
Ephesians 3:21—...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...

James 4:6—But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Psalm 139:23-24—Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Question #1: Biblically, What Is The Church?

A. God’s Word

1 Corinthians 1:2—To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...

Ephesians 5:25—Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...

Matthew 18:17—If 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.

The church is the people of God, his assembly or congregation, who are united to Jesus Christ through faith. It can refer both to all believers throughout time as well as congregations in the present day of various sizes in a variety of locations.

B. Implications for Youth Discipleship

We must be alert to the ways insecurity and arrogance breed division between those whom God has joined into one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12–27)

- **Insecurity:** “Because I am not...” (12:15, 16)

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- **Arrogance:** “I have no need of you. ... I have no need of you.” (12:21)

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- **God's design:** "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (12:27)

For Further Study: The biblical gravitational pull of the visible church including believers across the generations should propel us towards to consider the following things.

MEMBERSHIP: What does the Bible teach about local church membership? See: Leeman, Jonathan. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012). Harris, Joshua. *Stop Dating the Church!: Fall in Love with the Family of God*. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Multnomah Publishers, 2004). Should your church encourage young believers towards membership? If so, how?

CORPORATE WORSHIP: What does the Bible teach about including children and young people in corporate worship? See: "Do Children Belong in Church? A Biblical Overview" by Dr. Rob Rienow <http://tinyurl.com/dochildrenbelonginchurch-pdf>

If the patterns and commands of Scripture point in this direction, then what are we doing or can we do to cast this vision to our flock and make it a workable reality? See David Michael's vision and practical wisdom here: <http://www.hopeingod.org/document/children-worship-services>

SERVING: The Bible indicates that all believers have received spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:7) and calls believers, young and old, to use their gifts to build up the church (Ephesians 4:12, 16; 1 Peter 4:10). How can our church grow in its effectiveness in helping young believers discover, develop, and deploy their gifting to serve Jesus throughout the church?

FELLOWSHIP: What does the Bible teach about the robust nature of fellowship, and among whom it should be practiced? See: "2001 CDG Seminar "Towards a Biblical Relational Youth Ministry" <http://tinyurl.com/biblicalrelationalyouthmin>

What can your church do to encourage, advertise, and provide opportunities for young and old to pursue Jesus Christ together?

Question #2: What is God's Purpose for the Church?

A. God's Word

Ephesians 1:3–14—For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. ¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...

Philippians 1:9–11—And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Romans 1:5—...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations...

B. Implications for Youth Discipleship?

Romans 11:36—For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

(Compare this to Daniel 4:30 and note its context in Chapter 4).

Who is the ministry you serve flow “...from...through...and to...”?

For Further Study: The Bible gives a resounding message from cover to cover: everything exists for the exaltation of the Triune God.

DOCTRINE: Interact further with this truth in Chapters 2–4 of the updated and expanded: Piper, John. *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2013).

YOUR HEART: Receive biblical heart surgery as you interact with these skillful surgeons: Scott, Stuart. *From Pride to Humility* (Bemidji, Minnesota: Focus Publications, 2002) and Mahaney, C.J. *Humility: True Greatness*. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Multnomah, 2005).

Question #3: Who has God tasked with the accomplishment of the discipleship component of his mission for the local church?

A. God’s Word on this Question:

1 Thessalonians 2:13—And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

See also 1 Corinthians 3:5–7; Ephesians 5:29; and Matthew 16:18.

For Further Study: God is the primary builder of his church. Apart from him we can do nothing (John 15:5). To what extent are you gripped with that truth? To what extent does our ministry time allocation display that reality?

PRAYER: What priority should the pastor/leader (Romans 1:9–10; Acts 6:1–5, etc.) place on prayer? How should we pray? Jason Meyer preached a very helpful sermon on this topic entitled “Look to the God Who Gives,” January 5, 2013: <http://www.hopeingod.org/sermon/look-god-who-gives>. What should we pray? See D. A. Carson’s examination of Paul’s prayers for his people: Carson, D.A. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1992).

Ephesians 4:7–16—But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” ⁹(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

B. Implications for Youth Discipleship:

1. Do we come to give or receive?

Romans 1:11–12—For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

2. Are we providing and shepherding opportunities for the body to intentionally connect on a variety of levels across the generations?
3. Are our young people walking with the wise?

Proverbs 13:20—Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

For Further Study: God’s design for the equipped “saints to do the work of the ministry” leaves us with many questions.

MIXED MULTITUDE: What does the Bible teach about believers and unbelievers co-existing in the church? (Acts 20:17–35; 1 Corinthians 11:19; 2 Timothy 2:19; The Book of 1 John; etc.) How does biblical instruction on this topic call us to shepherd the young people in our care? Though directed at the entire church, Mark Dever’s Sermon *False Conversions: The Suicide of the Church* (April 10, 2012) has provoking and powerful implications for Youth Discipleship and this topic. Sermon: <http://tinyurl.com/falseconversionsmarkdever>

Transcript: <http://tinyurl.com/markdevertranscript>

WISDOM ON COMPANIONS: What wisdom does the Bible give to young men (and young women) on companions from the book of Proverbs? Consider reading the entire book with an eye for this topic. How does 1 Corinthians 10:31 (the primary mission of the church) relate to believers interacting with unbelievers? Are the young people we shepherd spending time with unbelievers because they love what the lost loves (the world) or because they desire by God’s grace to help the lost love what they love (Jesus)? What steps can we take to equip believing students to be grounded in mutual life-giving relationships with believers and wisely interact with unbelievers in God glorifying life-dispensing relationships?

Question #4: How and by what means has God ordained for his discipleship purpose for young people to be carried out in the church?

A. A Pathway Toward Answers:

- Scripture is sufficient! We must continually ask—“What does God’s word say about this?”
- God’s Word constrains us in some areas and frees us in others!
- **I** Irreducible Essentials—Without these elements, our discipleship to young people would not be biblical.
- **P** Priorities—Scripturally-rooted unique callings to a specific local church or churches which God does not make to all churches.
- **O** Optional—Programmatic ministry expressions which local churches are free to exercise or not to exercise.
- **D** Do Not—Biblically prohibited ministry expressions.

B. God’s Word on Some Irreducible Essentials:

1 Corinthians 1:2—To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...

Acts 20:28–32— Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 1:8—But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (See also 1 Corinthians 14:23–25.)

1 Peter 4:10–11—As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (See also Ephesians 4:7.)

Hebrews 3:12–14—Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Psalms 78:5–8—He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ⁸and that they should

not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God. (See also Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 1:8.)

C. Implications for Youth Discipleship:

- The Church is to be “always being reformed.” We must lean on the Shepherd and lean into the refining he desires us to pursue.

For Further Study: The battle between pragmatism and God’s revealed will found in his Scriptures is a battle we face more often than we realize. The following are resources addressing that need:

SCRIPTURE’S SUFFICIENCY: How firm is your ministry foundation? Our people need leaders gripped by God’s convictions from God’s Word. Mark Dever supplies us with a strong foundation for thinking through the doctrine of the church and the sufficiency of Scripture with relation to programs, priorities, differences, and much more. See: Dever, Mark. *The Church, The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2012, pages xiii-xxix).

ALWAYS BEING REFORMED: Find out the history and implications of this phrase for your local church by reading Michael Horton’s article “*Semper Reformanda*,” from the October 1, 2009 issue of Table Talk Magazine, found here: <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/semper-reformanda/>

Question #5: What Biblical wisdom is available to help us navigate steps forward?

1. Take Heart: We have a Great Shepherd!

Hebrews 13:20–21—Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

2. God leads sheep through leaders through prayer!

Luke 6:12–13—In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles... (See also 1 Chronicles 14:9–17.)

3. God uses his Scriptures to grip his leaders!

Romans 15:20–21—...and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, ²¹but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

4. Thrive as a leader under authority!

2 Timothy 1:1—Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
