



CAN
YOU
IMAGINE?

Discovering Jesus' Plan for
the New Testament Church

Rob Weber

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Testament Church.

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*To my dear wife,
Karen,
whose Christian companionship
has made life an adventure and this study a reality.*

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0.1 Author's Prologue

The study of God's plan for the Church projects a picture and presence of what can be and what might be, what was and what surely will be again. The Scriptures themselves will witness to your spirit and reveal His Church, filled with the life of Jesus Christ and endowed with the unconquerable power of God's perfect love. It is a Church courageous in witness, joyous in persecution, and whose members consider themselves strangers and exiles in the world. Together, they happily travel the narrowest of all roads, leading to the one destination for which all human hearts long, heavenly Jerusalem.

The author initiated his study while attending Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. As a young, zealous Christian, it was perplexing as he considered the gap between God's greatness and limitless grace in Christ and the everyday life experience of most believers. It was as if God provided a 200 amp service box (enough electricity for an entire house) and believers' lives were illuminated by a single 25 watt light bulb. What tremendous unused potential! But why?

What was the void? More importantly, what was the needed connection? A book by Alexander R. Hay, titled *New Testament Church and Missionary*, pointed to the Church's organization and workings as key to releasing God's divine intention in the lives of everyday saints. Believing that the Bible held the answers, the questioning author made a note card study of the New Testament during his last year in seminary (1980-81). Reading the New Testament from beginning to end yielded almost 600 references to the church and its activities. In addition, the author reviewed 39 books written on the subject of the Church. The note cards were sorted by theme and organized into groups, ultimately forming the outline of the study.

More than twenty years lapsed, the original outline and shoe box of note cards biding their time. Now, ten children later and evermore happily married to the same wife, ten years working in industry as a marketing professional and another twelve years developing an "old economy" manufacturing business, the shoe box of study cards resurrected.

The original outline was due a slight change of attitude. Every section is now introduced with discussion in hopes of providing fuller perspective

to the subject. More importantly, the entire scripture for each Bible reference is reprinted in the text.

“The proof of the pudding,” as the saying goes, *“is in the eating.”* It is the author’s deepest conviction that someday soon we will experience the Church overflowing anew with a remarkable love, joy and peace as to rival the earliest band of Christians. Their powerful love and childlike faith sparked a spontaneous expansion of the Church and turned the world in their own day upside down.

I hope you and I are members of it.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rob Weber

0.2 Introduction

Can you imagine “What is possible in God?” Your first reaction might be, “But of course, all things are possible with God.” True, certainly, and yet who do you know lives as if that truth penetrated their soul?

The first human couple, Adam and Eve, uncovered what is possible outside of God. They ate the forbidden fruit and unleashed a flood of death dealing consequences from which we still suffer today (Genesis 3:6-8).

What are the possibilities for you and me in God? The Bible provides a record of ordinary lives transformed to extraordinary when joined with God in His eternal purposes. Noah erected an ark safely carrying his family and species of the animal kingdom through the Great Flood and repopulating the earth (Genesis 6-9). Abraham abandoned his country, following the Lord to an unknown land which his descendants inhabit today against all odds (Genesis 12:1-4). Jael won a great victory for Israel without leaving the perimeter of her home. An enemy commander, exhausted and in retreat, made an unplanned stop at her home seeking food and shelter. After a meal, while he slumbered, Jael drove a tent stake through his temple, triumphing over Israel’s enemy (Judges 4:17-22). Hannah, refusing to remain barren, “poured out her soul before the Lord” (1 Samuel 1:15) and God opened her womb with the birth of Samuel, the prophet.

Ancient earth reveals God’s possibilities hidden in creation. Several years ago, miners in the Naica Silver and Lead Mine of Chihuahua, Mexico, discovered a cavern containing a literal forest of the world’s largest crystals. Unmatched in proportion, the crystals average four feet in diameter and thirty feet in length, some as long as fifty feet! (web search: giant crystals) **Can you imagine?**

Working for a seventy year old firm whose top management anticipated limited growth, human projections could not rival God’s possibilities. Within a short three year period, a flood of new products drove sales to increase four-fold. **Can you imagine?**

Old Testament prophets spoke of the day when God would break the pernicious problem of sin, not by writing tougher laws or establishing wiser leaders, but by replacing man’s stony, self loving heart with a heart of flesh, truly capable of loving God and our fellow man. How? By pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, each person is enabled to know Him personally (Joel 2:28, Ezekiel 36:26). **Can you imagine?**

What if you cannot imagine? The New Testament recounts an interesting story involving religious leaders who had no expectation of better things to come. They possessed no hope for the future, refusing to believe in the afterlife. One account describes their attempt to prove that the resurrection of the dead was a complete impossibility. Imagine that! In the record, these religious and learned folk strongly defended their conviction, relying on Scripture for justification. Jesus listened patiently, but rejected their logic. Pointing to where their mental road map took them off course, Jesus said, “You are mistaken, because you don’t know the scriptures or the power of God.”

Matthew 22:23-33: ²³On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, ²⁴asking, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up children for his brother.’ ²⁵Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; ²⁶so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. ²⁷Last of all, the woman died. ²⁸In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her.”

²⁹But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ³²‘I am the God Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” ³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

To a degree, more or less, you and I might accept the logic of the Sadducees of old, living a less-than-possible life and not knowing the scriptures or the power of God. Jesus said, “I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Have we tested the limits of the more than abundant life? Have we plumbed the depths of the peace that passes all understanding? (Philippians 4:7) Have we held our breath

with joy inexpressible (1 Peter 1:8), or lost ourselves in the love of God which is beyond knowledge? (Ephesians 3:19)

What is possible in God? Can you imagine a simple way to gain entrance into a lifetime of continual discovery?

As a young man I was accused of asking too many questions and having too few answers. As an unbeliever it was troublesome to explain why people act the way they do. Particularly perplexing: as natural as it is to live unhappily, the task to create genuine happiness, at least for more than a moment of time, lay far beyond my reach. Thankfully, after personal salvation, the spiritual understanding of sin and the power of sin dissolved these bafflements.

And along with salvation, new questions surfaced. Why do Christians act the way they do and why do so many, including myself, live less than more abundantly? What changed?

Did God change? No! Did His power or His good will toward us or the promises and precepts in His word change? “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, yes and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). “All flesh is like grass and the flower of grass. The grass fades and the flower falls off but the Word of God abides forever” (Isaiah 40:8). Likewise, human nature remains unchanged: fallen. “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) Temptations and our Adversary remain constant. What changed?

What is so fundamentally different from the early, New Testament Church as to explain the spiritual poverty inflicting so many saints today? The answer lies in the conventional wisdom men use to organize the church and its functions, a pattern totally foreign to the New Testament. The Church that flamed to life at Pentecost two thousand years ago is the model that we will explore. Jesus’ own teaching, as well as His will revealed through the apostles and authors of scripture, describe a Church uniquely designed to serve the needs of the saints, unlock the personal experience of His actual presence, and release His almighty power in the lives of ordinary believers. Through a living, vibrant Church, God will flood the earth with the knowledge of His glory: His saving mercy in the Gospel of Christ.*

*Thankfully, Jesus’ triumphant return does not await our successful evangelizing of the world. Hallelujah! He can come at any moment! When our Heavenly Father says, “Enough, it’s time,” He will send an angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people

You may wonder how God's plan for the Church, detailed in the Bible, could disappear almost unnoticed. Actually, other basic Bible truths, even plainly stated ones, were neglected or simply "lost" for long periods of time.

One example, "salvation by grace through faith" a key tenet proclaimed in the Protestant Reformation was previously a sweet mercy hidden from the Church for possibly over 1000 years. Until then, salvation came solely through the Church, through its priests, and the administration of sacraments. One could purchase forgiveness from the Church with money by buying an "indulgence." **Can you imagine?**

Ephesians 2:8: ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 3:24: ²⁴...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

In the early 1500s Martin Luther championed the truth of saving grace through personal faith in Christ, setting the foundation stone of the Protestant Reformation. New churches were formed (for example: the Lutheran Church, named after Martin Luther) and the monopoly of the Catholic Church, exclusive and authoritarian, began to splinter.

We ponder how on earth a central saving truth vanished in the midst of a believing community. During most of the period between the birth of the New Testament Church at Pentecost and the Protestant Reformation only Church leaders could access the Bible and only in the ancient languages of Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Furthermore, religious and civil law prohibited translating scripture into any common language understood by all. *Fox's Book of Martyrs* records the persecution and death faced by those who bravely did translate and distribute scripture.

Why would leaders entrusted with the Church's wellbeing prevent their congregations from reading the Bible? Furthermore, why would the same religious leaders teach false doctrines, enticing the multitudes to buy God's forgiveness through indulgences? The love of money, lust for power, and desire for position and privilege provide sufficient explanation.

(Revelation 14:6). The sacred proclamation will be complete. He will reap His harvest field.

Another reasonable question is “Why would God provide a detailed plan for the Church, its organization and activities?” How could a single plan address all the needs of diverse peoples, cultures, languages and times of history? Reviewing Bible history uncovers how frequently God provided detailed plans.

In the construction of Noah’s ark, length, width, height and materials used are all detailed. The directions provide an overview of the construction, not a design intended to be duplicated ever again.

Genesis 6:14-16: ¹⁴Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

¹⁶You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

The design of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant, formed the spiritual gathering place utilized by God’s people as the center of Old Testament worship.

Exodus 25:9-40: ⁹According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.

¹⁰They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. ¹¹You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it. ¹²You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on one side of it and two rings on the other side of it. ¹³You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. ¹⁵The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it. ¹⁶You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.

¹⁷You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ¹⁸You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. ²⁰The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. ²¹You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²²There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

²³You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. ²⁴You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a gold border around it. ²⁵You shall make for it a rim of a handbreadth around it; and you shall make a gold border for the rim around it. ²⁶You shall make four gold rings for it and put rings on the four corners which are on its four feet. ²⁷The rings shall be close to the rim as holders for the poles to carry the table. ²⁸You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that with them the table may be carried. ²⁹You shall make its dishes and its pans and its jars and its bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. ³⁰You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.

³¹Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand and its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. ³²Six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side and three branches of the lampstand from its other side. ³³Three cups shall be shaped like almond blossoms in the one branch, a bulb and a flower, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bulb and a flower—so for six branches

going out from the lampstand; ³⁴and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond blossoms, its bulbs and its flowers. ³⁵A bulb shall be under the first pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the second pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the third pair of branches coming out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. ³⁶Their bulbs and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it shall be one piece of hammered work of pure gold. ³⁷Then you shall make its lamps seven in number; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it. ³⁸Its snuffers and their trays shall be of pure gold. ³⁹It shall be made from a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. ⁴⁰See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

The duties of the priests and the system of sacrifices and feasts practiced throughout Old Testament history from the construction of the tabernacle to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., entailed what sacrifices, when, why, how performed and by whom. More than enough detail - a literal handbook for generations of God's people to study and follow each procedure.

Leviticus 1: ¹Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, ²“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock.

³If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. ⁴He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. ⁵He shall slay the young bull before the LORD; and Aarons sons the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ⁶He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. ⁷The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸Then Aarons sons

the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet over the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar. ⁹Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁰But if his offering is from the flock, of the sheep or of the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer it a male without defect. ¹¹He shall slay it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD, and Aarons sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. ¹²He shall then cut it into its pieces with its head and its suet, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar. ¹³The entrails, however, and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it, and offer it up in smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁴But if his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering from the turtledoves or from young pigeons. ¹⁵The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head and offer it up in smoke on the altar; and its blood is to be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶He shall also take away its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar eastward, to the place of the ashes. ¹⁷Then he shall tear it by its wings, but shall not sever it And the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar on the wood which is on the fire; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.” (This is only the beginning of God’s instructions for sacrifices, but it provides a flavor of the depth of detail provided.)

God’s detailed plans given to man are a common theme in Bible history. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). God-given plans for God’s work are a mercy. Jesus promised, “I will build My church.”

Does it seem a stretch to look for organizational solutions when man’s problems seem rooted in the individual Christian life? Personal failings

are generally attributed to a lack of faith, shallowness of commitment, or simple disobedience.

For good or ill, organizational systems exert mighty influences and deeply affect personal behavior. The United States of America is unquestionably the most successful nation in history. Is this because Americans are by nature the smartest or most industrious folk on the face of the earth? (Ans: No.) Unique among nations is its organization which recognizes the God given rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The Founding Fathers trusted God's influence in the daily life of each citizen. All political systems that deny this truth fail to unlock the potential of their people as history and present experience proves.

Perhaps you have read about businesses that "reorganize," describing management's efforts to reroute everything. The design directing the functions and relationships of individuals within the firm is flawed; not the training or competency of the workers. The employees sincerely work, but unproductively and below their capabilities.

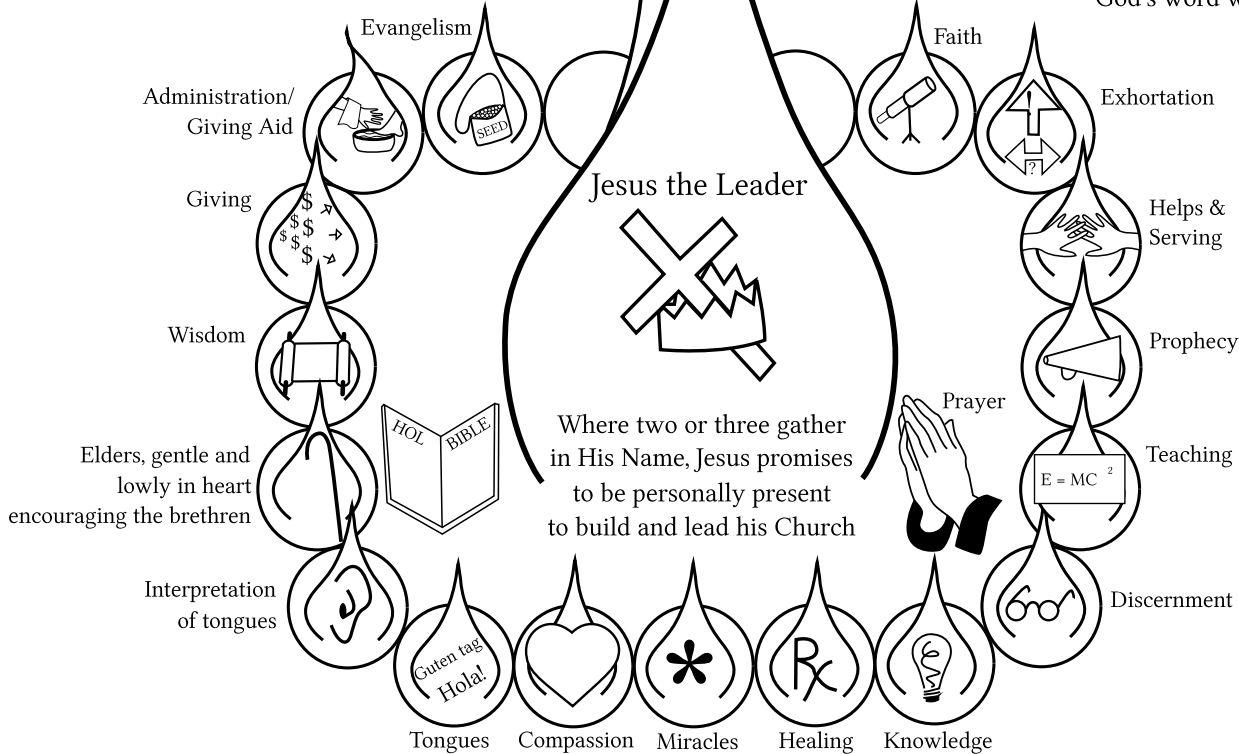
As we have seen, God provided detailed design and order for the religious organization and community life of His people under the Old Covenant. It seems plausible that He also communicated a plan for the organization of the Church of the New Covenant (New Testament). Can you imagine entrusting the design of His Church to the wisdom or imagination of the Twelve Apostles or the most up-to-date organizational theories of Twenty-First Century Christians?

In fact, the record of the New Testament provides ample information regarding God's plan for His Church. Our responsibility is to search the scriptures and believe that what God designed, He can and will build. Even the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Remember the error of the Sadducees, who did not understand the scriptures or the power of God.

The New Testament Church

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts and ministrations to the brethren

Each saint filled with the Holy Spirit, sharing God's word with the brethren



The New Testament Church, with Jesus personally present as the actual Leader, the Holy Spirit, His Administrator, and with saints, each and every one, as priests to God, ministers to one another, and witnesses to the world.

1 Pictures of the Church

It is not an exaggeration to say that a picture is truly worth a thousand words. God harnesses the power of pictures to help us visualize the essential nature of His Church.

The New Testament describes the Church in at least seven ways:

- God's Dwelling Place
- God's Family
- Jesus' Body
- A Royal, Holy Priesthood
- The Bride of Christ
- The Pillar and Support of the Truth
- The Flock of God
- God's Field

1.1 God's Dwelling Place

Unlike any other social institution, the Church houses God on the earth. The Church welcomes God as His abiding place; a home, a place designed and perfectly suited for Him. The saying relates that a man's home is his castle. The Church functions as a dwelling place where everyone revolves around the King of the house, God our Father and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church is divinely conceived and divinely built, where God is Master and Lord, and all things reflect His holy presence.

Ephesians 2:21,22: ...²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:5: ...⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 3:15: ¹⁴I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵but 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. ¹⁶By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness:

He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.

1.2 The Church is God's Family.

The Church is the Family of God. God is our Father and we are all adopted sons and daughters. God sits at the head of the table. Jesus is the first born among many brethren.

In His family, the full range of strengths and weaknesses are present; all the faults and foibles along with goodnesses and graces. The joined lives of real people make up God's family, each one loved and adopted by God our Father.

A healthy family's bio would read: Loving relationships, trust, responsibility, encouragement, training, discipline, commitment. If there ever were a complete family, God's family can meet and exceed all expectations.

John 1:12,13: ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Mark 3:35: ³⁵For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.

Romans 9:26: ²⁶And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," there they shall be called sons of the living God.

Romans 8:10-16: ¹⁰If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

¹²So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God...

1.3 The Church is Jesus’ Body - obedient to His command.

Jesus is the Head. We are His body, fulfilling His will in the world. Every body functions with purpose and working parts. Its health depends on the fitness of each individual part, even the least. The Church performs the tasks, and Jesus provides purpose, power and plans. Jesus is alive and well, His body functioning in the world and fulfilling His ministry. The movements of Jesus come alive, a motion picture of skill, coordination, energy and direction. Jesus’ Body continues the mercy deeds of Jesus on earth, a man who went about doing good, and always fulfilling the deeds that pleased His Father (Acts:10:38).

1 Corinthians 12:27: ²⁷Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.

Colossians 1:24: ²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.

Ephesians 5:28-30,32: ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but

nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,³⁰ because we are members of His body...³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

1.4 The Church - a royal, holy priesthood.

The New Testament pictures the Church as a royal, holy priesthood; an assembly or nation of priests to God, ministering to God with praise, thanksgiving and prayer. We, as priests, lift others before God's throne in prayer and through our witness to the World bring the light of the knowledge of the glory of God to those living in darkness.

The writer of Hebrews records Jesus as a priest according the Order of Melchizedek, not according to the lineage of Aaron, but by the power of an indestructible life (Hebrews 7:16). By that same life, eternal life, we follow in His footsteps as priests according to that same order.

1 Peter 2:5,9: ...⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

Revelation 5:9,10: ⁹And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

1.5 The Church, The Pillar and Support of the Truth.

The Church shoulders a singularly solemn and sobering responsibility, lifting up God's truth in a world where the Prince of the Power of Darkness reigns (2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:13). Jesus entrusted His Church with the sacred scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit and alone able to impart life, health, peace, joy, and the true love of God.

1 Timothy 3:15: ¹⁴I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵but 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. ¹⁶By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness:

He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.

Matthew 5:13-16: ¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

1.6 The Church - The Bride of Christ.

The Church is the Bride of Christ, its members betrothed, eagerly awaiting the final and complete union with Christ in God. As man and woman become one in marriage, the dawn of the day of God will inaugurate the marriage supper of the Lamb when the redeemed Church unites with her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Even now, Jesus prepares New Jerusalem and the Marriage Supper. He will return for the Church - The Bride of Christ.

Revelation 21:9,10: ⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit

to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God...”

Revelation 19:7: ⁵And a voice came from the throne, saying,

“Give praise to our God,
all you His bond-servants,
you who fear Him,
the small and the great.”

⁶Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,

“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God,
the Almighty, reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and be glad
and give the glory to Him,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come
and His bride has made herself ready.”

⁸It was given to her to clothe herself
in fine linen, bright and clean;
for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

⁹Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”

Revelation 22:17: ¹⁶I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. ¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, “Come” And let the one who hears say, “Come” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”

1.7 The Church is the flock of God

The picture of God’s flock illustrates two characteristics central to understanding the church. 1) The flock needs its shepherd. 2) The flock knows its shepherd. Take a good look at the brethren around you. We are all sheep in

God's flock. We all personally know our Good Shepherd and follow Him. Thank God for our Shepherd and the simple truths that unite us! Psalm 23 deepens our understanding of the benefits of the Shepherd's care.

1 Peter 5:1,2: ¹Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ²shepherd the flock of God among you...

John 10:14-16: ¹⁴I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

1.8 The Church is God's field, a divine planting

There are those who tend his field but God causes the growth.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9: ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

2 Jesus, the Ruling Christ

Next, let's discover the place of our Lord Jesus Christ in God's plan for the Church.

2.1 Jesus Christ is the supreme authority over all rulers and authorities.

Jesus is the Ruling Christ who has the power and authority to fully accomplish His will in His Church and in the world.

Colossians 2:10: ...¹⁰and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Matthew 28:18: ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Revelation 1:5: ...⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood...

2.2 Jesus is the Head of His body, the Church.

Imagine the Church, the Body of Christ, with Jesus as its actual head. Some might say, "Preposterous," others "...scandalous!" He is our only Leader, present and able to direct His saints to do His good will.

Colossians 1:18: ¹⁸He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Ephesians 1:22,23: ²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4:15: ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ...

2.3 Jesus is, Himself, personally present when we assemble as His Church.

Jesus personally presides in our midst, meaning His “preeminence” with respect to the Church (Colossians 1:18). We gather at His command and in His presence. He is the One we need and He has what we need. We hear His voice, “I am the good shepherd.” His sheep know His voice, hear His voice, and follow Him. How do we know that He is present in our meeting? He promised never to leave us or forsake us. With eyes and ears of faith He is seen and heard by those who gather, listen and wait.

Matthew 18:20: ²⁰For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.

Matthew 28:20b: ...^{20b}and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

2.4 Jesus is the builder of His Church.

The Church is a dwelling of God in the Spirit, and our Lord Jesus is the builder of the unique, divine structure. God questioned King David, “What kind of a house will you build for Me?” Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God is supremely qualified and ever willing to construct a house, a dwelling place, of the joined-lives of the saints. “I will build My Church,” He said.

Matthew 16:15-18: ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸I 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.”

Hebrews 3:2-6: ²He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. ³For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. ⁴For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a

testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; ⁶but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Colossians 2:19: ...¹⁹and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9: ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not mere men?

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

2.5 Jesus is the Cornerstone.

Our Lord, the Builder, also shoulders the burden as the Cornerstone of the Church, the supreme foundation stone, on whom all other stones rest. Each saint is set as a living stone, placed stone on stone by the hand of God. Any other BEGINNING STONE frustrates the building of a temple of God in the Spirit.

Matthew 21:42: ⁴²Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The Stone which the builders rejected, This became the Chief Corner Stone; This came about from the LORD, And it is marvelous in our eyes’? ⁴³“Therefore I say

to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. ⁴⁴And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

2.6 Jesus is the Leader of His Church.

Jesus governs His Church. He leads each saint in life and service by His gentle and lowly spirit. Jesus leads as the Servant of All, calling, “Follow Me.”

Matthew 23:1-12: ¹Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ²saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. ⁵But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. ⁶They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. ⁸But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. ¹¹But the greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹²Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Luke 6:46-49: ⁴⁶“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground

without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

2.7 Jesus is the Chief Shepherd.

One Chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, shepherds the flock. All others appointed to shepherd and guide are under-shepherds, accountable to the saints and answering to the one, supreme Shepherd.

1 Peter 2:25: ²⁵For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

1 Peter 5:4 (Peter addressing elders): ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

2.8 Jesus is the great Guardian of our souls.

“If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31). The devil, our adversary, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking all whom he may devour. Take heart, dear saint! Jesus stands along side us to guard and keep us safe now and forever.

1 Peter 2:25: ²⁵For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

John 10:27-30: ²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.

Revelation 7:13-17: ¹³Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?” ¹⁴I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.

¹⁶They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;

¹⁷for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

2.9 Jesus is our High Priest.

Within the Church, a kingdom of priests to God, Jesus functions as the High Priest of our confession. He is, even now, at the right hand of the Father, ever to make intercession for us.

Hebrews 4:14-16: ¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

2.10 Jesus is our Bridegroom.

Jesus is the Bridegroom, the Church, His bride. The ultimate proof of His love, a life sacrificed for another, culminated on the cross.

John 3:28,29: ²⁸You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, “I am not the Christ,” but, “I have been sent ahead of Him.” ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.

3 The Holy Spirit's Ministry in the Church

Have you ever wondered, "How far away is heaven?" When Jesus ascended in the glory cloud to join His Father at His right hand, how far did He actually go? Was it "just around the corner" or "to the other side of the moon"? How far away is heaven?

The nearness of heaven is hinted about in the account of Stephen's death, told in the Book of Acts. Arrested, Stephen bravely faced the Jewish council and being full of the Holy Spirit made his good confession. Filled with rage, the eyes of the Jewish leaders fumed dark with murder but Stephen's eyes looked upward and in the clearness of a pure heart saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. What was our Lord doing... standing? He was standing with Stephen, leading His Church to victory. Hallelujah! Stephen's last words were addressed to the One Standing Near, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Then he fell asleep.

In that courageous moment, how far was Stephen from heaven? How far are you and I from that Holy Assembly? Is heaven any further than a baby can crawl from the safety of his mother's arms or as far as a kitten can wander from the litter? The Bible teaches that if the veil parted which separates this world from the eternal splendor, you and I would see that same One Stephen saw "standing at the right hand of the Father." Can you imagine? Seen or unseen, Jesus is at this moment in our midst! Glory!

Nearer still than the Blessed Standing One is the Helper, Comforter, Teacher and Promise of the Father who dwells in our hearts. He quickens our spirits. By His presence we can cry out "Abba, Father." The mystery hidden from long ages passed and now providentially revealed... "Christ in you, the hope of glory!" Jesus is recognized as our Leader, the Holy Spirit as His Administrator.

3.1 The Holy Spirit creates the Body of Christ through His indwelling presence.

1 Corinthians 12:12,13: ¹²For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or

Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Romans 8:9: ⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

3.2 In the Body of Christ, the Many, through the Holy Spirit, are made ONE.

“That they may all be ONE,” was Jesus’ prayer, “even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You” (John 17:21).

1 Corinthians 12:12,13,20,27: ¹²For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit... ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body... ²⁷Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.

Romans 12:5: ...⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

3.3 The Holy Spirit is present in the assembly of the Church.

John 14:16,17: ¹⁶I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

Acts 5:4 (Speaking to Ananias, Peter said...): ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22: ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will

for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

3.4 The Holy Spirit is the Administrator of spiritual gifts and ministries.

1 Corinthians 12:4-16: ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

¹²For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

3.5 The Holy Spirit leads God's people in life and service.

Romans 8:14: ¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Acts 2:17,18: ¹⁷“And it shall be in the Last days,” God says, “That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; Even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy.”

Acts 16:6,7,9: ⁶They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; ⁷and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them... ⁹A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

3.6 The Holy Spirit is our Teacher.

John 14:25-27: ²⁵These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

1 Corinthians 2:12,14: ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God... ¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1 John 2:20: ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

John 16:13: ¹³But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

3.7 The Holy Spirit fully equips the local Church with spiritual gifts for particular ministries according to His plan.

1 Corinthians 1:1,2,4-7: ¹Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours...

⁴I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Corinthians 12:4-6,11,18: ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. ¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills... ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

3.8 The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each saint enabling us to minister to our brothers and sisters in Christ and bless those outside the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:7: ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Peter 4:10: ¹⁰As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Corinthians 7:7: ⁷Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

3.9 The measure and manner of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are as deep as the needs of the human heart and as wide as the reach of Christ's Great Commission.

Romans 12:6-8: ⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10: ⁸For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:28-30: ²⁸And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? ³⁰All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

3.10 The Holy Spirit appoints saints for service.

These ministries may take many forms including those listed below.

1 Corinthians 12:28

Apostles
Prophets
Teachers
Workers of Miracles
Healers
Helps
Administrations
Various kinds of tongues

Ephesians 4:7-12

Apostles
Prophets
Pastors (Elders)
Teachers
Evangelists

1 Corinthians 12:28: ²⁸And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

Ephesians 4:7-12: ⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says,

“When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And he gave gifts to men.”

⁹(Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Romans 1:3-5: ³concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake...

3.11 An important purpose of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is to perfect (equip to completeness) all the saints in order that each one can effectively serve to build up the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-16: ⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says,

“When He ascended on high, He led captive a host
of captives, And he gave gifts to men.”

⁹(Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until 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. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

3.12 Each and every saint is God's gift to the Church and belongs to the Church. God's Church belongs to no man or group of men.

1 Corinthians 3:1-23: ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not

yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

¹⁶Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

¹⁸Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is the One who catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰and again, "The LORD knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless." ²¹So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or

death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, ²³and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

4 Authority and Church Leadership

The New Testament describes and teaches a form of Church leadership and authority remarkably different from that by many places today. Historians say the emergence of “ecclesiasticism” (church hierarchy and clear clergy/laity distinctions) did not occur until sometime in the 2nd century. From early on the rise of secular authority models continued until eventually Church leaders held powers equal to civil government.

The Dark Ages with its feudalism and barbarism were supported by the leaders of the Christian Church in their quest to gain, hold, and exercise power. The Spanish Inquisition of the 1600’s, with its horrific brutality and greed, only magnified this abusive pattern.

What other outcome could be expected from the “work of the Nicolaitans” which Jesus said, “I also hate” (Revelation 2:6). The word Nicolaitan means “one who rules over the laity” and their deeds are described in the New Testament.

Revelation 2:1-6: ¹To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

²“I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; ³and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. ⁶Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

2 Corinthians 11:13-20: ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also

disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

¹⁶Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. ¹⁷What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. ¹⁸Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. ¹⁹For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. ²⁰For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

Colossians 2: ¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. ⁵For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

⁶Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ⁹For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him

through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

¹⁶Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— ¹⁷things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

²⁰If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹“Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” ²²(which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

3 John 1:9,10: ⁹I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.

God allowed the evil planting to grow and blossom for a moment of

time. In His administration of the ages, He raised up a man to turn over the soil of His garden and plant new seeds of grace, truth and, ultimately, glory.

In the early 1500's, Martin Luther stood in opposition to the Church by declaring the Bible truth of "salvation by grace through faith". As a result, Luther endured severe persecution from Church leaders. Luther's experience, the penalty and death dealt by the Church to those who paved the way for him, the ill treatment of those who followed his footsteps, the suffering inflicted on those whose only offense was to disobey Church leaders in translating and distributing Bibles printed in commonly understood languages, all these give strong testimony to the death grip the spirit-of-the-world held on the Church.

An early bloom in this reformation planting was the 1611 publication of the King James Bible, the first legally authorized English language Bible. In spite of this breakthrough, worshipping outside the Anglican Church in England resulted in serious civil penalties and punishments. The continued lack of religious freedom was responsible for the flight of the pilgrims to the New World, a savage wilderness promising freedom to worship God as personal conscience dictated, without risk of penalty.

4.1 Revivals

Beginning with the Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther, many movements have been breathed by God to plant, prune, tend, and harvest His garden. Revivals have stirred His people, restoring to the Church lost truths and forgotten experiences. Chief among these revivals are:

4.1.1 Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation (early 1500's) restored the individual believer's personal approach to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as opposed to the church's teaching which placed priest between the saint and his Savior. In the established church salvation was obtained from the church through the priests in the administration of the holy sacraments. The Protestant Reformation broke the Church's monopoly for dispensing salvation. Once again as in the Early Church anyone could by grace, through faith in Christ's propitiatory work, receive forgiveness of sins and begin an eternal relationship with God.

Ephesians 3:8,9: ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—⁹not because of works, lest any man should boast.

4.1.2 Wesleyan Revival

The Wesleyan Revival, in the early to mid 1700's, witnessed the reading and practice of Bible truth embraced by common working folks in an organized and methodical way. The movement emphasized the study and application of the Bible to everyday life. The revival began in England with John Wesley, the leading figure, but spread more successfully in America with the establishment of the Methodist Church. The Methodists held two radical beliefs. First, Methodists believed individuals could “know” or have the assurance of their salvation... a witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, confirming their adoption as sons of God. Second, that each believer could be “entirely sanctified” or perfected in love as a second work of grace.

Romans 8:14-16: ¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

1 John 3:1-10: ¹See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

⁴Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the

one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

4.1.3 Pentecostal Revival

The Pentecostal Revival, starting with the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, reintroduced the infilling and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 11:13: ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

Mark 1:8: ⁸I (John the Baptist) baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

4.1.4 Charismatic Revival

The Charismatic Revival in the mid 1900's emphasized Bible truths regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to ordinary Christian people. The revival empowered "lay" people to use spiritual gifts to minister to the saints and the world (1 Corinthians 12; also see Chapter 3: "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit").

4.2 What's our place in God's Administration of the Ages?

It is possible to be so captivated by our own generation, the traditions, concerns and daily events, that we lose sight of God's acting in history to fulfill His plan for the ages, "the summing up of all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10).

We live almost two thousand years after Jesus birthed the Church by giving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Important New Covenant truths revealed in the New Testament scriptures were "lost" to the

Church-at-large for almost fifteen hundred years. Mercifully, the Protestant Reformation and revivals that followed restored many of these truths. What is God heading for?

Can you imagine a Church with each saint filled and possessed with the Holy Spirit? Can you imagine those saints meeting together in gladness and sincerity of heart, Jesus personally present leading unopposed and the Holy Spirit ministering unhindered through each saint to build up His Body? It is time for our Lord to take His rightful place in the midst of His gathered ones. I believe this is what the Bible teaches as the will of God. Ours is to understand Jesus' rightful place and surrender that position to Him; to know our rightful place and surrender ourselves to His will.

5 Jesus, Himself, teaches us about authority and its role in His Church

“Who will rule?” always takes its place as the central issue and greatest struggle. Who will rule in the heart? Who will rule in the home? Who will rule in the Church? Who will rule in the earth? The answers to these fundamental questions slowly come to light, one by one. Christ alone rightfully claims supreme authority over the human heart. Christ alone rightfully claims final authority in the home. Our Lord affirms His singular title and role as Leader in His Church. Someday soon the kingdoms of the earth will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever! Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords!

5.1 Our Lord reserves for Himself the sole right to the title of Leader.

All authority is vested in God the Father, and He gave it to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 23:1-12: ¹Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ²saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³*therefore all that they tell you, do and observe*, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. ⁵But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. ⁶They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. ⁸But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, *He who is in heaven*. ¹⁰Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is, Christ*. ¹¹But the greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹²Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Matthew 28:18-20: ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

5.2 Jesus totally rejects human, positional authority roles and establishes actual servanthood as the controlling principle of greatness in His Church.

We can receive Jesus as Leader or we can repeat the mistake of the early Israelites who demanded a king like those who ruled over their neighbors. Receive Jesus as the true King, the One who is gentle and lowly in heart. The One who stoops to serve. The One who actually serves.

Matthew 20:25-28: ²⁵But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:42-45: ⁴²Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Mark 9:33-37: ³³They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. ³⁵Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to

them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”³⁶ Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,³⁷ “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”

Luke 22:24-27: ²⁴And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’²⁶ *But it is not this way with you*, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

6 Jesus exercises His authority In His Church

6.1 Jesus exercised His authority and leadership through Paul who was an apostle.

Paul's writings are authoritative for faith and practice, not merely as the writings of an apostle, but as the message of Jesus Christ spoken through and written by Paul. Paul possessed no absolute authority inherent in his position as an apostle. Paul submitted and Jesus Christ lived, worked and spoke through him.

1 Thessalonians 2:13: ¹³For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 4:2,8: ²For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus... ⁸So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

1 Timothy 6:3-4: ³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions...

2 Peter 3:2,14-16: ²that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

1 Corinthians 14:37: ³⁷If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

Romans 16:25-27: ²⁵Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; ²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

2 Timothy 2:8: ⁸Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel...

2 Thessalonians 3:11,12: ¹¹For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

6.2 Paul's pattern for life (both faith and practice) sets forth a standard for us. Why? Because Paul imitated Jesus Christ as The Example of fullness of life.

1 Corinthians 11:1,2: ¹Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. ²Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

Philippians 3:17: ¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

6.3 Paul taught a standard code of faith and practice for all to follow.

1 Corinthians 4:14-17: ¹⁴I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For if you

were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. ¹⁷For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Corinthians 7:17,20: ¹⁷Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches... ²⁰Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

Philippians 4:9: ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

6.4 The saints of the early Church received Paul's instruction and obeyed, a reverent response to God's Word.

Philippians 2:12,13: ¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Philippians 3:17-19: ¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

1 Corinthians 11:2: ²Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

1 Thessalonians 2:13: ¹³For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but

for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 4:1: ¹Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3,15: ¹Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction... ¹⁵So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

2 Thessalonians 3:4: ⁴We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.

6.5 Paul distinguishes between his own opinion and the Lord's word.

1 Corinthians 7:5-14: ⁵Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

⁶But this I say by way of concession, not of command. ⁷Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

⁸But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. ⁹But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

¹⁰But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹(but if she does

leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

¹²But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

1 Thessalonians 4:15: ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 14:37: ³⁷If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

6.6 The authority and leadership of Jesus are made flesh in the lives of Timothy and Titus, traveling ministers.

Timothy, an evangelist, and Titus taught with authority, an authority not inherent in their positions, but in the standard of faith and practice which they lived (what they believed and how they lived) which originated with Paul who in turn received it from Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:1-2: ¹You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Titus 2:15: ¹⁵These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority Let no one disregard you.

1 Corinthians 4:17: ¹⁷For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

6.7 Jesus our Lord exercises His authority and leadership through the lives and service of elders.

Elders are men who know and follow Jesus Christ as evidenced by their character and conduct. Their teaching and example of life carry the force of moral and spiritual authority. Both the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit attest their lives and doctrine are worthy of imitation, having originated from the teaching of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and ultimately from the Lord Himself.

1 Peter 5:1-3: ¹Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ²shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Philippians 3:17: ¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Elders followed the example of Paul's life.)

Hebrews 13:17: ¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

6.8 The authority and leadership of the Lord Jesus were rejected by saints who practiced secular leadership principles.

Those who adopt secular leadership roles in the church reject the authority and leadership of the Lord Jesus. Diotrephes, an example of the secular model of authority, Jesus rejects and declares inappropriate in His Church. Jesus alone reigns as the sole authority and leader of His brethren. Diotrephes acted as the FIRST, CHIEF, and THE LEADING ONE among the saints of the church and was severely reprimanded. As the LEAST, SERVANT-OF-ALL, or SLAVE-OF-ALL, as Jesus commanded,

Diotrephes would have both blessed and been blessed. Instead, he erred in attitude and action by lording over the brethren and following the ways of the Nicolaitans (ones who “rule over” or “conquer” the laity). Jesus is the Chief Shepherd - all elders are under shepherds.

3 John 1:9,10: ⁹I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.

Revelation 2:6 (to the Church of Ephesus): ⁶Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15,19-20: ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds... ¹⁹For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. ²⁰For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

6.9 Jesus exercises His authority through each and every saint as each individual believer, in faith, submits to Him and obeys Him.

By submitting to one another, we submit to our Lord as He ministers through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Ephesians 5:17-21: ¹⁷So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

6.10 We recognize Jesus' leading in the Church as producing a unity of agreement, agreement involving the entire Church and revealed to each believer through the Holy Spirit. God's Church is neither episcopal (ruled by elders) nor congregational (ruled by majority vote). Jesus is Lord! He alone has the preeminence.

Jesus, Lord of His Church, reveals His will in the hearts of His saints. The settled agreement, a divinely inspired unity, requires neither discussion, debate or argument (although we should not be afraid to discuss differences of opinion). Those abiding in Christ, as led by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the will of their Leader. The patience of love waits for unity of understanding and direction.

Acts 6:1-7: ¹Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. ²So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

⁷The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Acts 13:1-3: ¹Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 15:22-30: ²²Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, ²³and they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. ²⁴Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, ²⁵it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”[†] ³⁰So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

[†]*The Western Text of the Acts of the Apostles* reads: “that ye abstain from idol sacrifices, and from blood, and from fornication and whatsoever ye would not should be done to yourselves, ye do not to another.” (*The Acts of the Apostles* translated by Canon J. M. Wilson, D.D.)

6.11 The Lord Jesus Christ alone has authority over His people.

Jesus is our Leader and Lord and we are all brothers and sisters. Secular authority positions function in their proper place in the secular world. In God's Church, Jesus tolerates no "popes," little or big. He alone governs His Church and presides personally in the assembly. He rules through His written Word, through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and through each and every believer, as each one speaks and lives out His message in the life of the Church and the world.

7 How God's Children Live Together

What kind of family is the family of God? What is it like to live in His House? **Can you imagine?**

Society familiarizes our culture with two terms regarding families, “functional” and “dysfunctional.” Born again into God’s family, Christians function uniquely toward each other. Grace flows abundantly for each member to interact in a large and diverse group, where unity may not have naturally occurred.

7.1 We are taught by God to love one another.

How? Not as we love ourselves, but in the same manner and measure as Christ loved us. The new commandment of the New Covenant takes Love and Love’s service to a higher plane. God’s perfect love modeled in Christ is described link by link in the Bible’s “Love” chapter, 1 Corinthians 13.

John 13:34-35: ³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

1 John 3:23: ²³This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

John 15:12: ¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

Romans 13:8: ⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:10: ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

1 Thessalonians 4:9: ⁹Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

1 Thessalonians 3:12: ...¹²and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;

1 Peter 4:8: ⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 1:22: ²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart...

Romans 12:10: ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

1 John 3:14-16: ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8: ¹If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. ⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

7.2 We are taught to be at peace with one another.

The presence of peace manifests our hearts' settled agreement with the King of Love. This is the simple happiness of love.

Mark 9:50: ⁵⁰Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

Romans 12:18: ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

7.3 We are taught to show forbearance to one another.

Forbearance is the perseverance of love. We bear the annoyances, thoughtless words and actions, and unkindnesses of others, returning good in exchange.

Colossians 3:13: ¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

7.4 We are taught to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another.

Confessing and praying is only possible in the tenderness of Love.

James 5:16-18: ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

7.5 We are taught to forgive one another.

The cost of forgiveness is the hurt that Love gladly accepts as its own.

Colossians 3:13: ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Ephesians 4:32: ³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

7.6 We are taught to accept one another.

Acceptance is the open arms of Love.

Romans 15:7: ⁷Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

7.7 We are taught to be of the same mind with one another.

Living as “one among equals” is the companionship of love.

Romans 15:5: ⁵Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus...

Philippians 2:1,2: ¹Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ²make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

7.8 We are taught to give preference to one another in honor, to practice the humility of love.

Put the other person first.

Romans 12:10: ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

1 Peter 5:5: ⁵You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Philippians 2:3: ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

7.9 We are taught to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

The respect that Love gives to the brethren (because Christ also dwells in them) allows each man to receive from all for each individuals' up-building. In all things, it is to the word of God acted upon and spoken by fellow believers that we humbly submit.

Ephesians 5:21: ...²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

1 Peter 5:5: ⁵You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

7.10 We are taught to be kind to one another.

Kindness, the generosity of Love.

Ephesians 4:32: ³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

7.11 We are taught to bear one another's burdens.

Burden-bearing, the priesthood of Love.

Galatians 6:2: ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

7.12 We are taught to be hospitable to one another without complaint.

Hospitality, the open arms of Love inviting and receiving others into the circle of our home.

1 Peter 4:9: ⁷The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. ⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaint. ¹⁰As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

7.13 We are taught to do good to those who are of the household of faith.

Well-doing, the service of Love.

Galatians 6:9,10: ⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

7.14 We are taught to greet one another with affection.

Love for a shared Savior accents the bond of Love's greeting.

1 Peter 5:14: ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:26: ²⁶Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

1 Corinthians 16:20: ²⁰All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Romans 16:16: ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

7.15 We are taught not to be angry with one another.

Love cannot hold a grudge or continually burn with anger.

Matthew 5:22: ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty

before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Ephesians 4:26,27: ²⁶Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity.

7.16 We are taught to be reconciled with our brother.

Separation, the heartache of Love, cries out to be healed with Love's reconciling balm.

Matthew 5:23,24: ²³Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

7.17 We are taught not to be haughty in mind toward one another.

Conceit is love-of-self. Love never adopts the Adversary's attitude or employs his methods.

Romans 12:16: ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

7.18 We are taught not to be puffed up (arrogant) one against another.

Love does not vaunt itself.

1 Corinthians 4:6,7,18-20: ⁶Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. ⁷For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive

it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? ... ¹⁸Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

7.19 We are taught not to lie to one another.

For those who have received the love of the truth, lying strikes at the taproot of a fruitful life.

Colossians 3:9: ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices...

7.20 We are taught not to complain against one another.

Personal preferences, likes and petty dislikes find no place to lodge at Love's table.

James 5:9: ⁹Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

7.21 We are taught not to speak against one another.

Love speaks to build-up, not to tear down.

James 4:11: ¹¹Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.

7.22 We are taught not to judge one another.

Love "lives and lets live," blesses and is a blessing.

Romans 14:13: ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this— not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

Romans 14:4: ⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

7.23 Summary

The “Rules of the House” may sound a bit far-fetched and impossible to execute, an extensive list. The Church, unlike any other human organization, is empowered by the fire of God's love. Together with our brothers and sisters we can, by the Holy Spirit, cry out, “Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).

Obviously, no exemptions are offered for the above requirements. The “rules of engagement” apply to the whole Church, whether apostle or miracle worker or teacher or elder or speaker in tongues or anyone. We should not demand to be treated according to the guidelines of love, no matter our position, age, education, income, or any personal characteristic leading us to expect “better.” Love endures all things and acquires the prize. Love covers a multitude of sins.

The Bible says that as believers we “have tasted of the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:5). Chief among those powers reigns the power to love one another as God in Christ loved us! The proof of our love for God is found in our love shown for the brethren. When we are united in love we radiate the unmistakable witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ (John 17:23). Let us all join, Church, and love one another!

8 The Ministry of the Many: Jesus Leads Through Our Obedient Service

The remarkable involvement of the saints recorded in the New Testament depicts an unhindered flow the the Holy Spirit, absent of the controlling hand of man. Within the sacred pages, the budding smells, sights and sounds announce a long awaited Springtime. As winter's icy grip cannot arrest the coming of spring, the powers of darkness and the dread of death cannot silence the Holy Spirit. All the demons in Hell and every imagination and tradition of man raised up against the knowledge of God will be overthrown when confronted with Jesus. Our triumphant Lord leads His Church, making disciples of all nations and filling the earth with His kingdom come.

The acts of the Body of Christ really come to life with the advent of Pentecost, recorded in Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament. The record describes God's people speaking in tongues, prophesying, witnessing, praying, working miracles and signs, and doing deeds of kindness. His people gather together with gladness and sincerity of heart, taking care of widows and orphans, joyous in persecution, weeping with the sorrowful, and rejoicing with the glad hearted. Bible history recalls Jesus' disciples carrying on His work, seeking and saving the lost wherever they can be found.

Conspicuous by its absence is even the hint of an overbearing organization, ecclesiastical distinctions or artificial constraints of time. Instead, within the Church, the presence of delightful happiness, freshness of first love, and generosity like the Spirit of Christmas abound through lives given to God and joined in one Body, sharing one purpose, having one hope, and accepting one another just as they are accepted by God in Jesus Christ.

His Church, a motley crew and uncontrollable, humanly speaking, rejoices, not drunk with wine, but filled with the Holy Spirit. A church designed for the Ministry of the Many, Jesus leads and builds His Church through the obedient service of the many saints gathered.

8.1 The Ministry of the Many is foretold in the Old Testament.

8.1.1 God's intention revealed by Moses

Moses, the man of God, talked with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend (Exodus 33:11) and yet he also receives the description as the most humble man on earth (Numbers 12:3). For these two confirming reasons it isn't surprising that Moses first revealed God's heart and intention to accomplish His will by working through His many saints.

Numbers 11:24-29: ²⁴So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. Also, he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again.

²⁶But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷So a young man ran and told Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them." ²⁹But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

8.1.2 Prophesied by Joel

Joel, the prophet, also foretold a coming day when the office of prophet and the personal experience of the indwelling Holy Spirit would expand exponentially.

Joel 2:28,29: ²⁸It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,

Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
²⁹Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

8.2 Our Lord Himself practiced the Ministry of the Many.

8.2.1 Jesus began His ministry alone.

Luke 3:23: ²³When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph...

8.2.2 Then Jesus trained and sent out 12 apostles to minister as servants of God.

Luke 9:1-6: ¹And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. ²And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. ³And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. ⁵And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

8.2.3 Later, Jesus commissioned seventy unnamed disciples to minister in the same manner as the first 12 apostles.

Luke 10:1-20: ¹Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. ²And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no money belt, no bag,

no shoes; and greet no one on the way. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' ⁶If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. ⁸Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹²I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

¹³Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!

¹⁶The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." ¹⁸And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

8.2.4 Importantly, Jesus commanded His disciples not to hinder others from doing God's work.

Luke 9:49,50: ⁴⁹John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you."

8.3 The "Great Commission" given by Christ at His ascension forms the basis of His plan for The Ministry of the Many.

8.3.1 Marching Orders

Jesus commanded all His followers, each one, to:

GO! Make disciples. Baptize them. Teach them to obey Jesus' commands.

KNOW... His guiding, providing, comforting, loving, strengthening presence.

Matthew 28:18-20: ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus has the right to **COMMAND based on His supreme authority over all creation**, including you and me. He owns the right to command and the right to demand obedience. We simply obey and experience the peace and joy of entering into our mission.

Matthew 28:18: ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

8.3.2 His command extends to all who hear his command, whether directly from Him or relayed through others.

I can't remember the last time I saw an honest to goodness "chain letter," but Jesus' commission recorded in the Gospels has all the distinguishing features. Our Lord's command and promise, initially delivered to the immediate few (perhaps as many as 500) at His ascension, initiated "marching" orders to pass on to all disciples until the End of the Age.

Matthew 28:20: ...²⁰teaching them to observe **all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Jesus directed His final earthly command to His apostles and disciples present with Him on the mount as well as all those called by His name for all time.

In doing so He unleashed a mob in the world; a mob of mercy does sent out across the face of the earth, filled with the perfect love of God and carrying with them their personal, intimate relationship with Jesus and the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Believe on Him whom I believe. Follow Him whom I follow. Love Him whom I love and by whom we are all loved.

Our Lord coupled His awesome command with an equally incredible provision, "Wait until you receive the promise of the Father which I will send to you and you will be endued with power and you will be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). We need to receive His promised One, asking God to make us poor in spirit, to fill and possess us with the Holy Spirit, and to make us to know Jesus more and more. He will gladly give.

Experiencing the personal presence of Jesus Christ and knowing His promise of the same to each one of His followers fulfills all. Jesus is Who we need and He has what we need.

8.4 Other commands of the Lord Jesus relayed to us through His apostles and prophets include the command to:

8.4.1 Teach one another.

Allow the Holy Spirit to write God's word on your heart. Share it with your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Use the treasure you have been

given in Christ to benefit another. Give generously; receive thankfully; live joyously!

Colossians 3:16: ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 5:19: ...¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

8.4.2 Admonish one another.

Iron sharpens iron and consequently a man sharpens his friend's countenance (Proverbs 27:17 paraphrased). We mold together on this journey, for whatever we possess models the gift of His grace in our personal life. If we believe ourselves wise in one matter, chances are we are foolish in another. With humility surrender and engage the aid of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Romans 15:14: ¹⁴And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:14: ¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

8.4.3 Serve one another.

Jesus lived a life of service and enjoins us to imitate Him. After all, He is the Bread of Life reaching from the wantless realm of glory to serve famished ones; their hunger to satisfy. He is the One who pours forth rivers of Living Water, flooding parched souls in a waterless world, their thirst to assuage. You and I are called to follow in His footsteps.

Galatians 5:13: ¹³For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Mark 10:45: ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

1 Peter 4:10,11: ¹⁰As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

8.4.4 Encourage one another.

A roaring campfire extinguishes more quickly and easily after separating the flaming logs. You and I need each other to help keep the kindled love of God blazing in our hearts. Distractions can sap our zeal and dampen our love, “little-fox” sins, small discouragements, unexpected oppositions, or the simple predictability of daily, mundane responsibilities. When warmed by the flame of another saint’s burning-life love, our own love for Jesus and His brethren reignites.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Hebrews 10:25: ...²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 3:12,13: ¹²Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

8.4.5 Build up one another.

We should always strive to enrich the saints in every way possible, whether by encouragement, teaching, admonishment, or our example of faithfulness, hope, cheerfulness, boldness or joy. Be generous with God’s grace. The more we give – the more we receive.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

8.4.6 Stimulate one another to love and good deeds, the spark of your love energizing souls around you to do the mercy deeds of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:24: ...²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds...

8.5 The Ministry of the Many will continue throughout all eternity since in the New Jerusalem His bond servants will serve Him.

Revelation 22:3: ³There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;

Jesus, the supremely able and wise Leader, intends His saints to be fully equipped, trained and mobilized, engaged in ministry, and carrying out His will in the world. His will is to seek and save the lost, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teach them the commands of our Lord. Each one joining this happy throng is being built up and equipped; oblivious to the traditions of man and the norms of the age. Together with the many, they engage in the sacred and urgent task to seek and save the lost, baptize new converts, build up, equip and encourage the brethren till Jesus returns.

The problem is those who are lost in sin and the solution is Jesus Christ, Savior of the world. His saving vehicle is the Church and His method is the Ministry of the Many. The madness of His method provides no place for the controlling hand of man and unleashes a mob in the world; a mob of mercy doers sent out across the face of the earth, completely free to follow Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Can you imagine?

9 How the Ministry of the Many functions in the Church as the Saints Assemble

The most explosive power known to man lies in the dreaded detonation of a nuclear device. An awesome, frightening wonder arises at the sight of that singularly ominous, mushroom silhouette... a cloud shadowing beneath its vast canopy the release of energy so intense that material at “ground zero” simply vaporizes.

The secret of this “Mother-of-all-Bombs” is nothing more than the gathering together into one small place some thirty or forty ounces of highly enriched uranium. Dispersed, the metal can do no more than excite a Geiger counter. When smashed together, one energy charged atom excites another in an instantaneous chain-reaction... and in one split-second of time, the powers that hold the universe together unleash.

Nature’s lessons teach us about the manner in which the early, New Testament Church met together. Like an atomic bomb, the gathering united uncontrollably, explosively and dangerously. Endued with power equal to their commission they turned the known world upside down (Acts 17:6), destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and setting free those held in slavery through fear of death (Hebrews 2:15).

It was said of those who inhabited the first century that they were a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). Twenty centuries later, the flowering of evil in the heart of man blossoms evermore full. The Bible predicts that in the end days “men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power...” (2 Timothy 3:2-5). What kind of church is able to fulfill Christ’s Great Commission in a world awash in a flood of evil, an evil seemingly near high tide?

Considering the assembly of the Church, we benefit by reflecting on the Sadducees’ bold argument. The Sadducees convinced themselves, and perhaps some of us as well, that the resurrection of the dead could never occur. Ponder the absurdity of seven men married to the same woman in the eternity of resurrection life. The practicality of resurrection life appears impossible to the natural reasoning mind. Likewise impossible,

the total impracticality of the Ministry of the Many in the assembly and spiritual life of the Church. Indeed, the teachings of The New Testament prove the impossible not only possible but practical as well.

9.1 God instructs us how to meet together as His Church.

One particular chapter in the New Testament focuses on the mechanics of assembling as a Church. The entire chapter follows:

1 Corinthians 14: ¹Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. ³But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. ⁴One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

⁶But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? ⁷Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? ⁸For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? ⁹So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. ¹¹If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. ¹²So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

¹³Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays,

but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. ¹⁶Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. ¹⁸I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; ¹⁹however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

²⁰Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. ²¹In the Law it is written, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to me,” says the Lord. ²²So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe. ²³Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

²⁶What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; ²⁸but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. ³⁰But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; ³³for God is not a God of

confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

³⁴The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. ³⁵If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

³⁶Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? ³⁷ If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. ³⁸But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. ⁴⁰But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

9.1.1 Each one's responsibility

Those inclined to disregard this chapter may point to "tongues" or perhaps "women talk" as the key problem. However, these issues serve only as "red herrings," for by and large the tradition of man in conducting church meetings makes void the Word of God, especially as it relates to verse 26 which is the focus of the entire chapter:

"What is the outcome then, brethren?"

We should pause and consider, "the outcome of what?" Chapter 14 follows the famous "LOVE" chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. We need to ask, "What is the outcome then, brethren, of having the flame of the pure Love of God burning in our hearts?" Not an ordinary love but the pure LOVE without which I can say nothing, I am nothing, and I can accomplish nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). How will God's Church assemble if true LOVE is allowed to express itself in fullest measure?

Let us consider what the outcome should be, as we are instructed to "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Words speak high value in God's kingdom; particularly, God's Words. "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). The Word of God took on material form in Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and

the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:1,2,14).

Prophesying involves speaking words of edification (to build-up), exhortation (to charge-up or stir-up) and consolation (to bind-up) (1 Corinthians 14:3). Prophesying words are God's Words, spoken in the Holy Spirit by God's people as they meet together. No imagination could utter more wonderful speech than this, sharing words that build and strengthen the saints in their faith, in knowledge, and in wisdom. Words spoken that stir up our hearts and convictions and determination and perseverance and courage to obey God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Words spoken that lift-up and bind-up the weak in faith or bruised or heavy hearted; discouraged souls wax strong when they hear God's words spoken in the assembly.

And concerning tongues, love expresses itself in the assembly of the saints in words understood by those present. Words spoken in tongues only edify if someone interprets the message, thereby speaking words of prophesy. Otherwise, speaking in tongues builds up a saint's own inner man (spirit) but cannot edify, exhort or console the brethren. In the assembly of the saints, five words of prophesy are worth ten thousand words spoken in tongues, if the tongues are not interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:19).

And now, "What is the outcome then, brethren?"

1 Corinthians 14:26: ²⁶What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Some might wonder how long a Sunday service would last if each one present prophesied as the Bible defines it. Others might be concerned with the orderliness of the meeting. Maybe we should simply obey.

The first letter to the Church in Corinth, Chapter 14, provides specific instructions on how to conduct ourselves in an assembly of the saints.

9.1.2 Prophecy

Relating to prophecy: There is adequate time for all to prophesy; no more than two or three should speak consecutively; (interruptions are perfectly in order and to be expected); then what is spoken is subject to the review of the saints. There's no hurry and no presumption as to the truth or value of what will be spoken.

1 Corinthians 14:29-32: ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. ³⁰But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

1 Thessalonians 5:20,21: ...²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;

1 Corinthians 14:5: ⁵Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

9.1.3 Tongues

Speaking in tongues is linked in the assembly of the saints with interpretation of tongues so that the words spoken become prophecy to those present. Again, two or three should speak in turn and then some gifted one should interpret. Notice that the "limit" of two or three relates to the number of consecutive messages in tongues and not to the total number of tongues allowed in a meeting.

1 Corinthians 14:27-28: ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; ²⁸but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

9.1.4 All things edifying are suitable to share as we gather.

All things done –the saints words and actions in the assembly– should edify the brethren. The list given does not exhaust the permissible. The exact **opposite** is true. The Holy Spirit in one small verse pulls the rug out from under those who seek preeminence in the assembly and who wish to limit the participation and content of God’s message.

1 Corinthians 14:26: ²⁶What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

9.1.5 How on earth can this Gathering maintain its orderliness?

Order maintains simply by the Holy Spirit’s leading and the saint’s individual obedience to Jesus who is present where two or three gather in His name. The role of elders ensures that saints can freely minister and guards against those who would dominate the assembly or otherwise act out of order. The Law of Perfect Love produces a perfect order in the midst of what should by all rights be utter chaos. **Can you imagine?**

1 Corinthians 14:33: ...³³for God is not a God of confusion but of peace...

1 Corinthians 14:40: ⁴⁰But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

9.1.6 Now concerning “women-talk” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

The instruction cannot relate to prophesy for “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 2:28). Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8,9). The speaking that is disruptive and improper is the kind that interrupts the assembly with a blizzard of questions that can be addressed later at home. Clearly, the speaking referred to by Paul was other than that which would edify, exhort or console.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-35: ...^{33b}as in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴the women are to keep silent in the churches; for they

are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. ³⁵If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

Acts 21:8,9: ⁸On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. ⁹Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.

9.2 The Ministry of the Many, the Divine Pattern of Assembly is established at the command of our Lord through Paul, the apostle, by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:36-40: ³⁶Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? ³⁷If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. ³⁸But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. ⁴⁰But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

Dear Saints, ours is to believe. Ours is to choose. Ours is to obey. Believe in your heart's hunger... follow after God. Our Lord stands ready to meet with us in ways more wonderful than we have experienced, if we follow Him into His plan for His Church. His beckoning is gentle, leading into a path of life. **Can you imagine?**

9.2.1 The Lord's command concerning the assembly of the saints may be like many other commands He gave during His earthly ministry (see the excerpt below); offered to the gentle and lowly of heart; to the ones who are childlike in faith.

His hand extends, not as a threat, but as an offer of life giving mercy. The majority of the mercies of God open when obeying Him. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). The heart tugs to believe God and obey Him.

Matthew 19:9-12: ⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.

¹⁰The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”

The ability to receive Jesus’ sayings awaken to the Many. But if we are like the Scribes who loved salutations in the marketplaces, chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts; who devoured widows’ houses, and for a pretense made long prayers (Luke 20:46,47), His sayings are unreceivable. If we are like the Sadducees who set their hope on this life (Mark 12:18) and who understood not the scriptures or the power of God (Matthew 22:29), His sayings are void. If we are like the Pharisees who were lovers of money (Luke 16:14), hypocrites (Matthew 23:13), who loved to be seen by men (Matthew 6:1), who “strained out the gnat and swallowed the camel” (Matthew 23:24), and who did not have the love of God in their hearts (John 5:42), His sayings go unheard.

In holding to religious traditions we can also find ourselves rejecting God’s instructions. As our Lord explained...

Mark 7:6-13: ⁶And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far away from me.

⁷But in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’

⁸Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”

⁹He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.

¹⁰For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who speaks evil of Father and Mother is to be put to death’; ¹¹but you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God)’; ¹²you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; ¹³thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

Successfully navigating the hindrances outlined above, leave us with still other potential pitfalls. We cannot truly receive His sayings if our hearts are like the thorn patch in Jesus’ parable of the sower and the seed. The thorns choked the word of God in the saint’s heart rendering him weak and unfruitful. Jesus identified the thorny culprits as the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things (Mark 4:18,19).

With this in mind, a simple prayer taught at Hebron Gospel Fellowship, in Hebron Kentucky, may be useful:

Judge us, each one, in our hearts, O Lord,
Separate the evil from the good.
Make us poor in spirit,
Fill and possess us with the Holy Spirit,
And make us to know Jesus, more and more.
Make us ready for your soon coming.
Send forth workers into Your harvest field,
And fill the earth with your glory. In Jesus’ name.

9.3 What is the result of saints meeting in God’s Order of Assembly?

As we meet in God’s order of assembly, the saints are built up, unbelievers brought face to face with God, and Jesus leads his Church forward in victory.

1 Corinthians 14:23-25: ²³Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴But

if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

9.4 Beyond 1 Corinthians 14, The New Testament provides additional teaching regarding the assembly of God's Church:

9.4.1 It's important to meet together.

Hebrews 10:25: ...²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

9.4.2 The Lord's Supper should be celebrated in our meeting.

1 Corinthians 11:20-34: ²⁰Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, ²¹for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

²⁷Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. ²⁸But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰For this reason many

among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. ³¹But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

³³So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

Luke 22:19: ¹⁹And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁰And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.”

9.4.3 We should be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit.

To Him and His leading, we must give full sway.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22: ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

9.4.4 We should treat all believers alike, regardless of their wealth or social standing.

Special honor or preferential treatment based on worldly values has no place in God’s Church.

James 2:1-9: ¹My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ²For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here

in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

⁸If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

The leadership and love of our Lord bloom in the assembly of His people.

Speaking through the assembled believers, Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, pastors His flock, exercising the tender care only the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls can give. Like a diamond of many facets, our Lord ministers to His Church in ways too wonderful to be effectively related by any one person or even a handful of persons. He chooses the MANY to minister. Only one thing stands to be seen: Will you and I take our place in His Church?

9.5 A serene and settled agreement exists, a perfect correspondence, between the Ministry of the Many and the truths concerning Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the saint, the world and the adversary.

- It agrees with the truth of Jesus’ lordship and intimate participation in the life of His Church.
- It agrees with the truth and purpose of the giving of the Holy Spirit.
- It agrees with the nature of the Trinity, the Oneness of the Many.
- It agrees with the nature of the supreme witness to the unbelieving world, the oneness of the Body of Christ as it proclaims an undeniable proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

- It agrees with the truth that we are incomplete, apart from one another, and are made in such a way as to actually need one another.
- It agrees with the truth of the mortal conflict between Spirit and flesh, between the saint and the Adversary who seeks all whom he may devour. As only one among the ministering many, saints are protected from coming under the heavy foot of pride or becoming flush with lust for power. The dreadful “I Am The One” spirit attacks all who would minister as if they were the only one. Throughout the ages, this evil spirit has undermined the Church’s success.

10 Church Discipline - another Ministry of the Many.

Along the nation's highways stretch miles and miles of guard rails. "Only in America," a truly blessed nation purchases such luxury for a seldom used product. Only occasionally does one notice the striking signs of a wayward driver kept from the ditch by the sturdy stretch of railing.

In similar fashion, the Church provides discipline, a guardrail along the road of life. Church discipline, not set in the middle as a road block, runs along side, a guiding white line then warning bumps to arrest a driver's attention, next the broad shoulder and at last the guardrail itself.

Church Discipline runs along side the life of the Church as a set of protective measures that help prevent saints from straying from the path of life and becoming shipwrecked in their faith. Discipline also protects the church from harm caused by fellowshiping with believers who willfully continue in sin.

Through the arm of the local church, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ exercises His loving hand of discipline in the life of His child. When called upon, it is our unpleasant duty to join the Lord in His ministry of correction.

Hebrews 12: ¹Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and he scourges every son whom He receives."

⁷It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not

discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

¹²Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. ¹⁴Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; ¹⁶that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

¹⁸For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, ¹⁹and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. ²⁰For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." ²¹And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

²⁵See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. ²⁶And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.” ²⁷This expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.

10.1 Discipline in the local Church involves a number of corrective measures.

Reproving or rebuking a brother or sister who sins against you.

Matthew 18:15: ¹⁵If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

Luke 17:3: ³Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

Withholding fellowship from a Christian who willfully continues to practice sin.

2 Thessalonians 3:6,14: ⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us... ¹⁴If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

1 Corinthians 5:2,11,13: ²You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst... ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he

is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one...

¹³But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

Matthew 18:17: ¹⁷If 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.

In extreme situations, the good of the believer and Church requires turning the willfully sinning saint over to Satan.

1 Timothy 1:19,20: ...¹⁹keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. ²⁰Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

10.2 The purpose of Church discipline is five-fold:

10.2.1 First, to honor by our holy living the Holy One Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ; the One who is personally present in the gathering of His Church. With eyes of hearts made pure, we see Him and join with Him as co-laborers in His ministry of Perfect Love.

Living a holy life means living in loving fellowship with Christ and His saints and in loving relationship with neighbors. The path of holiness sums up the two greatest commandments: to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourself (Mark 12:29-31).

When we live daily in loving relationship with Jesus, we tune our hearts with Him, are aware of His presence and sensitive to His leading. Paul, the apostle, lost in the love of our Savior, could say, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Desiring to walk by His side through the moments of everyday life, we need to walk as He walks, in the light, for “...God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him

and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7).

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). God’s Church embodies the fellowship of those with eyes of faith who see Jesus and join with Him, following His lead. Furthermore, each disciple brings to the fellowship the blessing of his own personal relationship with Christ and the unique manner in which Jesus ministers through him.

The Church falls short of the fellowship of Heaven on Earth. The Heaven-bound Bride of Christ prepares herself while on earth. Naturally, during the preparation certain members require special attention. As part of the Body of Christ they require the encouragement, insight, consolation or other divinely directed mercy that fulfills their particular need to overflowing.

Yes, needs and problems will always exist. The secret is in Christ. As long as we abide in Christ, the way will appear clear and the victory belongs to Him. Conversely, if saints become lukewarm in faith, the reality of Jesus “in our midst” fades from present-tense vibrant to future-hope vague. The stern letter written to the church in Laodicea serves to warn us in this regard. Jesus speaks as the One standing outside the church, and reproaches the saints declaring, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). In the broadest sense, local church discipline safeguards the spiritual health of the Body of Christ by ensuring that the Life of the saint and the Life of the church, Christ Himself, abides in our midst, preeminent.

Exodus 33:14: ¹⁴And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” ¹⁵Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. ¹⁶For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?”

Matthew 18:15-20: ¹⁵If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every act may be confirmed. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.

10.2.2 Second, to help ensure the continuing and increasing love of the brethren, one for another.

1 Peter 1:13-23: ¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. ²⁰For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

10.2.3 Third, to restore a straying disciple to the way of life (voluntary obedience to Christ).

James 5:19,20: ¹⁹My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

10.2.4 Fourth, to protect the Church from the negative moral and spiritual influences of a backslider.

1 Corinthians 5: ¹It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. ²You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

³For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. ⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? ⁷Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

Revelation 2:20: ²⁰But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Joshua 7:10-15: (The sin of Achan caused Israel's defeat at Ai.) ¹⁰So the LORD said to Joshua, "Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? ¹¹Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. ¹²Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst.

¹³Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, "There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst." ¹⁴In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the LORD takes shall come near by households, and the household which the LORD takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire,

he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.””

10.2.5 Fifth, to reinforce the purposefulness characterizing the Christian life.

1 Timothy 5:20: ²⁰Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

2 Corinthians 7:12: ¹²So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.

10.3 The procedure for disciplining is four-fold:

10.3.1 First, the one who sees a brother committing a sin should:

a) Pray for the erring one’s restoration and pray again and again.

1 John 5:16,17: ¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.

b) Examine oneself, considering our own personal faults and need for grace.

Galatians 6:1: ¹Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

c) Approach the erring brother in a spirit of gentleness. Love seeks the wanderer, as fellow wanderers kept only by grace... never content to merely wait for the erring one to “return to the fold.”

Galatians 6:1: ¹Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

d) Reprove him in private.

Matthew 18:15: ¹⁵If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

e) If he repents, (God willing he does), forgive him.

Luke 17:3,4: ³Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," forgive him.

10.3.2 Second, if he does not listen, take one or two with you as witnesses and approach him again.

Matthew 18:16: ¹⁶But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact maybe confirmed.

10.3.3 Third, if he continues to refuse to listen, tell it to the assembled church. This is not a matter of gossip but a report confirmed by two or three witnesses.

Matthew 18:17: ¹⁷If 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.

10.3.4 Fourth, if he still refuses to listen, the whole congregation should take action and...

a) Remove him/her from your assembly.

Matthew 18:17: ¹⁷If 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.

b) Don't associate with him on an individual/personal level.

1 Corinthians 5:2,3,11: ²You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. ³For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present... ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

2 Thessalonians 3:6,14: ⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us... ¹⁴If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

Romans 16:17: ¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

c) Pernicious offenders need to be turned over to Satan.

1 Timothy 1:18-20: ¹⁸This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, ¹⁹keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. ²⁰Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5: ¹It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. ²You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

³For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. ⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

⁶Your boasting is not good Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?

10.3.5 Finally, if he repents, forgive him and comfort him, reaffirming your love for him.

2 Corinthians 2:6-11: ⁶Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, ⁷so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ¹¹so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

Within any family, including the Household of God, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Love covers a multitude of sins. And a little sugar usually works better than the threat of a big stick.

11 Church Discipline Regarding Itinerant (Traveling) Workers

11.1 Beware of evangelists, prophets and teachers who are false and not of God. Do not accept at face value the character and credentials of those who claim to be servants of Christ.

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

2 Corinthians 11:12-15: ¹²But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

Matthew 7:15: ¹⁵Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

11.2 Test those who come to you.

1 John 4:1: ¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Revelation 2:2: ²I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to

the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

11.3 Look for two signs that will reveal their true nature:

11.3.1 Their doctrine; confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

1 John 4:2,3: ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

11.3.2 Their manner of life and influence on others.

Matthew 7:16-20: ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰So then, you will know them by their fruits.

Jude 1:3-23: ³Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. ⁴For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

⁵Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷just as

Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

⁸Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. ¹¹Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. ¹²These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

¹⁴It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." ¹⁶These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

¹⁷But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." ¹⁹These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep

yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

11.4 Take action if they are found to be false by:

11.4.1 Contending earnestly for the truth of God.

Jude 1:3: ³Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

11.4.2 Turning away from them (refusing to fellowship with them).

Romans 16:17: ¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

11.4.3 Refusing to give them hospitality.

2 John 1:10,11: ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, (the teaching of Jesus Christ; *author's note*) do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; ¹¹for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

12 Responsibilities of God's Local Church - Responsibilities of the Many

God's Word addresses God's people in His Church, the many, not the few. The responsibility to respond to God's Word is a responsibility of the many; each and every believer, individually. God's Church responds as each of the many brethren respond in obedience to our Lord and Leader.

Romans 1:7: ⁷To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:2: ²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

2 Corinthians 1:1: ¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:

Galatians 1:1,2: ¹Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

Ephesians 1:1: ¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 1:1: ¹Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

Colossians 1:1,2: ¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ²To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

1 Thessalonians 1:1: ¹Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

3 John 1:9: ⁹I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

Jude 1:1 ¹Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and keep for Jesus Christ:

12.1 The Church's responsibility to Traveling Workers (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers):

12.1.1 Honor those who work faithfully for the cause of the Lord Jesus.

Philippians 2:29,30: ²⁹Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; ³⁰because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

1 Corinthians 16:15,16: ¹⁵Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), ¹⁶that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.

12.1.2 Pray for those who diligently labor.

1 Thessalonians 5:25: ²⁵Brethren, pray for us.

2 Thessalonians 3:1,2: ¹Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; ²and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

Colossians 4:3,4: ...³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:18-20: ¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with

all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

2 Corinthians 1:10,11: ...¹⁰who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, ¹¹you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

Hebrews 13:18,19: ¹⁸Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. ¹⁹And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Romans 15:30-32: ³⁰Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; ³²so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

12.1.3 Give hospitality to those sent by God to serve temporarily in your area or who are passing through your area.

Acts 21:7: ⁷When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.

Acts 21:15-17: ¹⁵After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge. ¹⁷After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

Colossians 4:10: ¹⁰Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about

whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him)...

3 John 1:10: ¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.

Acts 28:13,14: ¹³From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. ¹⁴There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.

12.1.4 Provide material support for those temporarily laboring in your area.

1 Corinthians 9:1-18: ¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³My defense to those who examine me is this: ⁴Do we not have a right to eat and drink? ⁵Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? ⁷Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

⁸I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? ¹⁰Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. ¹¹If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap

material things from you? ¹²If others share the right over you, do we not more?

Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? ¹⁴So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

¹⁵But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. ¹⁸What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Galatians 6:6-10: ⁶The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. ⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

12.1.5 Send them on their way in full provision.

3 John 1:5-8: ⁵Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; ⁶and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷For they went out for the sake of the

Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

1 Corinthians 16:5-7: ⁵But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; ⁶and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. ⁷For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.

1 Corinthians 16:10,11: ¹⁰Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. ¹¹So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

12.1.6 Send support to the traveling workers laboring for Christ abroad.

Philippians 4:14-18: ¹⁴Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. ¹⁵You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:3: ³Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

12.2 The Church has a responsibility to help brethren in need.

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 (Regarding the relief supplied by the saints for brethren living in Judea who were suffering famine.): ¹Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ²that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ⁴begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. ⁶So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. ⁷But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

⁸I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. ¹⁰I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. ¹¹But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. ¹²For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality—¹⁴at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; ¹⁵as it is written, “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.”

James 1:27: ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

12.3 The decision to give is a decision of the many... each one, individually.

Acts 11:29: ²⁹And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

12.4 Our love for the saints reflects our love for God.

1 John 3:11-18: ¹¹For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹²not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

The responsibility to hear and obey God falls on each individual. As a result, the response of God's Church enlarges as each member responds uniquely to the leadership of Jesus Christ.

13 Elders: Real Servants in God's Church

Elders are men appointed in the local church as overseers to shepherd or pastor a local assembly of God's people. Understanding that all Christians are called to minister both to the saints in the Church as well as in outreach to the world, we can better appreciate the goal to which elders shepherd.

Elders carry the health and safety of the Church as their appointed responsibility; their vision, Jesus Himself, leading through the many saints and they embrace as their marching orders the equipping of the saints for the work of service which has been described in this study as the Ministry of the Many.

13.1 Elders shepherd or pastor God's people in His local assembly.

Acts 20:28-31 (Paul's message to the elders of Ephesus):

²⁸Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

²⁹I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

Shepherding or "keeping watch" involves faithfully living out a mature Christian life, leading others to follow Christ more fully, and helping to ensure the safety of the Church from false brethren.

1 Peter 5:1-3: ¹Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ²shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

13.2 What are elders specifically instructed to do?

As fellow believers, all elders participate in the Ministry of the Many, each adding his voice of encouragement or teaching or tongue or prophesy or interpretation of tongues or song. The Holy Spirit leads elders to serve by exercising spiritual gifts in the assembly and in outreach of Christian witness to the world.

13.2.1 Elders are charged to hold fast to the faithful Word of God's truth.

God's Word provides the objective truth, the standard for faith and practice.

Titus 1:7-11: ⁷For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

¹⁰For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

13.2.2 Elders should feed and guard the flock of God.

Elders are not the only ones led to teach the gathered saints or refute the teaching of false doctrines; however the "buck stops" with these appointed individuals.

Acts 20:28: ²⁸Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Titus 1:9: ...⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Acts 20:29-31: ²⁹I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

13.2.3 Elders should help equip the saints to participate in the ministry of the many.

Ephesians 4:11-16: ¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until 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. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

13.2.4 Elders should pray over and anoint saints taken ill.

In this regard the elders carry with them the united faith, love, and prayers of the entire congregation.

James 5:14,15: ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

13.2.5 Elders are instructed to be examples to the saints... examples of true disciples of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 5:1-3: ¹Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ²shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

The duties listed above are not exclusive to elders, but include responsibilities common to all believers. (See: Chapter 8, “The Ministry of the Many”) Elders, not placed over God's people in the manner of secular, hierarchical authority roles, are set among the saints as shining examples of the manner of life God desires for all His children; men who walk so closely with Jesus that their lives produce a longing for Him in the hearts of others. Elders, characterized by their age, Christian maturity, and sanctified life, prove helpful in dangerous situations with false brethren and those who take advantage of the freedom to minister in the assembly. Age and personal knowledge of God's triumph in the storms of life enable elders to provide counsel for trying times. Their living knowledge of the Word of God enriches the Church.

13.3 Multiple elders were appointed in every local church.

A plurality of elders provides provision and protection for both elders and the Church as a whole; provision in supplying a pool of wisdom and support; protection in holding all elders accountable to each other and the Church.

The group of elders model the love and oneness found in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If God is One in love and the elders of the Church display oneness in love, the path of oneness in love for the Church is laid.

Acts 14:23: ²³When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5: ⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you...

13.3.1 The Bible does not provide for a hierarchy within the group of elders just as it does not teach positional authority within the Church as a whole.

The only distinction between one elder and another is the differentiation in his work, the measure in which he rules well and works hard in the Word and in teaching.

F.G. Smith in his book, *The Last Reformation*, explains this eloquently: "...the difference existing between elders in the primitive (New Testament) church was not a difference in kind but in degree only, varying in accordance with their ability to put forth some portion of that moral and spiritual power by which alone Christ governs his church."

1 Timothy 5:17,18: ¹⁷The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Galatians 2:11-14: ¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Acts 21:15-18: ¹⁵After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.

¹⁷After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

13.4 Qualifications

No other role in the Church demands qualifications so strict and broad. Although plurality is the general principle, no man can be appointed as an elder who is not already an elder in character, conduct, and knowledge of the Scriptures.

Prior to appointment as an elder, men who desire the responsibility of overseer must first prove themselves to be:

Above reproach: Having nothing that would bring on themselves blame or censure; shame; or disgrace.

Temperate: Moderate; not excessive; Not marked with passion; not violent; cool; calm; Moderate in the indulgence of the natural appetites or passions.

Sensible: Having judgments and conduct that are marked and governed by sound judgment or good common sense.

Prudent: Sagacious in adapting means to ends; circumspect in action, or in determining any line of conduct; practically wise; judicious; careful; discreet; sensible.

Just: Not transgressing the requirement of truth and propriety; conformed to the truth of things, to reason, or to a proper standard; exact; normal; reasonable.

Respectable: Worthy of respect; fitted to awaken esteem; deserving regard.

Having a good reputation with outsiders: Held in favorable regard; public esteem; having a good name.

Devout: Committed to the careful cultivation of one's relationship with God.

Not addicted to wine: Not an alcoholic.

Not quick tempered: Doesn't fly off the handle.

Not pugnacious: Not disposed to or inclined to fighting; not quarrelsome.

Not self-willed: Not governed by one's own will; yielding to the wishes of others; not obstinate.

Not fond of sordid gain: Finding no delight or pleasure in unseemly gain in money or goods; gain at another's expense; gain from immoral or unrighteous practices; gain from activity for which remuneration is not acceptable.

Free from the love of money: Not motivated or controlled by greed or avarice.

Gentle: Having to do with nature, temper, or disposition as in a gentle manner; Not wild, turbulent, or refractory; quiet and peaceable; Soft; not violent or rough; not strong, loud, or disturbing; easy; soothing; pacific.

Peaceable: Not given to angry debate; not provoking dispute or contention; not quarrelsome.

Hospitable: Receiving and entertaining strangers or guests with kindness and without reward.

Loving what is good: Having a heart whose satisfaction and pleasure is found in what is good as God describes it. Good is generally what makes for life and happiness.

The husband of one wife: This rules out polygamists.

Having children who believe: Generally, if the head of the house is a believer, his children will follow.

Able to manage his own household well: If a man can manage his own family with its diverse relationships, personalities, needs and challenges, he likely has the wisdom and skills to manage the family of God.

Holding fast to the faithful word: One who patterns and orders his life without deviation by the teaching, precepts and commandments found in the Holy Scriptures.

Able to teach: Having a broad and sound understanding of the Scriptures so as to effectively explain the Word of God to other believers.

Able to exhort in sound doctrine: To incite, animate or urge by arguments based on sound Bible principles, as to a good deed or laudable conduct; to urge strongly; hence, to advise, warn, or caution.

Able to refute those who contradict: To disprove and overthrow by argument, evidence, or countervailing proof; to prove to be false or erroneous those who teach false doctrine.

Not a new convert: The test of sufficient time is required to prove the Christian character and maturity of those who aspire to be elders.

1 Timothy 3:1-7: ¹It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. ²An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. ⁴He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ⁵(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), ⁶and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:6-9: ...⁶namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. ⁷For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible,

just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. ¹⁰For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

Only men who owned the personal qualities of overseer in character, conduct and grounding in the Word of God, were appointed as elders. God chooses men who exemplify His effective, redeeming grace as models for His Church and to the world. Effectively shepherding the Church of God requires proven godly character.

The reference to “men” as a qualifying characteristic of an elder has been questioned since the advent of the Women’s Rights Movement. There is a very simple and biblical way to understand women’s role in the Church. The Scriptures clearly provide for all saints, men and women alike, to participate in ministry, the Ministry of the Many. Elders engage in the same ministry, and, in fact, more than that, they support and encourage it. As a result, it is not necessary to be an elder to minister in the assembly or outreach of the Church. However, in most traditional churches only the titled pastors or “ministers” have the authority to minister in the church, causing much unnecessary disappointment and spiritual emptiness. As we have seen, this restrictive practice robs all of their essential and fulfilling role in building up one another.

Those who support ordaining women as elders often use an argument that resembles the fallacy of the Sadducees who used the problem of the “seven brothers all husbands of the same wife” to prove the impossibility of the resurrection of the dead, although this runs logically in reverse. The reasoning used for women as elders follows this course:

1. Only elders/pastors can minister. (*This we have seen is false*)
2. Women are gifted to minister (Phillip, the evangelist, had four daughters who prophesied - Acts 21:9,10) (*True*)
3. Once a woman is appointed as elder, she will acquire the position that permits her to exercise her spiritual gifts. (*false*)

4. Therefore, it follows that women should also be appointed as elders.
(*false*)

Following the New Testament teaching regarding the Church makes this issue moot: Men, woman and children participating freely and to their full potential in the assembly of the Church. In God's wisdom, elders, selected from among the men of the Church, are charged with maintaining the unique spiritual order of the New Testament Church.

13.5 The crown of glory will be awarded to elders by Jesus at His appearing.

Elders receive the reward of the approval given by God and His people among whom they serve. Held in high esteem by the brethren, God's people honor the good and God Himself promises an unfading crown of glory for elders who serve well. These servants lay up for themselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal (Matthew 6:19,20).

1 Peter 5:4 (addressing elders): ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

13.6 Elders should take care not to succumb to the temptation to be THE ONE, "front and center," having all the say and directing and controlling the brethren.

Yielding to lust for power and love of position essentially defines Church as we know it. God's plan is so much better.

3 John 1:9-11: ⁹I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. ¹¹Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

13.7 Elders are reprovved for unchristian character and conduct.

1 Timothy 5:19-20: ¹⁹Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. ²⁰Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

14 Financial Support of Those Who Serve

The New Testament teaching on financial support demonstrates tension between a number of truths: 1) Those who are sent by God, go, without regard to their financial situation, trusting that the God who sent them will also provide all their needs; 2) No soldier serves at his own expense, yet at the same time he yearns to provide the gospel free of charge; 3) Saints are instructed not to burden the church, but to work diligently to support themselves while serving the Church; and 4) Lastly, the specific admonition aimed at the temptation to serve for monetary reward and caution against the love of money.

14.1 The Bible illustrates and teaches obedience to a faith that follows Christ without visible means of support.

Those who venture forth go at the Lord's command, trusting in His faithfulness to supply all their needs. They do the work of the ministry, laboring without promise or expectation of payment from those they serve.

Matthew 6:24-34: ²⁴No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

²⁵For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! ³¹Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or

“What will we wear for clothing?”³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Mark 6:7-13: ⁷And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;⁸ and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—⁹but to wear sandals; and He added, “Do not put on two tunics.”¹⁰ And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town.¹¹ Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”¹² They went out and preached that men should repent.¹³ And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

14.2 Traveling workers, apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers, deserve financial support.

They ought not demand pay or Church salary. Instead, workers should freely serve, knowing God will supply their needs, often through the generous gifts of the saints. In the same way saints will recognize that the Scriptures agree with the leading they may receive from the Holy Spirit to help support these workers with material means.

3 John 1:5-8: ⁵Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers;⁶ and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

1 Corinthians 9:1-14: ¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³My defense to those who examine me is this: ⁴Do we not have a right to eat and drink? ⁵Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? ⁷Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

⁸I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? ¹⁰Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. ¹¹If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹²If others share the right over you, do we not more?

Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? ¹⁴So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

14.3 Paul, the apostle, exemplified working day and night to provide for the physical needs for both himself and his fellow workers. Paul gave several reasons why he worked to earn the money needed to support himself:

14.3.1 To provide the gospel free of charge.

1 Corinthians 9:14-18: ¹⁴So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. ¹⁵But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. ¹⁸What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-12: ⁵For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed— God is witness— ⁶nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. ⁷But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

14.3.2 To set an example for elders in imitating his practice to provide their own support, not relying on the Church.

Acts 20:33-36 (Paul, speaking specifically to elders): ³³“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. ³⁵In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”
³⁶When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

14.3.3 To expose as counterfeits those who “minister” only for payment or hope of payment. Ministry is the labor God calls one to do without the promise of compensation or the expectation of financial remuneration, but with unshakable faith that God provides.

2 Corinthians 11:7-15: ⁷Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? ⁸I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; ⁹and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. ¹⁰As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

¹²But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as

servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

14.4 Financial Support Regarding Elders

Elders (pastors) in God's Church provide for their own needs, not requiring material gifts of support from the saints.

Elders who heed New Testament instruction support themselves by working in honorable occupations or professions, not burdening the Church for their needs. As men of faith in the secular world elders model the mode of life God calls all to follow. Furthermore, they understand their brothers and sisters and keep watch over their souls, themselves also in the "work a day" world. Elders' hardworking way of life discourages those who would pretend to bless the saints through ministry but with the ulterior motive of securing an income.

14.4.1 Paul instructed elders to follow his example by working to provide for their own daily needs.

Acts 20:33-36 (Paul, speaking specifically to elders): ³³"I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. ³⁵In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" ³⁶When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15: ⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; ⁹not because we do not have the

right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. ¹¹For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

¹³But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. ¹⁴If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. ¹⁵Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

14.4.2 Peter, the apostle, also instructs elders against working as “full-time,” salaried ministers.

The Bible says simply, “be eager to serve.” Saints in Peter’s day may have been inclined to hire out “pastoral” services as is common today. Certainly there were elders who expected or demanded payment. However, serving for “filthy lucre” or “sordid gain” contrasts with the Bible’s description of recompense for an honest day’s work.

1 Peter 5:2: ...²shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

14.4.3 Elders who “rule well”, specifically those who labor diligently in the Word and teaching, deserve appropriate honor by respect and material gifts.

1 Timothy 5:17,18: ¹⁷The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

The Bible speaks directly to individual saints to give respect and material gifts to elders He designates. No corporate offerings or organized collections are taken for this purpose. The Lord, Himself, directs this activity as He leads through the Holy Spirit in the specifics of what should be given, to whom, how, and when.

If a saint feels prompted by the Holy Spirit to honor an elder with a material gift, he will check this leading by considering if in fact the elder rules well, laboring diligently in God's Word and teaching. Satisfied that his leading lines up with the Word of God, he simply obeys with a personal gift or gift through the mail. When he feels led to give material honor again, the second gift follows as simply as the first. Strict secrecy need not apply for the honor shown is not an act of benevolence. Naturally a "show" of one's generosity should be graciously avoided.

15 Financing the New Testament Church, Part One

15.1 God's Church, built and led by the Son of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit is an organization of few costs and simple financing.

15.2 The leadership serves on a volunteer basis.

The Lord graciously prompts saints to bless those who serve and deserve the honor of material gifts, without requiring or extending the promise of salary or payroll. (Chapter 14 covers this subject in depth.)

15.3 Evangelistic and church planting efforts, while largely self supported, also benefit from the gracious gifts of the saints. These follow the leading of the One Who calls and provides.

Philippians 4:10-19: ¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹²I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

¹⁴Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. ¹⁵You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

15.4 Church assembly costs are prudently managed.

A home, rented meeting room, or other suitable facility is sufficient for the meeting of the Church. The local Church reflects the power and love of its Leader, not its ownership of brick and mortar assets.

Acts 1:8: ...⁸but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Acts 4:31: ³¹And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 5:12: ¹²At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s portico. ¹³But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number...

Philemon 1:1,2: ¹Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, ²and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

15.5 Church administered welfare programs are limited.

Only older widows, those modeling piety, charity, and without family to assist them, receive material help from the Church. Needy saints in other vicinities also constitute a cause worthy of charity. For these efforts, God’s Church accepts offerings and distributes them by designated representatives.

The narrow focus of “official” church welfare contrasts with the broad spectrum of good works the Holy Spirit may lead individual believers to do. “So then,” the Bible says, “As we have opportunity, let’s do what is good

toward all men, and especially toward those who are of the household of the faith” (Galatians 6:10).

1 Timothy 5:3-16: ³Honor widows who are widows indeed; ⁴but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. ⁵Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. ⁶But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. ⁷Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. ⁸But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

⁹A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, ¹⁰having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, ¹²thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. ¹³At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. ¹⁴Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; ¹⁵for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. ¹⁶If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

Acts 6:1-6: ¹Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

²So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Acts 11:27-30: ²⁷Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world And this took place in the reign of Claudius. ²⁹And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. ³⁰And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

2 Corinthians 8:1-24: ¹Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ²that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ⁴begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. ⁶So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. ⁷But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

⁸I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. ¹⁰I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. ¹¹But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. ¹²For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality—¹⁴at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; ¹⁵as it is written, “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.”

¹⁶But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. ¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. ¹⁸We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; ¹⁹and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness, ²⁰taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; ²¹for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. ²²We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. ²⁴Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4: ¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. ²On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. ³When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; ⁴and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

16 Financing the New Testament Church, Part Two

16.1 The mission of our Lord's Church is fueled not by gifts of silver and gold but human lives given unreservedly to Him. The Old Testament law of tithing is not taught in the New Testament. Instead, a new higher law is introduced by our Lord: renounce all and follow Me.

Luke 14:25-35: ²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

³⁴Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

16.2 The Old Testament “Church” or religious order relied on tithes and offerings to support the special personnel and spiritual supplies required under this covenant.

16.2.1 Tithes were required under Old Covenant law.

The Israelites (eleven tribes) paid tithes to the Levites for their service in keeping the Tabernacle and later the Temple. The Tribe of Levi was not given a large portion of the Promised land like all the other tribes. Instead of a territory they received forty-eight cities scattered throughout Canaan and a small allotment of land surrounding each city for cultivating. Furthermore, their duty was an obligation forbidden to members of all other Hebrew tribes.

Numbers 18:21-24: ²¹To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. ²²The sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, or they will bear sin and die. ²³Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of Israel they shall have no inheritance. ²⁴For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, “They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel.”

16.2.2 The Levites tithed the tithe they received, offering a “heave offering” given to Aaron and his sons as payment for their designated service as priests.

Numbers 18:26-32: ²⁶Moreover, you shall speak to the Levites and say to them, “When you take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. ²⁷Your offering shall be reckoned to you as the grain from the threshing floor or the full produce from the wine vat. ²⁸So you shall also present an offering to

the LORD from your tithes, which you receive from the sons of Israel; and from it you shall give the LORD'S offering to Aaron the priest. ²⁹Out of all your gifts you shall present every offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the sacred part from them." ³⁰You shall say to them, "When you have offered from it the best of it, then the rest shall be reckoned to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor, and as the product of the wine vat. ³¹You may eat it anywhere, you and your households, for it is your compensation in return for your service in the tent of meeting. ³²You will bear no sin by reason of it when you have offered the best of it. But you shall not profane the sacred gifts of the sons of Israel, or you will die."

16.2.3 Furthermore, priests also received specific allowances (designated parts of particular offerings), establishing additional sources of provision.

Leviticus 7: ¹Now this is the law of the guilt offering; it is most holy. ²In the place where they slay the burnt offering they are to slay the guilt offering, and he shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. ³Then he shall offer from it all its fat: the fat tail and the fat that covers the entrails, ⁴and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe on the liver he shall remove with the kidneys. ⁵The priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. ⁶Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy. ⁷The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is one law for them; the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. ⁸Also the priest who presents any man's burnt offering, that priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has presented. ⁹Likewise, every grain offering that is baked in the oven and everything prepared in a pan or on a griddle shall belong to the priest who presents it. ¹⁰Every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron, to all alike.

¹¹Now this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which shall be presented to the LORD. ¹²If he offers it by way of thanksgiving, then along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of well stirred fine flour mixed with oil. ¹³With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving, he shall present his offering with cakes of leavened bread. ¹⁴Of this he shall present one of every offering as a contribution to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings. ¹⁵Now as for the flesh of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving peace offerings, it shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it over until morning. ¹⁶But if the sacrifice of his offering is a votive or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what is left of it may be eaten; ¹⁷but what is left over from the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned with fire. ¹⁸So if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings should ever be eaten on the third day, he who offers it will not be accepted, and it will not be reckoned to his benefit. It shall be an offensive thing, and the person who eats of it will bear his own iniquity.

¹⁹Also the flesh that touches anything unclean shall not be eaten; it shall be burned with fire. As for other flesh, anyone who is clean may eat such flesh. ²⁰But the person who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings which belong to the LORD, in his uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from his people. ²¹When anyone touches anything unclean, whether human uncleanness, or an unclean animal, or any unclean detestable thing, and eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings which belong to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from his people.'

²²Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall not eat any fat from an ox, a sheep or a goat. ²⁴Also the fat of an animal which dies and the fat of an animal torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but you must certainly not eat it. ²⁵For whoever eats the

fat of the animal from which an offering by fire is offered to the LORD, even the person who eats shall be cut off from his people. ²⁶You are not to eat any blood, either of bird or animal, in any of your dwellings. ²⁷Any person who eats any blood, even that person shall be cut off from his people.”

²⁸Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁹“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. ³⁰His own hands are to bring offerings by fire to the LORD. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be presented as a wave offering before the LORD. ³¹The priest shall offer up the fat in smoke on the altar, but the breast shall belong to Aaron and his sons. ³²You shall give the right thigh to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. ³³The one among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat, the right thigh shall be his as his portion. ³⁴For I have taken the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their due forever from the sons of Israel. ³⁵This is that which is consecrated to Aaron and that which is consecrated to his sons from the offerings by fire to the LORD, in that day when he presented them to serve as priests to the LORD. ³⁶These the LORD had commanded to be given them from the sons of Israel in the day that He anointed them. It is their due forever throughout their generations.”

³⁷This is the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering and the ordination offering and the sacrifice of peace offerings, ³⁸which the LORD commanded Moses at Mount Sinai in the day that He commanded the sons of Israel to present their offerings to the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai.

16.2.4 The special work of the Levitical priests (Aaron and his sons) represented the people to God at the altar and behind the veil, offering sacrifices through which God covered their sins. All other Israelites were forbidden to execute this duty on pain of death.

Leviticus, chapters one through seven, provides a fuller understanding of the priests' functions on a day-in, day-out; basis, an unglamorous job.

Numbers 18:1-7: ¹So the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood. ²But bring with you also your brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you, while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony. ³And they shall thus attend to your obligation and the obligation of all the tent, but they shall not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die. ⁴They shall be joined with you and attend to the obligations of the tent of meeting, for all the service of the tent; but an outsider may not come near you. ⁵So you shall attend to the obligations of the sanctuary and the obligations of the altar, so that there will no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel. ⁶Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service for the tent of meeting. ⁷But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

16.3 God also commanded a feast as a tithe.

We found this—the single largest description of tithing found in the Bible—particularly interesting.

Deuteronomy 14:22-29: ²²You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. ²³You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. ³⁴If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring the tithe, since the place where the LORD your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the LORD your God blesses you, ³⁵then you shall exchange it for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. ²⁶You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. ²⁷Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you. ²⁸At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town. ²⁹The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

16.4 The progression from Old to New Testament, Old to New Covenant, necessitated a change both of priesthood and law. Jesus, with all His saints, replaces the levitical priests; the body of each saint replaces the Tabernacle and Temple – and the gathered saints, the Church, replaces the Tent of Meeting.

Jesus eliminates the need for a priestly caste by virtue of His atoning death and resurrection. Jesus' death on the cross, the final sacrifice and offering, renders unnecessary further sacrifice or offering for sin. Additionally, the Levites' tasks were also eclipsed when the focus of God's glory-presence

moved from the Temple in Jerusalem into the hearts of His saints and the midst of His assembled Church.

Hebrew 7:1-28: ¹For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ²to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. ³Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

⁴Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. ⁵And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. ⁶But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. ⁷But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. ⁸In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. ⁹And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

¹¹Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? ¹²For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. ¹³For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. ¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

¹⁵And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become such not

on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is attested of Him, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

²⁰And inasmuch as it was not without an oath ²¹(for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him:

“The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind,
‘You are a priest forever’”);

²²so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

²³The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, ²⁴but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. ²⁵Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

Hebrews 10:1-39: ¹For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers,

having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says:

“Sacrifice and offering you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
⁶In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
you have not taken pleasure.
⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come
(in the Scroll of the Book it is written of me)
to do your will, O God.’”

⁸After saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the Law), ⁹then He said, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹²but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,
¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them,
After those days, says the Lord:
I will put My laws upon their heart,
And on their mind I will write them,”

He then says,

¹⁷“And their sins and their lawless deeds I will
remember no more.”

¹⁸Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

²⁶For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" And again, "The LORD will judge His people." ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. ³⁵Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what

was promised.

³⁷For yet in a very little while,
He who is coming will come, and will not delay.

³⁸But my righteousness ones shall live by faith;
And if he shrinks back,
My soul has no pleasure in him.

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

16.5 The New Covenant replaces the law of tithes, sacrifices and offerings with a new and better law, instructing us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice.

It's not as simple as giving a tenth and spending the rest as we please. Instead Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him through life and beyond. All that we are and all that we can be, offered to Him unconditionally. Everything we own, used as He directs.

Romans 12:1: ¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20: ¹²All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. ¹⁴Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! ¹⁶Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "The two shall become one flesh." ¹⁷But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. ¹⁸Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or

do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Hebrews: 10:1-23: ¹For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says:

“Sacrifice and offering you have not desired,
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⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come
(in the Scroll of the Book it is written of me)
to do your will, O God.’”

⁸After saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the Law), ⁹then He said, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹²but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them,
After those days, says the Lord:
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And on their mind I will write them,”

He then says,

¹⁷“And their sins and their lawless deeds I will
remember no more.”

¹⁸Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

16.6 The focus of money accelerates all manner of schemes to encourage membership giving.

The most common schemes offer members opportunity to claim documented offerings as deductions on their federal income tax return. Consequently, the church must first incorporate as a non-profit, tax-exempt religious organization, instituting practices that run in opposition to Scriptural teaching.

Two problematic government requirements to obtain non-profit, tax-deductible status include setting a specific salary for the pastor(s) and holding annual meeting to discuss and vote on church business.

The Bible clearly exhorts elders against serving for sordid gain or filthy lucre. Also, Jesus, Head of the Church, delegates the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of the saints, producing agreement and unity, not majority rule.

17 In Summary

Reviewing scriptural traditions laid down by our Lord and His apostles might prod the mind to compare and contrast these truths with the church as we know it. Armed with Bible instruction, temptation can swell within, puffing us up until we sit in judgment, pronouncing sentence on others.

Listening intently, we hear our Lord lead in an entirely different manner, simply calling, “Repent and return.” Strong scriptural example urges us to take action. During King Josiah’s reign, the Book of the Law resurfaced in a temple cleaning, revealing long abandoned instructions given by God through His prophets. Upon reading the book, Josiah tore his clothes in repentance and led God’s people in a revival of scriptural practices (2 Kings 22 and 23).

Today, God calls each of us as individuals to repent and return. Our personal responsibility is to obey Jesus and offer ourselves as a living stone in the church He is building. Coming together in His presence is not complicated; no expenses, no legalities, no worship team, no specific sermon, only Jesus, Himself. When brethren assemble as the Bible teaches, our gathering is transformed into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit, where the Lord Jesus has preeminence.

Even so, our best intentions and actions can miss the mark. Thankfully, we can rely on our Lord to call us back as He did the saints of the church in Ephesus. The Bible witnesses to their faithfulness (Revelation 2:2,3). Yet their lives and consequently, the life of the church, began to miss the mark. Jesus, ever the Good Shepherd, called them back:

“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent” (Revelation 2:4,5). The first love of the saint and church is Jesus, Himself, personally in the midst, and the deeds we did at first are the good works His love inspires.

Noah built an ark, a ship of safety, according to God’s plan. He outfitted the vessel with provision and God called within its cavernous hold the lives He intended to save. To the world the ark stood as an object of derision and scorn. Yet Noah preached from its platform the saving message of God, “repent and return.” With ark and preparations complete, God shut

the door and raised the ship to safety, buoyed on waters of judgment and destruction.

The church Jesus builds as we meet with Him may be small in number and absent traditional trappings. The Builder adorns His house with His own personal presence and ever present love. As God adds to our number those who are being saved, the brethren rejoice and joy in the love of God, witnessing God's grace in Christ reconciling the world to Himself! Modern church traditions, their importance and urgency, simply fade away in the presence of Jesus, His church and His purposes.

Dear saint, follow your heart's hunger for God. Jesus promised "where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst." God will build His Church with Jesus Himself present as our actual Leader, the Holy Spirit as His administrator and disciples, each and every one, as priests to God, ministers to one another, and witnesses to the world. There the flame of the perfect love of God blazes unquenchable, lighting the path for the world to know Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God. God willing, I want to be a part of His Church. I'm sure you do, too. Let's do it together.

In Christ,
Rob Weber

Can you imagine a church where Jesus is actually the Leader, the Holy Spirit, His administrator, and where saints, each and every one, are priests to God, ministers to one another, and witnesses to the world?

If this kind of church would interest you, I know you will enjoy this study.