

Week 16 – Purposes of the Church

Purposes of the Church

God's eternal purpose is to build His church to fulfill His purposes in the earth and gather to Himself a Bride. It is through His church that His purposes will unfold. These purposes include upreach, inreach and outreach.

Upreach – To Minister to the Lord and Reveal His Glory

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” Revelation 4:11

Jesus tells us that “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The first purpose of God's people is to worship the Lord in spirit and truth.

Genuine worship must have both. Those who worship in “Spirit” without truth blow up; those who worship in truth without Spirit, dry up. Those who worship in Spirit and in truth, grow up. Vital churches embrace the life of the Spirit while staying firmly rooted in the truth of God's Word. Heaven touches earth during worship, which should include:

Exuberant Praise and Worship (Psalm 22:22; Psalm 100; Acts 16:25; 1 Peter 2:9)

Testimonies (1 Corinthians 14:26; Revelation 12:11, 19:10)

Communion (Genesis 14:18; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28)

Financial giving (Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 23:23; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 1 Timothy 5:17-18)

Teaching and preaching (Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:42; Romans 10:14)

Ministry to the needy (Mark 16:18; Galatians 2:10; James 1:27)

Prayers (Luke 1:10; Acts 2:42, 20:36)

Baptisms (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-41)

Inreach – To Minister to God's People

The Church is a place of fellowship, love and encouragement. Christians pull together because of a common experience (new birth) and a common purpose (following Christ). This coming together in unity is called fellowship. Fellowship in the Greek is koinonia, which means sharing in common, companionship, mutual sharing. As we come to Christ, our desires will change. We

acquire a new set of friends among believers and become a part of a Christian community or spiritual family.

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor...” (Romans 12:9-10)

The Bible tells us to encourage each other to remain devoted to Jesus (Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25). A little encouragement can go far. “But 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” (Hebrews 3:13).

The church should be a place of being lifted up and lifting others up. Of course, natural conflicts arise as flawed humans work together, but everything, whether in times of tranquility or when ironing things out, should be done in a spirit of encouragement and love.

In God’s family, there so many ways we can show our love for one another. At least 42 “one another” references are in the New Testament, including:

Jesus commands us, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). The night before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). This love must be visible and practical, such as praying for the sick and opening our homes to guests.

God wants to make us a real family through Christ. Fellowship is like being “fellows in the ship.” Jumping overboard is not an option. In the “ship” of God’s house, we should find growth (Hebrews 3:13), encouragement (Romans 1:11-12), Christ’s presence (Matthew 18:20), sharpening of each other (Proverbs 27:17), sharing with others out of our abundance (Acts 4:32-35), and praying together and building up each other (James 5:16).

Outreach - To Minister to Those Who Need Jesus and His People

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Some have had negative experiences in past churches or in hypocrisy from others. In their hurt and cynicism, they fail to see that the church is God’s provision for His people. It’s dangerous to say, “I love Jesus, but cannot stand His people” – and leave fellowship altogether. The church is God’s protection. Commitment to a local church shields and keeps us prospering in the Lord.

Through the recorded history of the early church (as revealed in the Book of Acts) we see remarkable outflow of God’s power, message and good works through His church. There are countless ways the church can do outreach today. We cover this more in Study #28.

Review:

1. What is inreach? What is upreach? What is outreach?
2. How does a Christian worship the Lord, according to John 4:24?
3. What is the new commandment that Jesus gives us in John 13:34-35?
4. What are some creative ways the church can do outreach today?