

What The Local Church Should Be

Introduction. The church does not belong to the elders, the deacons, the preacher, or the body of members. It belongs to God, who purchased it with the blood of Jesus. Back in the days of the Babylonian captivity, the people craved falsehood (Jeremiah 5:30-31), but now God's people have their names "written in heaven" because they love the truth (Hebrews 12:22-24). So we listen to Him in determining the course of action the church will take. For this reason, we can benefit from learning what the local church should be.

I. ***A Center Of Gospel Preaching***

- A. First and foremost, the church ought to proclaim the gospel (Romans 1:8; Philippians 4:15-16; Revelation 2:13). The church is not a civic or social club. It exists to try to save people from their sins.
- B. The church, in preaching the gospel, serves as a school for character and instruction (Acts 20:28, 32; 2 Peter 1:3).

II. ***A Family Circle Of Love***

- A. A congregation is more than just an assembly, or a group of people. It is a family (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:1-6).
- B. The family should have love for each other (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9-10). Love allows us to do our work together with unity and peace (Ephesians 4:3).

III. ***A Support For Spiritual Weakness***

- A. Everyone begins weak and becomes strong (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).
- B. It is our purpose to bring people to spiritual maturity (Galatians 6:1; Romans 14:1; 15:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:14). We are a "spiritual nursery."

IV. ***A Sphere Of Divine Discipline***

- A. We love one another, but we realize that love sometimes means discipline (Job 5:17; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- B. Discipline is not just for one area. It encompasses both doctrinal and moral sins (1 Corinthians 5:1, 5; 2 Timothy 3:2-5; Titus 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14).

V. ***A Target For The Devil***

- A. Peter described how the devil will look around and devour who he can (1 Peter 5:8). The devil wants mankind, including those in local churches, to do his will (Matthew 4:8-9).

B. If a congregation is doing as they should, they will be a target for the devil (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5; Revelation 2:13).

Conclusion. When it was built for an international exposition in the 19th century, the structure was called monstrous by the citizens of the city, who demanded it be torn down as soon as the exposition was over. Yet from the moment its architect first conceived it, he took pride in it and loyally defended it from those who wished to destroy it. He knew it was destined for greatness. Today the Eiffel Tower is one of the architectural wonders of the modern world and is the landmark of Paris.

In the same way we are struck by Jesus' loyalty to another structure -- the church -- which He entrusted to an unlikely band of disciples, whom He defended, prayed for, and prepared to spread the gospel. To outsiders they (and we) must seem like incapable blunderers. But Jesus, the architect of the church, knew this structure was destined for greatness. It is a wonder of divinely-inspired wisdom, but if we turn it from God's purpose, it will have its candlestick removed, and we will be lost (Revelation 2:5).