

TREK 201

CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Lesson 12

THE CHURCH

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying
God with deep reverence and fear.”
Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

TREK is a Discipleship Ministry of
Rockpointe Church

Written by Dr. Matthew S. Harding and Gene Griffin

(Jesus said)...**And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** Matthew 16:18 (ESV). With these words, Jesus declared Himself the founder of The Church. He is the cornerstone upon which the Church is built. He brings believers of all ages together to be indwelt and empowered by His Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22). What Jesus declared came to fruition on the Day of Pentecost as Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached to devout Jews “from every nation under heaven” that were staying in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5). Upon hearing the Gospel, 3000 people believed and were baptized. The Church Triumphant began its march in history to carry on Jesus’ mission and witness to Him “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The Church, founded by Christ and purchased with His blood, is not an institution or a building. It is PEOPLE. It is an organism, alive and growing, by adding to its number those who are being saved. If someone asked you where your church is located (and you know Jesus as your Savior) you could give them your home address. YOU are the church. That means the activities of the church are not confined to the four walls of a building we call “church” but they take place throughout the world in what you say, do and are.

Every genuine believer (Christian), regardless of denomination, is spiritually united in Christ and is spiritually one with every other believer. As we are obedient to the Head of the Church, Christ, we will be naturally drawn to and join with a local group of other believers for worship and service in a community we call “church”. There we pool the gifts and abilities that God has entrusted to each of us so we can “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV).

I. THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF CHURCH

A. Name

1. *ecclesia*,” Meaning “To call out from”
 - a. General usage refers to assembly of citizens (Acts 19:32,39,41)
 - b. Common usage in the New Testament – assembly of believers (Acts 8:1)
 - c. Used some 110 times in the New Testament

B. Nature

1. Local vs. Universal
 - a. A local community of believers (Acts 11:22, Acts 20:17. Rev 3:7)
 - 1) A “house church” is called a “church” (Rom 16:5)
 - 2) An entire city is also called “a church” (1 Cor. 1:2)
 - 3) A region is referred to as a “church” (Acts 9:31)
 - b. Universal -- the church throughout the entire world (Eph. 5:23-25, Matt 16:18). The book of Ephesians uses the word only in this sense.

2. Visible vs. Invisible
 - a. Visible - alive here on the earth at the moment
 - b. Invisible - those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Heb 12:1)
3. NOTE: Whether referring to a local community of believers or believers of all ages, the "church" always refers to people not buildings.

II. FIGURES USED TO DESCRIBE THE CHURCH

A. Body of Christ

1. Christ is the Head (Col 1:18); the source of its life, filling it with His fullness (Eph. 1:23); the center of its unity and the cause of its growth (Col. 2:19).
 - a. Therefore the Church is a living organism, alive and dynamic.
 - b. Made up of people who have put on Christ and live under His Lordship as the head
2. This speaks of the interconnectedness between all the persons who make up the church
 - a. Each believer encourages and builds up the others. (Eph. 4:11–16)
 - b. Members of the body are to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2) and restore those who are found to be in sin (Gal 6:1)
 - c. The body is to be characterized by genuine fellowship that is expressed by mutual understanding and encouragement (1 Cor. 12:26) as well as sharing physical needs (Acts 2:44-47)
 - d. Should be characterized by unity and equality (1Cor 12:12-13)

B. Bride of Christ

1. Marriage relationship illustrates Christ's relationship to the Church (Eph. 5:25-32)
2. Expresses His love and commitment to her
3. He purchased the Church with His blood so the church (believers) might be holy and blameless (Eph. 5:27)

C. People of God

1. Familiar expression in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:13, 16, Hosea 1:9-10)
2. Paul applies Hosea's statement to Jews and Gentiles (Rom 9:24-26)
3. The figure as people of God emphasizes God's initiative in choosing us (1 Thess 1:4)
4. It emphasizes His provision and protection of His people as reflected in the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13)
5. As God's people, He expects that we will be His people without reservation and without dividing their loyalty. He had "branded" us as belonging to Him by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13b-14).

D. The Temple of the Holy Spirit

1. The Spirit brought the church into being at Pentecost, where He filled the disciples and converted three thousand, giving birth to the church.
2. The church is now indwelt by the Spirit, both individually and collectively (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
3. The Holy Spirit gives power to the church, as Jesus indicated in Acts 1:8.
4. The Holy Spirit produces unity within the body. This does not mean uniformity, but an oneness in aim and action. (Acts 4:32)
5. The Holy Spirit equips the body for service and growth (Eph. 4:11-14, 1 Cor. 12)

III. OFFICES WITHIN THE CHURCH

A church officer is someone who has been publicly recognized as having the right and responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church. The New Testament discusses one church office which was limited to the time when the early church was founded (the office of apostle), and two other church offices which continue throughout the church age (the offices of elder and deacon).

A. Apostle

1. Means messenger; one sent forth from another; implies one sent of God.
2. In the New Testament apostles had the authority to speak and write words which were “words of God” in an absolute sense.
 - a. To disbelieve or disobey them was to disbelieve or disobey God. The apostles, therefore, had the authority to write words which became words of Scripture.
 - b. We would not expect it to continue today, for no one today can add words to the Bible and have them be counted as God’s very words or as part of Scripture
3. The two qualifications for being an apostle were (1) having seen Jesus after his resurrection with one’s own eyes (thus, being an “eyewitness of the resurrection”), and (2) having been specifically commissioned by Christ as his apostle (Acts 1:8, 22)
4. Who were apostles?
 - a. Original 12 (Luke 6:12-16), Matthias (Acts 1:26), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14) and James, brother of Jesus and author of books of James (1 Cor. 15:7-9)

B. Elder (Pastor/Overseer/Bishop)

1. The word Bishop is *episcopos* in Greek – Lit. “overseer.”
2. These seemed to be used interchangeably throughout the New Testament to describe the same position
3. Qualifications for Elder/Overseer/Bishop/ is found in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Today we commonly use the term pastor even though it is used only once in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11-12)
4. Duties

- a. Oversee and give spiritual direction to the congregation (1 Tim 5:17) which is the root meaning of the term translated as bishop or overseer
- b. Teach and preach (Eph. 4:11-12, 1 Tim 5:17)

C. Deacon

1. The word deacon is a translation of the Greek word *diakonos* which is the ordinary word for “servant” (lit. “one who stirs up dust” = active serving)
2. The qualifications are listed in 1 Tim 3:8-13.
3. The function of deacons is not spelled out here, but the qualifications for deacons suggest functions such as:
 - a. Responsibility in caring for the finances of the church, since they had to be people who were “not greedy for gain” (v. 8).
 - b. Administrative responsibilities in other activities of the church as well, because they were to manage their children and their households well (v. 12).
 - c. Ministered to the physical needs of those in the church or community who needed help (Acts 6:1-7).

D. Should Women serve as Elder/Pastor?

1. It has been assumed through the history of the church, with very few exceptions, that only men could be pastors or function as elders within a church. But in recent years a major controversy has arisen within the evangelical world: may women as well as men be pastors? **NOTE: The following discussion applies to the role of pastor not children’s, student, women’s or music ministry.**
2. The Scriptures affirm:
 - a. Men and women as equally created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, men and women have equal value to God and should be seen as having absolutely equal value as persons and equal value to the church.
 - b. Scripture assures men and women of equal access to all the blessings of salvation (Acts 2:17–18; Gal. 3:28).
3. Paul addresses this issue in three passages. The conclusion in each is the same. The functions that are carried out by the elders/pastors of the church are those specifically that Paul prohibits for women in the church.
 - a. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, Paul outlines the qualifications for elders/overseers. In both passages, he affirms the male as the office holder as he states they should be the “husband of one wife”. This is very definitive.
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:11–14, the Scripture declares: “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. *I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men*; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”
4. Several objections against the prohibition of women pastors:

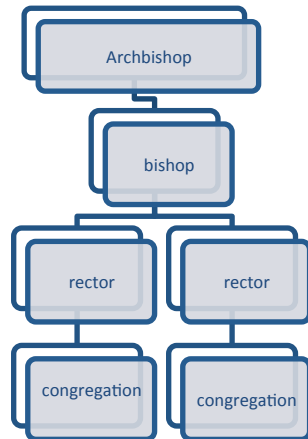
- a. It has been said that this passage (1 Tim 2:11-14) applies only to a specific situation that Paul is addressing, probably one where women were teaching heretical doctrine within the church at Ephesus.
 - 1) Paul does not simply tell certain women who are teaching false doctrine to be silent, but he says, “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men.”
 - 2) The reason Paul gives for this prohibition is not the one proposed in this objection, but a far different one: the situation of Adam and Eve before the fall, and before there was any sin in the world (see v. 13), and the way in which a reversal in male and female roles occurred at the time of the fall (see v. 14). These reasons are not limited to one situation in the church at Ephesus, but have application to manhood and womanhood generally.
 - b. Another objection is to say that Paul gave this prohibition because women were not well educated in the first century, and therefore were not qualified for teaching or governing roles in the church. But Paul does not give lack of education as a reason for saying that women cannot “teach or ... have authority over men,” but rather points back to creation (vv. 13–14)
 - 1) Those who make such an argument are sometimes inconsistent in that elsewhere they point to women who had leadership positions in the first century church, such as Priscilla.
 - 2) Yet Paul does not allow even well-educated Priscilla or any other well-educated women at Ephesus to teach men in the public assembly of the church. The reason was not lack of education, but the order of creation which God established between men and women.
 - c. Another objection is to say that if God has genuinely called a woman to be a pastor, she should not be prevented from acting as one. We must always test an individual claim to have experienced a call from God by what the Scripture teaches. **Scripture trumps everything.**
5. Additional support for the prohibition
- a. Jesus selected only men when he appointed the 12 as apostles. While apostles and elders/pastors are not the same, this pattern speaks loudly.
 - b. The history of male teaching and leadership through the whole Bible.
 - 1) There is not one example in the entire Bible of a woman doing the kind of congregational Bible teaching that is expected of pastors/elders in the New Testament church.
 - 2) In the Old Testament it was the priests who had teaching responsibilities for the people, and the priesthood was exclusively male; moreover, even the women prophets such as Deborah prophesied only privately, not publicly to a congregation of people.
6. Conclusion: The Bible does not support that women function in the role of pastor or elder within a church.

IV. FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Throughout church history, there are basically three forms or systems of church government (Polity). These terms apply to the system of government not to denominations.

A. Episcopalian:

1. Derived from the fact those who govern are “bishops” which oversee or rule.
2. An archbishop has authority over many bishops. They in turn have authority over a “diocese,” (the churches under the jurisdiction of a bishop). The officer in charge of a local parish is a rector. Archbishops, bishops, and rectors are all priests but in practice the rector is most often called the priest.

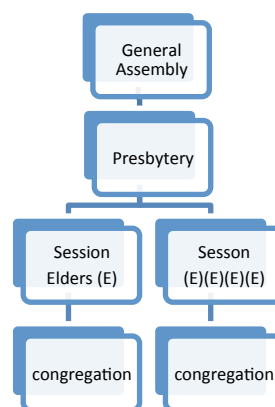


3. The Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Episcopal and Methodist have this form of government.
4. This system of church government was predominate throughout the church by the second century.

B. Presbyterian:

1. The key officer is the elder which in the Greek translates as *presbuteros*, hence the presbyterial or pertaining to elders form of government.
2. Each local church elects elders to a session. The pastor of the church will be one of the elders in the session, equal in authority to the other elders. This session has governing authority over the local church. The members of the session (the elders) are also members of a presbytery, which has authority over several churches in a region. This presbytery consists of some or all of the elders in the local churches over which it has authority. Some of the members of the presbytery are members of the “general

assembly” which usually will have authority over all the Presbyterian

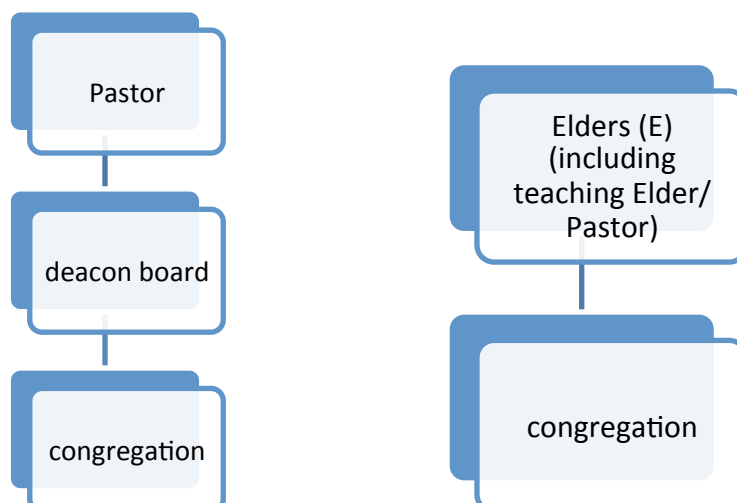


churches in a nation or region.

3. Usually make a distinction between “teaching” elder and “ruling” elder
 - a. The Teaching Elder is ordained to the Gospel Ministry. The Teaching Elder’s main responsibilities are teaching/preaching, counseling, and leading the spiritual oversight of the staff and church.
 - b. Ruling Elders are chosen by the congregation. Most do not preach, baptize, or administer communion. Ruling Elders assist in the government of the church including the financial affairs of the church.

C. Congregationalism:

1. Groups such as Baptists, Evangelical Free Church, Disciples of Christ and Bible and other independent church use this form.
2. Two concepts are basic to the congregational scheme: autonomy and democracy.
 - a. Autonomy. Means that the local congregation is independent and self-governing.
 - 1) There is no external power which can dictate courses of action to the local church.
 - 2) Means that each local church calls its own pastor and determines its own budget. It purchases and owns property independently of any outside authorities
 - b. Democracy. Means that every member of the local congregation has a voice in its affairs. It is the individual members of the congregation who possess and exercise authority.
 - 1) Two ideas support the democratic view of ministry.
 - i. Christ is the head of the church. Since every believer has access to God because of the work of Christ no need for rulers.
 - ii. Priesthood of the believer. Each believer is a priest (1 Pet 2:9) and can represent God to witness and minister to others.
3. Can have single elder/pastor or plural elders one of which is the pastor.



**Rockpointe Church is a Hybrid Elder-led & Congregational Church. Though we are Elder led, we also employ Congregational tendencies, since before the church moves ahead with its annual budget, building new buildings, and the hiring of the Senior Pastor, - we vote congregationally. Big decisions are usually congregational. The day-to-day- ministry is overseen by the Elders and carried out by the Pastoral staff & volunteers.

V. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Should baptism and the Lord's Supper be called a sacrament or an ordinance? The Catholic Church, for example, teaches that these are sacraments. By that they in themselves actually impart grace to people (without requiring faith from the persons participating in them). Some Protestants (especially Baptists) prefer the word ordinances instead. This is thought to be an appropriate term because baptism and the Lord's Supper were "ordained" by Christ. Their outward rites are symbols but do not impart grace.

A. Baptism

Baptism or more specifically believer's baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ. This excludes infant baptism which will be discussed in # 5 below.

1. Mode and Meaning of baptism

a. Baptism in the New Testament was by immersion. The person being baptized was immersed or put completely under the water and then brought back up again.

b. Evidences of such:

1) The Greek word *baptizo* means "to plunge, dip, immerse" something in water. Even Martin Luther and John Calvin acknowledged

immersion to be the basic meaning of the term and the original form of baptism practiced by the early church

- 2) The sense to “immerse” is appropriate for several NT passages:
 - i. Mark 1:5, people were baptized by John “*in* the river Jordan”
 - ii. Mark also tells us that when Jesus had been baptized “he came up out of the water” (Mark 1:10).
- 3) The symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion.
 - i. Rom 6:3-4
 - ii. When the candidate for baptism goes down into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Baptism thus very clearly pictures death to one’s old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ. Baptism by sprinkling or pouring simply misses this symbolism.

2. Who should be baptized?

- a. This view holds that only those who have themselves believed in Christ should be baptized. This is because baptism, which is a symbol of beginning the Christian life, should only be given to those who have in fact begun the Christian life. Thus the name believers baptism
- b. In the New Testament, baptism was appropriately given to those who have received the gospel and trusted in Christ for salvation.
 - 1) After Peter’s sermon at Pentecost we read, “Those who received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41). The text specifies that baptism was administered to those who “received his word” and therefore trusted in Christ for salvation
 - 2) When Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, we read, “When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women” (Acts 8:12)

3. Why should we be baptized?

- a. To follow the example set by Christ. Why was Jesus baptized? In order to save Him? No, He didn’t need to be saved. He was perfect. Baptism doesn’t save you. It is a symbol of obedience and it’s an example that we are to do what He has done.
- b. Because Christ commands it. Christ commands that every Christian be baptized. (Matt 28:19-20)
- c. It demonstrates that I’m really a believer. Baptism doesn’t make you a Christian. It just shows that you are a Christian. It’s just an outward symbol of an inward commitment. It is your commitment to Christ that saves you. Baptism just says to the world, “I’m not ashamed to tell the whole world what’s happened to me. I’ve given my life to Christ.”

4. When should children be baptized?

- a. The most direct answer is that they should be old enough to give a believable profession of faith. It is impossible to set a precise age that will apply to every child, but when parents see convincing evidence of genuine spiritual life, and also some degree of understanding regarding the meaning of trusting in Christ, then baptism is appropriate.

5. Alternative views in favor of infant baptism

- a. **Alternative #1: The Roman Catholic View.** The Roman Catholic Church teaches that baptism should be administered to infants. The reason for this is that the Catholic Church believes that baptism is necessary for salvation, and that the act of baptism itself causes regeneration. Therefore, in this view, baptism is a means whereby the church bestows saving grace on people. And if it is this kind of a channel of saving grace it should be given to all people.
 - 1) "Faith, as it is not the effective cause of justification ... need not be present. The faith which infants lack is ... replaced by the faith of the Church." Ludwig Ott, in his *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (p. 359)
 - 2) Essential to understanding the Roman Catholic view of baptism is the realization that Catholics hold that the sacraments work apart from the faith of the people participating in the sacrament. And if this is so, then it follows that baptism would confer grace even on infants who do not have the ability to exercise faith.
 - 3) There is no New Testament example of a person receiving grace who does not exercise faith for themselves. Quite the opposite is true. God extends grace through the media of faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)
- b. **Alternative #2:** The Protestant view of administering baptism to infant children of believing parents (called paedobaptism. The word "paedobaptism" means the practice of baptizing infants --the prefix paedo—means "child"). This is a common view among Presbyterian and Reformed churches.
 - i. Infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant as an outward sign of entrance into the covenant community or the community of God's people. This view says baptism is parallel to circumcision so it an outward sign of entrance into the "covenant community". Therefore baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision. It follows that baptism should be administered to all infant children of believing parents.
 - ii. Some objections to this view:
 - 1. Not only the physical descendants of the people of Israel were circumcised, but also those servants who were purchased by them and lived among them. The presence or

- absence of inward spiritual life made no difference whatsoever in the question of whether one was circumcised. Circumcision was given to every male living among the people of Israel even though true circumcision is something inward and spiritual. It is a matter of the heart (Rom 2:29)
2. What does such infant baptism actually accomplish? What benefit does it bring? Roman Catholics say it causes regeneration. Baptists say it symbolizes the fact that inward regeneration has occurred. Those believing parents who baptize their infants can only say it symbolizes a regeneration that might occur in the future, when the infant is old enough to come to saving faith. Since it is not certain that the infant will be regenerated in the future—some infants who are baptized never come to saving faith later.
 3. Those who advocate believers' baptism often express concern that leads persons baptized in infancy to presume that they have been regenerated, and thereby they fail to feel the urgency of their need to come to personal faith in Christ. It gives a sense of false security that might result in their destiny of hell.

B. The Lord's Supper

1. The Institution of the Lord's Supper
 - a. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with these words: "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:26–29)
 - b. Paul adds the following sentences from the tradition he received (1 Cor. 11:23): "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:25)
2. The Meaning/Benefit of the Lord's Supper
 - a. Affirm Christ's death in our behalf. By our actions of breaking bread and drinking the cup, we give a picture of His death for us. When the bread is broken it symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body, and when the cup is poured out it symbolizes the pouring out of Christ's blood for us.
 - b. Proclaim the benefits of Christ's Death. As we individually reach out and take the cup for ourselves, each one of us is by that action proclaiming, "I am taking the benefits of Christ's death to myself." When we do this we give a symbol of the fact that we participate in or share in the benefits earned for us by the death of Jesus.

- c. Spiritual Nourishment. Just as ordinary food nourishes our physical bodies, so Lord's Supper, as any worship service should, nourish us spiritually.
- d. Affirms Christ's Love for Me. Participation is a vivid reminder and visual reassurance that Jesus Christ loves me individually and personally. When I come to take of the Lord's Supper I thereby find reassurance again and again of Christ's personal love for me.
- e. Proclaims that Jesus is coming again.(1 Cor 11:26). This gives assurance of hope that one day in the future that I'll join Jesus at the great marriage supper of the Lamb and take the place He has been reserved for me.

3. Views about the how present is Christ?

- a. **The Roman Catholic View: Transubstantiation.** According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ. This happens at the moment the priest says, "This is my body" during the celebration of the mass.
 - 1) Every time the mass is celebrated, the sacrifice of Christ is repeated (in some sense), and the Catholic church is careful to affirm that this is a real sacrifice, even though it is not the same as the sacrifice that Christ paid on the cross.
 - 2) Because the elements of bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ, the church for many centuries did not allow the lay people to drink from the cup of the Lord's Supper (for fear that the blood of Christ would be spilled) but only to eat the bread. It is more common today to receive both elements.
 - 3) Objections:
 - i. This view fails to recognize the clear New Testament teaching on the finality and completeness of Christ's sacrifice once for all time for our sins. (Heb. 9:25–28)
 - ii. The idea of a continuation of Christ's sacrifice destroys our assurance that the payment has been made by Christ and accepted by God the Father, and that there is "no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1) now remaining for us.
- b. **The Lutheran View: Consubstantiation.** Luther's conclusion was not that the bread actually becomes the physical body of Christ, but that the physical body of Christ is present "in, with, and under" the bread of the Lord's Supper. The example sometimes given is to say that Christ's body is present in the bread as water is present in a sponge—the water is not the sponge, but is present "in, with, and under" a sponge, and is present wherever the sponge is present.
 - 1) This view fails to realize that Jesus is speaking of a spiritual reality but using physical objects to teach us. When he says, "This is my body." we should take this no more literally than we take the

corresponding sentence, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20).

c. **A Symbolic and Spiritual Presence of Christ.** This view says the bread and wine symbolizes the body and blood of Christ, and they give a visible sign of the fact that Christ himself is truly present.

1) Jesus promised to be present whenever believers worship (Matt 18:20).

2) And if He is especially present when Christians gather to worship, then we would expect that He will be present in a special way in the Lord’s Supper.

4. Who should participate in the Lord’s Supper?

a. Most Protestants would agree that only those who believe in Christ should participate in it, because it is a sign of being a Christian and continuing in the Christian life.

b. Those who participate should practice self-examination (1 Cor. 11:27-29). We ought to ask whether our relationships, actions and character in the body of Christ are in fact reflecting the character of the Lord whom we meet there and whom we represent. (Matt 5:23-24)

5. The Elements to Be Used

a. What elements are used will depend on the concerns of the participants. If their chief concern is duplication of the original meal, they will use the unleavened bread of the traditional Passover and the wine (probably diluted). If, however, the participants’ chief concern is preservation of the symbolism, they might use a loaf of leavened bread and grape juice.

b. The use of bizarre substitutes simply for variety should be avoided. Potato chips and cola, for example, bear little resemblance to the original.

6. The Frequency of Observance

a. Since there are no explicit statements in Scripture as to frequency, the Lord’s Supper should be observed often enough to prevent long gaps between times lest we forget the truths which it represents, but not so often as to make it seem trivial or so commonplace that we go through the motions without really thinking about the meaning.

b. Perhaps it would be good for the church to make the Lord’s Supper available on a frequent basis, allowing the individual believer to determine how often to partake.

VI. THE MISSION/PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH

RockPointe’s statement of faith expresses the mission of the church like this: “Operating under the direction of Jesus as Lord and Head of His body and through Godly servant leadership, believers devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word,

observance of baptism and communion, fellowship, service to the body, and outreach to the lost.” From this we discover at least five purposes of the church.

A. **Worship**

1. Worship is our expression of loving God (Matt 4:10) through praise, prayer, Scripture. It is giving “worship” to our Creator and Redeemer.
2. In biblical times, worship laid the foundation for the other purposes such as service and evangelism. Worship focuses our hearts and minds on God which, in turn, leads to loving a neighbor as ourselves (Matt 22:39).

B. **Evangelism and Missions**

1. Jesus’ last words to his disciples is evangelism (Matthew 28:19) and dependence upon the Holy Spirit as the source of power in sharing the Gospel (Acts 1:8).
 - a. The call is a command.
 - b. The power is the Holy Spirit
 - c. The extent is all-inclusive. Local evangelism, church planting, and world missions are all the same thing. The only difference is geographic distance.
2. Evangelism is both our responsibility and privilege.

C. **Edification/Discipleship**

1. God gave gifts to the church in form of pastors-teachers to equip and edify the body of believers (Eph. 4:11-13).
2. The church then has an obligation to nurture believers and build them up to maturity in the faith. The goal of the church is not just to share the Gospel and bring people to a saving faith but also to develop mature believers (Col. 1:28).

D. **Ministry/Service**

1. It is clear that Jesus cared about the problems of the needy and the suffering. He healed the sick and met physical needs (feeding of 5000). If the church is to carry on His ministry, it will be engaged in some form of ministry to the needy and the suffering. That Jesus has such an expectation of believers is evident in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
2. Ministry is demonstrating God’s love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus including spiritual, emotional, relational and physical needs.

E. **Fellowship**

1. As believers, we are not meant to live lone-ranger lives. Instead we are to belong to a community of believers. This sense of belonging is seen in Jesus’ command to baptize. Baptism is not only a symbol of our salvation but a symbol of fellowship.

2. This was part of the early church community: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship...”(Acts 2:42)
Fellowship is literally “partnership” or “sharing.” Christians become partners with Jesus Christ and all other believers. In fellowship we have a spiritual duty to encourage one another to righteousness and obedience. The Apostle Paul emphasized this partnership in his epistles by the phrase “one another” used some 30+times. For example, he says we are to forgive one another (Eph. 4:32), encourage and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11), and love one another (Rom 12:10).
- F. Key is Balance
1. A strong church will have effective ministries in all of these areas. The key is balance. For example, a church that emphasizes only worship will end up with inadequate Bible teaching of believers and its members will remain shallow in their understanding of Scripture and immature in their Christian lives. If it neglects evangelism, the church will cease to grow and influence others; it will become ingrown and eventually begin to wither.
 2. A church that makes evangelism such a priority that it neglects or diminishes the other purposes will end up with immature Christians who emphasize growth in numbers but have less and less genuine love for God expressed in their worship and less and less doctrinal maturity and personal holiness in their lives.

VII. SUMMARY STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CHURCH

- A. **The church is not to be conceived of primarily as a sociological phenomenon, but as a divinely established living organism. Accordingly, the Scriptures determine its purposes as reflected in Matt 28:19-20 and Matt 22:37-40.**
- B. **The church exists because of its relationship to the Triune God. It exists to carry out the Lord’s will by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts1:8).**
- C. **The church is the continuation of the Lord’s presence and ministry in the world.**
- D. **The church is to be a fellowship of believers who display the spiritual qualities of their Lord.**
- E. **While the church is a divine creation, it is made up of imperfect human beings. It will not reach perfect sanctification or glorification until the Lord returns. If you find a perfect church, don’t join it because you’ll mess it up.**