

The Anatomy of a Church (37)

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 11/16/14)

Fundamental Priorities of a Good Church

A. The Description of the Church, [1 Timothy 3:14-16](#)

1 Timothy 3:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;

¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

¹⁶ By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

(1 Timothy 3:14-16) Introduction: this passage begins a new division of subjects in [1 Timothy](#)—the believer's behavior and relationships in the church. This first passage is one of the greatest discussions on the church in all of Scripture. It is a passage that every church and believer needs to study and heed.

1. **The purpose of the Pastoral Epistles—that men might know how they ought to behave in the church (v.14).**
2. **The description of the church (v.15).**
3. **The truth of the church (v.16).**

1. **(1 Timothy 3:14-15) Church— Pastoral Epistles— Scripture:** these two verses explain why Paul was writing to Timothy and why he was later to write to **Titus** and **Philemon**.

1 Timothy 3:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;

¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

¹⁶ By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

In essence these two verses give the very purpose for all the **Pastoral Epistles** ([1 Timothy](#), [2 Timothy](#), [Titus](#), and [Philemon](#)). Paul was writing to tell believers how they should behave within the church, that is, within the household or family of God.

11-23-14

Series: The Anatomy of a Church

The word “**behave**” (*anastrephesthai*) means “**the conduct, walk, and behavior of a person; but it especially refers to how a person relates to other people.**” Therefore, the great concern of the Pastoral Epistles is how believers behave in their relationships to 1) **God, 2) to each other, and 3) to the unbelievers of the world.**

Remember: Timothy was in Ephesus and Paul was writing from Macedonia. Paul hoped to visit Ephesus and Timothy soon, but he was not quite sure that he would be able to leave Macedonia.

Therefore, he was spelling out in some detail...

- 1) how Christian believers are to conduct themselves within the church.
- 2) how Christian believers are to behave and witness to a world that is lost and reeling under the weight of corruption and evil.

I get a lot of emails. I got ...I think about a 24-page letter several years ago, that’s a daunting thing, you know, you’re so busy, you get a 24-page letter and you say, “Really, do I need to read this?” But this was from a lady, her name is Cathy. It’s an absolutely...it may be the most incredible letter I’ve ever received and I read all twenty-some pages of it. And I was so moved by it, that letter. This woman went through this incredible process of coming to understand the gospel. She was from Ghana, Africa. She came to South Africa. She married a real bozo of a guy. And life was horrific. She’s a writer and a journalist. She tried to find truth. She went through cults. She became a God-hater and a Christ-hater and she goes writing through all of this. And she’s a good writer. And as the years go by she’s becoming more and more desperate. As a little kid her mother was involved with the occult. Her father was into demonology. She couldn’t sleep at night for fear that she was going to be killed by demons and she had all these incredible fears. She was abused as a child. And the story goes on and on.

Well, to make a long story short, she turns on the radio. She listens to “Grace To You”, South Africa. And it’s a series on the lordship of Christ. She hears the message. She writes for the book. First book she reads is the lordship of Christ. And she and her husband read it out loud verbatim. That’s a pretty heavy introduction into Christianity. She decided she wasn’t sure the New Testament documents were actually accurate so she needed to know about that, so she went and got F.F. Bruce’s book on New Testament Documents and read that. She came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be. The New Testament was what it claimed to be.

And riding along in a car, reading...again the gospel of Jesus Christ with her husband...she was converted to Christ. And then she goes on for about five pages to describe in the clearest way this absolutely insatiable thirst to know the truth. And she says she weeps to know the truth. She falls on her face before God to know the truth. She falls on her knees before Christ and pleads that He would show her the truth. Whatever it is that she comes to understand in the Word of God as she believes implicitly without question and she is demonstrating the real work of God in a transformed heart.

11-23-14

Series: [The Anatomy of a Church](#)

You know, one could wish to have a church full of people like that **who can never get enough of the truth**, who just hangs on every element of the truth because it is food like no other, because it is so soul-satisfying. And if it isn't soul-satisfying for you, then somehow you've developed bad spiritual eating habits, right? How...how can we...how can we move ourselves away from these dangerous places of apathy that so easily creep into our lives. **And many of you fit into that sort of third generation category.** You come from a Christian home. You come from parents who came from Christian parents. Your grandparents maybe know the Lord, you've been raised in the church, you didn't fight for the truth, you just kind of got handed the truth. How do you...how do you fight against the tendency to be apathetic about that? How do you avoid the danger of spiritual privilege?

Michael Griffiths, the **British writer**, said, "Christians collectively seem to be suffering from a strange amnesia. A high proportion of people who go to church have forgotten what it's all about. Week by week they attend the services in a special building. They go through their particular time-honored routine. They give little thought to the purpose of what they're doing. The Bible talks about the bride of Christ, but the church today seems like a ragged Cinderella, hideous among the ashes." Pretty graphic. And the ragged Cinderella has lost its beauty because it failed to understand the priorities of spiritual life in the church.

If we're going **to recover the passion**, if we're going **to recover the zeal for the truth**, we've got **to focus ourselves on the right things**. And let me say this as simply as I can say it, **you have to focus yourself away from yourself**. Building a church around felt needs is utterly contrary to Scripture. Focusing **on you** and **your problems** and **your dilemmas** and **your circumstances** and **your situations** is counterproductive. And while it may intend to help you, the unintended consequence becomes, **you are the one being worshiped**. This is a problem. You are the **center of attention**. You are the **center of focus**. And then the unintended consequence is when you feel like you don't have any particular needs, or they're not doing a very good job of meeting those needs, **you don't need a church**. If they fail to deliver **what you think you need**, **you check out**.

So we need to get back to what the really...the really important matters of the church are. As the hymn writer said, you want to go to church **to get lost in wonder, love and praise**. You want to go to church **to forget about yourself**, **to set yourself aside** and **to lose yourself in the glory** and **wonder of God**, a God-centered preacher, a God-centered teacher, a God-centered worship is what you want in a church.

When you look for a church, that's what you want. You want those who are consistently being brought before God, who are being brought into the very throne room of heaven to see His glory and His majesty and the wonder of who **He is** and **His righteousness** and **His holiness**. It's really sad when people don't understand the full glory of God because if you don't...if you don't understand the depth of the being of God, **you can't** rise to the heights of praise. And that's what dramatically alters life.

Now, how do you pick a church? Look, you come from a church, we all come from some church, and you go to a church. The rest of your life you're going to be involved in a church. The church is going to be the center of your life. It's going to be...some of you are

11-23-14

Series: The Anatomy of a Church

actually going to get married and have children. You're going to raise them in a church. The church scene is frankly frightening. In the emails that we get I would say that the commonest complaint that we receive is from people who cannot find a church where they feel the truth of God is honored and ministry is done in a biblical way. This is no small frustration.

It's not that there are many...there are many churches, there are lots of churches. It's trying to discern what a good church is, what is a right church. And I want to help you with that. I want to talk about what a church should be. Now when I talk about this, you know you're getting down to the core of where I live because as a pastor I have a great love for the church.

And Jesus said, **“I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”**

Matthew 16:18 (NASB)

¹⁸**“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”**

It's the only institution Jesus ever promised to build, the only one that He is building. And so we have to be committed to the church. But obviously not all churches are committed to what they should be. So let me give you some principles, okay? What you want to look for in a church. Not just now but certainly now and for the rest of your life. These are not unrealistic expectations. These are not methods, nothing to do with that. These are not formats. These have nothing to do with style. I've been all over the world, I've been in church from the high mountains of the Andes in Chile, South America, to a house church in China, to churches in the Middle East, to churches in Europe, to churches in Asia and Africa. I've been all over the world. Everywhere I've gone I've been in churches and I've seen every imaginable kind of style of church. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about substance. Don't look at style, it's seductive. It's, at best, style can only appeal to the flesh. **Substance is what you're after.**