

Design of the Church 01-15-17

In Ephesians 4:11-16 Paul describes the purpose of the church. In fact, he suggests more than one purpose of the church. Ultimately, we might sum that purpose up as equipping Christians to please God and get to heaven.

The design of the church is important. Paul said in Ephesians 3:11 that the church was God's "eternal purpose". The Old Testament gives a spiritual foreshadow of the church through the nation of Israel (1 Corinthians 10:11, Romans 15:4). The pattern revealed for the local church (the body of believers in a local area) is one that is repeatable anywhere in the world (Titus 1:5) by the authority of Scripture (1 Timothy 3:15). Finally, the church was totally equipped to accomplish all of its purposes.

What are the purposes of the church? Many passages give details and directions to the church. Let us consider this list (from the least often mentioned to the most often mentioned) from the New Testament:

- Equipping Saints for service (Ephesians 4)
 - In evangelism (and edification)
 - In good works
- Offer a corporate worship (Acts 2:42)
 - Gathering of the assembly (Heb. 10:25)
 - Actions of communal worship
- Organizing itself in the pattern (1 Tim. 3:15)
 - Elders, deacons, teachers, preachers
 - Worship leaders, etc
- Doctrinal purity
 - 12 NT books address this concern
 - Acts 2:40, Gal 1:21, Eph 4:14, Tit 2:1, 1 Tim 1:3, 6:3, 2 Tim 4:3, 1 Pet 2:2, 1 John 2:19, 2 John 9, 3 John 3, Jude 17, Rev 2-3
- Membership discipline
 - 15 New Testament books address this
 - Matthew 18, Acts 20, Rom 16:16, 1 Cor. 5, 2 Cor 2, Gal 6:2, Phil 4:2, 2 Thes 3, 1 Tim 6:4-5, 2 Tim 3:5, Titus 3:9-10, 2 Peter 2, 1 John 2:18, 2 John 9, Jude
- Familial affection (56 "*one another*" verses)

If a church wishes to understand its purpose, it needs to understand that it must labor for ALL of these purposes, and that the ultimate goal is creating effective saints. The church is the means of the goal, NOT the end of the goal. In other words, the church's (main) purpose is not the church; it is NOT to grow itself nor is it NOT to accomplish works itself. It is to make Christians able to accomplish the purposes.