truth.** The causes of all this are very difficult to arrive at. I have my own ideas about them, but I am not going to wary you with them.

“Then the next reason I would give is this: the whole moral condition of the country, and the need of a clear statement, an authoritative prophetic statement. I need say no more about that for it is a thing that we are all agreed about, I am certain; but **it is an appalling thought that in the present state of this country and its morals—the whole condition of society—somehow or other we are failing.** When we contrast ourselves with what our forefathers did in such times, I think we should put on sackcloth and ashes and feel utterly ashamed of ourselves. **We seem to be living in our ‘cieled houses’ and to be ready to believe that everything is all right as long as everything is all right with us.** The whole general situation seems to pass by default as far as we are concerned.

“The next thing that I would emphasize is the tremendous need of preaching the gospel in an evangelical manner up and down the country. I have a feeling that we who meet under these auspices, who belong mainly to the Greater London area, are in a very false position with regard to this, and perhaps in a very misleading one. It is a well-known fact that evangelicalism, speaking generally, is concentrated in the Greater London area. What is happening in industry is happening in evangelicalism; everything is crowding into the southeast of England... We are in our ‘cieled houses’; everything is all right with me; my church is flourishing; everything is going well; and we tend to forget the conditions that prevail in the greater part of the country... This is a tremendous challenge to us.

“To sum it all up, it seems to me that there is not only a great challenge that comes to us at this time, but a unique opportunity. The [church denominations] which are not evangelical are failing; they have no message to offer. They are preaching ecumenicity...and the people are not given the gospel, they are not given the message. It is we alone who can give them this message and there is this unique opportunity calling to us. But in this very situation we seem to be silent; we seem to be ineffective; we seem to be doing nothing; our voice is not really being heard. In this tremendous period of change and crisis, with people looking for a lead, waiting, wondering what is going to happen, there is no clear statement emanating... We do issue statements now and again, but I think that we will all agree, even those of us who put our names to them, that they are very tepid and harmless; there is no challenge in them. They are so carefully worded that in the end they achieve practically nothing. Such is the situation in which we find ourselves, and it is in the light it that I say, ‘*Consider your ways*’.

“Let me make it clear before I proceed any further that what I am going to say applies to all of us... It applies to some more than others but I would make it quite clear that I have no one particular denomination or section of the Christian church mind. I say, ‘*Let a man examine himself*’ (I Cor. 11:28)

“...Here then is the call, ‘*Consider your ways*’. Why are we in this parlous, ineffective position? Why are we counting for so little? Why are we so silent? Now I must try to answer these questions... I have not come here with a cut-and-dried programme; I have not got a blueprint for the future. I do not think we are in a position for that. **What we need is to think, because the gravamen of my whole position here is that we have not been thinking and that in various ways we have indeed almost deliberately avoided thinking.**” (all above quotes, pp. 164-170)

[At this point in his address Dr. Lloyd-Jones went on to discuss the tendency of Bible-believers in England (at the time) to join what are called in Great Britain “*Movements*” i.e. Para-church

organizations there that deal with various moral, spiritual and social issues. He concluded that while joining an organization that opposes a social or political ill was probably ok, by believers doing so in regard to spiritual issues he maintained the church had suffered: “It is **that while [Bible-believers] have tried to solve their problem and get out of their difficulties by forming movements, they have evaded, avoided, and bypassed the whole question of the nature of the church...** surely these [subjects and issues] **should be decided and determined in terms of the church, and in the realm of the church...**” (p. 178)

THE MAJOR QUESTION: THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

“In the light of what I have been saying **it is obvious that it is the nature of the church which has become the major question and problem. *What is the Christian church? What is the real nature of the church?*** How do you decide that? **We are all agreed in saying that you can only decide the question by the Scripture... when it comes to the realm of practice and the realm of actual decisions so often we are influenced more by tradition and history than we are by purely biblical exposition.** We are so influenced by the need to maintain the status quo [**or the currently popular “seeker friendly” status quo of the present moment-mwe**] that we start with that rather than with the scriptural teaching.”⁵

“What is a church? What is the nature of the church? ...What is the New Testament picture of the Christian church? Is it not something like this?

“It is a gathering **of saints**; it is **an assembly of true believers**; it is a gathering of **men and women who have believed the preaching of the gospel**. More, it is a gathering of **people who have been ‘born again’**. It is the association of people who are **the body of Christ and members in particular. It is those who are ‘in Christ’**. ***That is how the New Testament regards them; that is how it always addresses them.*** They meet together, conscious of His presence in the midst, conscious that they are a spiritual society with the Holy Spirit as their companion, as the one who leads them, and the one who inspires them, as the one who has been given to them to lead them into all the truth.” (pp. 178-179)

“**Now I could quote many Scriptures to establish what I am saying. Let me give just one or two which are perfectly familiar.** We start in the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and here are a number of statements. [**Acts**] **verses 41-42:** ‘Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.’ Verse 44: ‘And all that believed were together, and had all things common.’ Verses 46 and 47: ‘And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved’, or if you prefer it, ‘such as were being saved’. Now that is the church. The people who are being saved, who believe the truth, are conscious of this change in their lives; they have been taken out of the world, and are conscious of a new life and a new outlook, and have the desire to be with others who are the same; and the others gladly receive them.” (p. 180)

“There are many other statements which come to much the same thing. Take for instance that great statement of **Ephesians 2:19-22:** ‘Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles

⁵ At this point Lloyd-Jones went on to contend that many have not gone to Scripture to determine what the church is, but rather to what the church found to be expedient in the past, particularly in the third and fourth centuries, before returning to the subject at hand, i.e. the biblical definition of a church. -mwe

and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grow into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.’

“You have got almost exactly the same notion in **1 Peter 2:4-9**, where Peter uses very much the same analogy: ‘To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones’ – they are living stones – ‘are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ’, and so on, leading up to, ‘But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.’

“I sum up by reading again from John Owen on this matter. Here is a very good summary of what I have been trying to say. It is from his *‘Brief Instruction in the Worship of God and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament’*;

‘Question: What is an instituted church of the gospel?

‘Answer: A society of persons called out of the world, or their natural worldly state, by the administration of the word and Spirit, unto the obedience of the faith, or the knowledge and worship of God in Christ, joined together in a holy band, or by special agreement, for the exercise of the communion of saints in the due observation of all the ordinances of the gospel.’

“Then Owen adds to that the next question:

‘Question: By what means do persons so called become a church of Christ?

‘Answer: They are constituted a church, and interested in the rights, power, and privileges of a gospel church, by the will, promise, authority and law of Jesus Christ, upon their own voluntary consent and engagement to walk together in the due subjection of their souls and consciences unto his authority, as their king, priest, and prophet, and in a holy observation of all his commands, ordinances and appointments.’

“I suggest that that is a fair statement of the New Testament picture of what a ‘gospel church’, as John Owen calls it, is.

“I know it is not complete, it is inadequate, but for the sake of brevity and of time I leave it at that to proceed to the second question which is...

‘What, then, are the marks of a true church?’

“This is the thing that becomes the crucial question if we are agreed about what I have already said. It has been generally believed... that there are three main marks of the Christian church:

THE MARKS OF A TRUE CHURCH:

“The first is that the gospel, or the true doctrine, should be preached. If the true doctrine is not preached it is not a church. It is only by the true doctrine of Christ, that unadulterated milk of the Word, that we can grow. This is primary, this is fundamental, this the great thing argued for in the New Testament... All the apostles were preaching the same thing. The apostle Paul uses that argument more than once. It was his gospel, yes, but it was also the gospel of the others. They were all preaching this same fundamental message.

“Secondly, the church is a gathering where the [ordinances] are faithfully administered... We would all be equally opposed to the doctrine of transubstantiation and all that is indicative of sacramentalism.

“Thirdly... the church is a gathering where discipline is administered. Now this is a very important point. Can we evade the conclusion that the New Testament in its doctrine of the church definitely and specifically teaches that discipline is to be administered? Is it not implicit in what happened at Caesarea Philippi and our Lord’s statements made there in this very connection... **Matt. 16:17-19** surely carries with it the whole notion of discipline and that the church is given this power to exercise the discipline of admission and of excommunication, without which you have no guarantee whatsoever of the purity of the life of the church, both as regards her doctrine and her practice.

“Then you have exactly the same thing taught in the twentieth chapter of John’s Gospel in verses 21-23... Or take what you find in **Matthew 18:15-20**: ‘Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall [have] been bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall [have] been loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.’

“It is this doctrine [of church discipline] **which we find put into practice when we come to the Epistles. My first example of that is in I Corinthians 5**, where the apostle is dealing with this terrible case... [Paul says] ‘*For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*’ (vv. 2-5). **Now that is clear instruction. It ought to have been carried out, you notice, by the church. The church is to exercise discipline in this way.**

“The same thing is indicated in **Galatians 5:12**: ‘*I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*’ Paul is concerned about these false teachers, these Judaizers. Then you have another statement of it in **2 Thessalonians 3:6**: ‘*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*’ The last quote is from **Titus 3:10-11**: ‘*A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*’ The heretic has got to be ‘rejected’ and that is what did happen; **such discipline was the practice of the church up to a certain point in history.** There are other references that I could quote, such as are to be found in the Second and Third Epistles of John.

“Here is the whole subject of discipline, but the question is, do we believe any longer in it, do we exercise it? Is this teaching compatible with a view which justifies what we are doing by saying, ‘*Ah yes, the church, the denomination to which I belong is a wonderful place to fish in,*’ by which we mean, ‘*Oh I know that many of the members of the church are not Christians, but I get a wonderful opportunity to evangelize them.*’ **Is that compatible with the teaching of the New Testament concerning discipline?** [The answer, of course, is No! And this is the exact problem with the “*seeker friendly*” philosophy & methodologies that has become popular and accepted in the past couple of decades—*mwe*] Should the Christian church be a place to ‘fish’ in evangelistically? I am, of course, not referring

to our public services which are meant to evangelize those who are outside; my criticism is of the argument which justifies remaining in a church because its members need to be evangelized; they are the fish that, it is hoped, will be caught. Is that compatible with the biblical teaching concerning the administration of discipline?

“So this third mark of the church again faces us with one of the primary and fundamental questions we have got to consider: **Is a church truly a church if she does not administer the discipline that the Scripture indicates? [in other words, if our churches look just like the world, are they even churches? Because instead of disciplining those who are disobedient or even show no signs of regeneration, the “trendy” thing to do in regard to “doing church” is to look, act, dress, sound as much like the world as possible so that the unsaved will feel comfortable coming into our church services and functions! –mwe]**

PROPER CAUSES FOR ADMINISTERING CHURCH DISCIPLINE:

“For what causes should we administer... (his address continued on but I have not added that material & am not sure it’s particularly relevant to these notes-mwe)

Their goal was to fulfill the Great Commission – Acts 1:8 (“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and Judea & Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”) But there was nothing random about it. Paul had a plan, and knew what he was doing:

“2 Tim. 3:10: “ But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose...’ The word translated purpose is ‘*prothesis*’, which means –a plan, design, purpose or aspiration, clearly set forth, exhibited or displayed. It refers here to Paul’s plan and strategy for the conduct of his life and ministry, which was ‘fully known’ to Timothy, his pupil...

*** **“Would we expect great variation in the practice of medicine or surgery? Would we be happy at the idea that every practitioner developed his or her own highly individualistic procedures and techniques? ...In the case of the ministry there is a once-for-all policy which should be the approach of every ‘workman that needeth not to be ashamed.’ Ideally, if one set of officers passes from the scene and another is raised up, the overall policy should not be interrupted any more than if one doctor replaces another in the local surgery.”** (Peter Masters, “*Do We Have a Policy?*” (The Wakeman Trust: London, England, 2002), pp. 10, 11).

Note: All of the following points & all the quotes not indicated from other sources, are taken from a message by John MacArthur which I heard approximately 30 years ago & found challenging & helpful.

THE KEY PREREQUISITE: “Foundational to everything else is the centrality of the Word of God, and the preaching of it! We believe in its inspiration, authority, sufficiency, and power. Everything that follows (in this outline assumes) that the Word of God is central.”

1. FOR A CHURCH TO BE CHRIST-HONORING THERE MUST BE A HIGH STANDARD OF HOLINESS - Acts 5:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:15-17; 4:17.

“We must strive to ensure that the church membership is as wholesome as it can be. When we receive in new members we must be extremely careful to ensure that they really love Christ and want to advance. And we must not turn a blind eye to the wrong behaviour of long-standing members.” (Masters, pp. 27-28)

“Take, for example, the problem of gossip. Sometimes whisperings, carping, criticisms and backbitings creep in to a church. Do we have a...policy for this? Not that we are to emulate the oppressive sort of pastor who leaps into action every time someone sneezes. That is so-called ‘*heavy shepherding*.’ We are not to engage in pastoral overkill, interfering with every little problem as though Christian people had no spiritual power or conscience to regret their sin and put things right by themselves. Nevertheless, when people begin to gossip and run one another down, or to speak against the cause, then there is a sad and potentially serious problem, and someone will need to speak directly to those who have veered into this activity...The question is, are the grumblers and gossips merely regarded as a nuisance, or is something done to help them?

“...Covetousness is also a problem which ring alarm bells...What do we do if someone is plainly out of control and swept along by the power of desire? What if someone is justifying luxuries which will be a snare both to themselves and others?... What if we pick up the signs that a great deal of TV watching has gradually crept into the lives of some members—including soap operas and other crass, worldly entertainment programmes? ...It may be that suddenly there is a rash of parties among the young, and rather excessive socializing, involving showing off, banalities, and things of that kind ...Are those involved aware that even good leisure activities, while precious and profitable, should be subject to moderation, like food? ...worldly dress... (Masters, pp. 28-29)

，“We should never insult believers by suspecting great sin or unspirituality the moment they slip into something wrong! We are to look for spirituality as the apostle did in Phil. 4 when he counseled sensitive correction, saying, ‘*Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel*.’ Paul’s first assumption was that they would respond to counsel, advice and help. Our immediate assumption must be that our members will be ready to listen.” (Masters, pp. 30-31)

"It isn't enough to just preach against sin. If you preach against it but tolerate it in leadership, or mention it without disciplining it, you teach your people that preaching has nothing to do with real life!"

Note **Revelation 3:20** - "*Jezebel*". That was "probably not her real name, but an indication of her character (evil), which was allowed to poison the church unchecked! Christ asks them, '*How could you allow that...How could you permit that?*'"

Church discipline is described in Mt. 18:15-20. The process in Mt. 18 is very clear. Go individually, then take 2-3, then send the whole church after them. Then if there is still no repentance, treat them like a tax gatherer (an outcast). Matthew eighteen makes it clear that when a church does that, all they are doing is acting out on earth what heaven has already done. By the way, the terms "*binding*" & "*loosing*" are old rabbinical terms similar to "*permitting*" & "*forbidding*." **Mt. 18:19 is probably the most abused & misinterpreted verse in the Bible!** ("*where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.*") **It is not a prayer meeting scene that is being described but is actually referring to the 2-3 witnesses in a discipline case, and it is saying that you can know that Christ is acting with you, if you are acting in accordance with His Word!"**

"The purity of the church is not the responsibility of the preacher, but of the people. But some may say, '*Who am I to tell (straighten) them?*' That's a good point. In other words, we need to have our own life pure first, before we go and try to straighten someone else out. **So the backwash effect is that this whole responsibility becomes a self-purifying process, and causes us to clean up our own life FIRST!** (cf. Mt. 7:3-5 where we are told to get the log out of our own eye first, before trying to help our brother).

2. FOR A CHURCH TO BE BIBLICAL, IT MUST BE COMMITTED TO SOUND, CLEAR DOCTRINAL CONTENT - Acts 2:42; Rom. 6:17; 16:17; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3; 4:6,13,16; 5:17; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1,7; 2 John 9

Doctrine (Bible truths/principles) is taught in Acts and emphasized in I & II Timothy & Titus. **Doctrine = Principles of Scripture. People have to have principles (truths) to live by. Marriage & divorce; the second coming of Christ; spiritual life; salvation; how to recognize a false prophet; etc.** "It's not enough to just 'stroke' your people (i.e. make them feel good). The trend today in preaching is going towards psychological, sociological type stuff. Helping people with their ego, self-esteem, etc. (e.g. Joel Osteen) **That is popular but fruitless. The problem with that approach is, when you do that, your members need to keep running back to you to be 'stroked' again.**

The average Christian is so weak in Bible doctrine that the late Walter Martin once said: *'The tragedy of contemporary evangelicalism is that the average 90 day wonder (trainee) out of the Jehovah's Witnesses can take apart (totally confuse) a Christian in about 30 minutes.'*

3. FOR A CHURCH TO BE CHRIST-HONORING, IT HAS TO HAVE A STRONG EMPHASIS ON DISCIPLESHIP - Matt. 28:19-20.

"A church must be committed to personal reproduction (bearing fruit) ...If you are a church member and don't have a ministry and are not reproducing yourself, you are a contradiction in terms... Some protest, 'But I don't know much!' We say, *'Find someone who knows less than you do and teach them all you know, and find someone that knows more than you do, and learn all they know.'* (Eph. 4:9-12). Get in the process."

"Simply put, all discipling is, is teaching someone how to live a godly life... You give birth - that's evangelism. Child raising - that's discipleship (the discipline, feeding, love, etc.). 1 Cor. 4:14-21. (e.g. "The Pastor's Class," with Bob Shelton, First Baptist, Pontiac, Michigan; Bill Tipton & our Bible study group at EMU; the CBF discipleship program at UPNG; etc.).

"The single greatest element in discipleship is... EXAMPLE! (Phil. 3:17; 4:9; II Tim. 2:2). You are NOT just teaching them Bible doctrine. You are counseling them, taking them with you on various ministries, memorizing Scripture together, letting them see your life, etc. **If someone hangs around you long enough, no matter what you say, they usually turn out like you** (either for better, or for worse!).

4. FOR A CHURCH TO BE BIBLICAL, IT MUST BE COMMITTED TO HAVING AN ACTIVE, MINISTERING PEOPLE - Acts 6:4; Eph. 4:12.

"In Spurgeon's day an American Christian newspaper editor once decided to spend a week at the Tabernacle to make a survey of the great man's ministry. But as this editor turned up at the Tabernacle evening after evening, an entirely unexpected scene met him. The basements and rooms of the building were constantly alive with activity. Groups assembled for district visitation; prayer gatherings convened; ragged school classes were under way; Sunday School teacher's briefings took place, and a host of other activities. **This editor came to extol the work of a pulpiteer, but he also discovered a working church. Sadly, in many fellowships today, most members loyally attend the services and financially maintain the work, but beyond this they are little more than comfortable observers.**" (Masters, p. 37)

"People should be involved, not just spectating! As one has said, if members aren't involved, they tend to 'sit, soak, & sour.'... **Benchwarmers always end up as critics...** Nothing is more grievous...than

people coming to church who do nothing... You have to have active, ministering people, not paid professionals financed by lay spectators. In **Eph. 4:12** we learn that pastors are to perfect (the church members) to do the work of the ministry.

MacArthur says, "***We need to teach our people, 'If you don't do it, it may not get done!'*** ...Years ago when we (MacArthur's church) had 1500-2000 members, Moody Monthly sent some people out who spent 3-4 days surveying (their) church. They went back and wrote an article titled, '*The church with 900 ministers.*' That blessed me."

"Some church members are so intimidated by their inactivity and so inferior feeling because of other people's great commitment, that they secretly wish for the failure of the church ...or maybe not so secretly."

5. FOR A CHURCH TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT MUST HAVE AN INTENSE LOVING SPIRIT - John 13:34-35; Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37.

Notice, the believers in the early New Testament church shared and met each other's needs. "*The people need to know how to get along together.* The strong and the weak (Rom. 14) are having a lot of difficulty... We're committed to each other." (MacArthur)

Study the "One Another's" of Scripture:

1. "Love one another." Jn. 13:34; 15:12, 17; I Thess. 3:12; 4:9; I Pet. 1:22; I Jn. 3:11,23; 4:7,11; II John 5
2. "Prefer one another" (i.e. put the other person first, serve one another, submit to one another-humility). Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 5:21; I Pet. 5:5
3. "Be of the same mind one to another." Rom. 12:16; 15:5
4. "Don't wrongly judge one another." i.e. in "grey," unclear areas. It does **not** mean that the church doesn't judge or discipline believers cf. II Jn. 5-6 [love=obedience to God's Word]; II Thess. 3:6-15 cf. Rom. 14:13.
5. "Edify (build up) one another." Rom. 14:19
6. "Receive (accept) one another." Rom. 15:7
7. "Admonish (exhort, discipline, correct, provoke to good works) one another." Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25.
8. "Have the same care (compassion) for one another." I Cor. 12:25; I Pet. 3:8
9. "Greet (fellowship with) one another." I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Jn. 1:7
10. "Forbear (forgive, overlook the wrongs) of one another." Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; Jas. 5:9
11. "Be kind (use hospitality) toward one another." Eph. 4:32; I Pet. 4:9
12. "Comfort one another." I Thess. 4:18
13. "Confess faults to one another." Jas. 5:16
14. "Pray for one another." Jas. 5:16

Regarding Matt. 18:1-10: "In the context, the little children are not the kids, but the one who has humbled himself, and has become converted. The passage is talking about **BELIEVERS** (Infants can't believe!); In other words, the passage is saying, "**You better be careful how you treat other Christians.**"

6. FOR A CHURCH TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT MUST HAVE A STRONG EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY PENETRATION - Matt. 5:14-16

"Somehow, reach your community with the gospel... The only reason God left us here is for evangelism (Mt. 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 3:16) ...If we were left here for fellowship, then we better go to heaven where it's perfect. If we were left here for praise, then we better go to heaven where it's perfect. If we were left here for service, then we better go to heaven where it's perfect."

*** *"The most dramatic way (God evangelizes the unsaved) is by the life of the individual church members out in the world. Not by what we preach, but by what we are!"*

"Even the landscaping can be a source of evangelism. One who got saved at (MacArthur's) church first began coming to their church because of how beautiful they kept the property. That person later said, *'I figured if you took that good care of the plants, then you probably knew how to take care of people too!'*"

Likewise a rotten testimony can be a tremendous detriment and can ruin a church's impact in a community. MacArthur tells the story of an article that appeared in a Los Angeles newspaper titled: *"The crookedest lawyer in Los Angeles."* The problem was, someone mentioned that the lawyer attended Grace Community Church (MacArthur's church). The next Sunday MacArthur got up in the pulpit and said: *"I don't know who you are, but whoever you are, I wish you'd either get your life straightened out, or leave! You're ruining our testimony out in the world."*

Gene Getz says: **"The credibility of the individual church member out in the world lays the foundation upon which the individual testimony can be believable."** "It's not (most important) what happens up in the pulpit, but what happens out there in your (i.e. the church members') lives."

7. FOR A CHURCH TO BE BIBLICAL, IT MUST HAVE A DEEP DEVOTION TO THE FAMILY - Ps. 127; Eph. 5:22-6:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; etc.

"God's design for human society is the passing on of a godly seed through well ordered, Christ exalting families." Emphasize and help the families in your church! For instance, teach your members about the roles of the husband and wife; how to discipline children biblically; how husbands should love their wives; how wives can honor their husbands; how to have a personal family devotional time; etc., and then model it before them with your own family (1 Tim. 3:4-5)!

8. FOR A CHURCH TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT MUST BE WILLING TO CHANGE – e.g. Christ vs. the Pharisees

Someone has said that the seven last words of a dying church are: *'We've never done it that way before.'* **IMPORTANT NOTE: We are NOT talking about changing our beliefs & doctrines, or compromising God's message!** What we are talking about are things like changing a program, changing the time of a church service, doing outreach in a different way, etc.

Remember: "The forms (routines) are not sacred! Moving a Sunday School class to a different venue seems to be the end of the kingdom for some (churches)." Beware of meaningless tradition (Matt. 15:1-9). Spurgeon once said: *"Suppose there were no church buildings, no chapels, no services, no assemblies for worship. Would you still be a Christian?"* Of course! So try to be flexible. It's good for a church to not always do everything in the same way forever. Some people go through formalities and habits, but it is nothing but meaningless ritual and tradition to them.

Illustration: MacArthur's old relative who once asked him: "*John, are you having a Christmas Eve service?*" 'No,' replied MacArthur. '*Oh, that's too bad... We're having an 11:00pm service at the Methodist church,*" she declared. MacArthur then asked her: "*Are you going?*" Her reply: "***Going... No one goes!***"

9. FOR A CHURCH TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT HAS TO LIVE BY FAITH - Ps. 118:8; Prov. 3:5-6; Matt. 17:20; Mark 11:22; Lk. 17:5 & Heb. 11:1, 3, 6.

"We have to step out and believe God for some things that only He can do, so that when He does them, He gets all the glory... We're not talking about foolish gambles, but trusting God for what He is leading us to do, but for which we have not the resources."

10. FOR A CHURCH TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT MUST BE MARKED BY A SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE - 2 Sam. 24:24; Mal. 1:13-14; John 12:3; 2 Cor. 8:1-6.

Sacrifices of time, sacrifices of money, sacrifices of energy, is what we are talking about here.

Illustration: A couple in MacArthur's church were planning to get married, and had been saving their money for a year to be able to take a special honeymoon trip when they got married. Instead, they decided to give all the money they had saved for that trip to the church to use for the Lord's work! This does not mean it is wrong to take a nice trip, save money, or own something nice! We are simply saying that growing churches have members who sacrifice and go the extra mile to help God's work go forward.

11. FOR A CHURCH TO BE CHRIST-HONORING, IT MUST HAVE A PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON WORSHIP AND PRAISE - Ps. 29:1-2; 100:4. In the morning services MacArthur's church emphasizes worshipping the Lord. In their evening services, they emphasize praising the Lord.

Concluding thought:

"All of the above points are built on the foundation and presupposition of preaching and teaching the Word of God. Without that primary emphasis on the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, everything else will be fruitless, and even impossible." (MacArthur)