

Week 20 – The Church: More Officers and Metaphors

Other Officers of the Church

Deacons

The deacons or deaconesses of a church are called and appointed to serve the church elders, thus enabling them to minister the Word and pray. The word for deacon, “diakoneo,” simply means servant. Acts 6:1-6 gives the first mention of deacons being ordained in the church. (Romans 16:1, 1 Timothy 3:10)

The Apostolic Team

In addition to the local leader, God places apostles and prophets in, around or over local churches (Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 2:20, 4:11). The apostolic team (popularly called “church planters”) pioneers work in new territories. Typically, the apostolic team will design strategy and decide on the timing for planting new works. They will appoint the key man into the leadership of a local church (e.g. Titus 1:5), and through teaching and counsel, will strengthen the church (e.g. Acts 15:36, 18:23), especially during its initial stages or during times of major new initiatives. An apostolic team provides stability and guidance during times of transition or special challenge, and also will manage the distribution of funds between various churches (e.g. 2 Corinthians 8:1-21, Acts 4:37).

Scriptural Metaphors of the Church

In His Word, God provides several pictures of the church to help us understand its nature and purpose. In Ephesians, for example, Paul described the church in a different way. These metaphors display indispensable significance and divine design of God’s church.

The Church is His **BODY**; Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Picture the church as a living organism whose parts are interconnected and interdependent. It is not a dead institution, but full of power, love, and life. (1 Corinthians 12:12-25)

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

The Church is His **BUILDING**; Christ is the Cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

The church is like a building under construction. As partakers and partners of this house, we participate in the building process. We are more than spectators, we are called to help build wherever the Lord places us.

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)

See also 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The Church is His **FAMILY**; Christ is Big Brother. (Ephesians 3:6, 10, 15)

In a dysfunctional society where the family life is often less than God’s best, God in His goodness has made provision in raising up powerful yet loving church families, where He “makes a home for the lonely” (Psalms 68:6).

Gentiles are no longer outsiders, but fellow heirs and members of the body, partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Ephesians 3:6).

See also Ephesians 1:11, 2:19; Hebrews 2:14-17

The Church is His **MATURE MAN**; Christ is the Example. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

The church is also maturing. God’s desire is for His church to be like a mature Son, having character and anointing to share in the Father’s business.

“...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until 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.” (Ephesians 4:12-13)

The Church is His **BRIDE**; Christ is the Groom. (Ephesians 5:27)

According to this Scripture, Christ will return again for His Bride and the Bride will be ready, spotless and glorious. Even today the church is getting rid of past blemishes so that we might be more attractive to our Groom – the Lord Jesus.

“...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:27)

“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” (2 Corinthians 11:2)

“Let 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.” (Revelation 19:7)

The Church is His WARRIOR; Christ is our Armor of Victory. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

The church is called to do significant, strategic and supernatural warfare. We are to do battle with the full armor of God and to take “every thought captive to the obedience of God” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.” (Luke 10:17-19)

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:11-12)

See also Matthew 16:18-19 and Calvin’s Institutes 4:1:4

Review

1. What is the role of a deacon or deaconess?
2. Name 3 metaphors used to describe the church.
3. With which metaphor of the church do you most identify?