

## **NINETEEN MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH**

**A look at the doctrines and practices that make up the ideal church.**

**Each mark, we could say, is a stone in God's house. Since there is only one Foundation, we must take every care as we build His house.**

**First Corinthians gives us a model upon which to plant and build a local church. Paul had spent over 18 months establishing this church in Corinth. A few years later, some problems had arisen that needed to be addressed. Paul later warned the Ephesian elders about the wolves and the Diotrefes spoiling the beautiful bride of Christ. Things are no different today. We need to be constantly on our guard. In this epistle, we see how God wants the church to conduct herself. We need to be constantly repairing and restoring in order to reproduce that glorious church which is built on the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.**

### **Mark number one – THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE**

**(1 Corinthians 1:1-10)**

**In the first ten verses of this letter, our Lord is referred to ten times, but never once only as Jesus. Read the first 14 verses of Second Thessalonians and you will notice the same respect given to our Lord Jesus Christ. In the last verse of chapter one, within the same sentence, Paul repeats the full title, 'Lord Jesus Christ'.**

**Beware of those who glibly and childishly refer to our Lord simply and always only as Jesus. Following His resurrection and glorification, the apostles speak of our Lord in most respectful ways. They addressed Him, and refer to Him, as Prince and Saviour, Your holy Servant Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus or Lord Jesus. No longer was it just Jesus of Nazareth, but it was now, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Some exceptions to this rule may be found in the books of Hebrew and Revelation. This is probably due to the exalted context, which leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that this Jesus is none other than the Lord of glory.**

**Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:16, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him no more." Not just according to the flesh, but now they knew Him as the risen Lord of glory. They gave Christ the respect that was due to Him. Beware of those who want to belittle Him. There is an old saying, which is true, familiarity breeds contempt. The word 'Abba' expresses warm affection and filial confidence. A good paraphrase of this word could be 'Dearest Father' or 'Dear loving heavenly Father'.**

**We need to repair this damaged stone and reproduce the practice of referring to our Lord in proper dignified terms. He, and He alone, is the Great Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd-Pastor.**

*Discussion Questions*

*1 In 2 Thess. 1:12, why would Paul not use the personal pronoun on his second reference to Christ?*

*2 Why did the apostles not know Christ any more after the flesh?*

*3 What does it say to others when we constantly, and often glibly, refer to our Lord as Jesus only?*

## **Mark number two – UNITY IN FAITH**

**(1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-3)**

**Denominationalism showed its ugly head early in the life of the church. People were denominating themselves as a fraction of the whole with the use of a person's name. Quarrels, contentions, envy, strife, and divisions (denominations) are all symptoms of carnality. One faction denominated themselves with the name of Paul, another with the name of Christ. One was as bad as the other. Both were destroying the unity of the body. When we use any name, whether divine, biblical or non biblical, to identify a particular faction we are acting carnally. In bible times, the church was simply identified by its geographical location. It is without doubt the church of Christ; the church of God; or the church of the saints. However, it is never exclusively denominated by any title. If we have been saved according to the Scriptures, the Lord has added us to His church, which He purchased with His own blood. To avoid division, it is sufficient for one to be, and to say, 'I am a follower of Christ and a member of the Lord's church'.**

**What is the solution to schisms and dissensions? First, we must all agree to preach the same doctrines. Second, we must have perfect harmony in the way we think of Scripture and spiritual things. And third, we must agree in our estimation of matters of conduct and practice. A proper understanding and a humble attitude toward God's word is essential to obtaining this desired unity. As Isaiah warns us, we must tremble at the Word of God. We must accept it as divinely inspired and authoritative – our final court of appeal. If the Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it – this should be our attitude. We must only speak where the Bible speaks and keep silent where the bible is silent, on all matters of faith and practice. While in essentials (Matters concerning faith and practice on which the Bible has spoken) there must be unity; in non-essentials (Matters other than those of practice and doctrine about which the Bible is silent) we must allow liberty of opinion; and we must remember at all times to demonstrate brotherly love.**

**We must study and be diligent in order to rightly divide the Word of God. Each word in the Bible was inspired to give one meaning and convey only one intent. To determine this meaning we must compare Scripture with Scripture, consider the context, who is spoken to, by whom, and under what circumstances. In addition, our conclusions, or interpretations, must fit with the overall truth revealed in God's word.**

**We must repair this unity in faith and doctrine by discarding all private interpretations and dogmas of men. We must reproduce this unity in humility**

**‘cutting straight’ the Word of God. There are many crafty people who peddle God’s word deceitfully. We must reject as heretics, after the second admonition, those who cause factions through insisting on their own personal interpretations and opinions.**

***Discussion Questions***

***1 What name should we give to our religious party or persuasion?***

***2 How can we all interpret the Bible alike?***

***3 How do we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?***

**Mark number three – GOSPEL PREACHING**

**(1 Corinthians 1:14-31)**

**While Acts 18:8 tells us that many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized, and while it is true that Paul baptized some with his own hand, yet the primary purpose or focus of the preacher is to PREACH the GOSPEL. The message of the cross may be foolishness to the world but it is through the foolishness of the message preached that it pleased God to save those who believe. We too should preach Christ crucified! When we do the result will be the same: many will believe and be baptized. The Lord Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John though Jesus Himself did not baptise, but His disciples.**

**When and where should the church preach the gospel? In places where we can reach the lost and when we can catch them. Our Lord likened our work to that of an angler. We can learn a lot from this profession. The fisherman go where the fish live; they go at a time when the fish will most likely respond; they put attractive bait on the hook; they make sure the tackle is adequate for the task; they take a lot of patience; they go prepared to suffer any inconvenience; and they go expectantly with a bag into which they put the fish when they are caught. However, most of all they GO and they keep going, regardless of the results. Although from time to time, this has to be readdressed. They study and learn from the textbook, observing others and from personal experience.**

**Gospel preaching is different from edifying the saints. The elders must be able to teach and those who labour in the word and doctrine must be given double honour. They are to feed (pastor) the flock of God. The preacher must do the work of an evangelist. He must preach the word. He is a missionary. He must appoint elders and set the church in order.**

**The church must repair and reproduce this stone of gospel preaching. This may be done in a weekly service dedicated to this end; it may be done in outdoor settings where people are likely to listen; it may be done over the radio or television; it may be done through literature and tract distribution; it may be done in special campaigns and evangelistic crusades; in a village or in a house, but, by whatever means, it must be done!**

### *Discussion Questions*

*1 Which is the best day or night of the week to attract outsiders to a gospel meeting?*

*2 What kind of a service (music and atmosphere) would be conducive to gospel preaching?*

*3 How can people best be reached with the gospel in your area?*

*4 What is your church doing about preaching the gospel?*

**Mark number four – APPEAL TO REVELATION**

**(1 Corinthians 2:1-18)**

**Many of the problems that arise over church doctrine and practice can be solved if we would humbly submit to what has been revealed, rather than seeking the wisdom of man. Excellent speech and persuasive words of man's wisdom may draw crowds, but it is the Good News that is God's power unto salvation. The apostles spoke and wrote words that the Holy Spirit taught them. Paul reminded the Corinthians that God had revealed to the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, the glorious truths hidden to the world.**

**The eyes of the world are blinded, and God sends a strong delusion to those who reject the truth. The natural man cannot understand the things of God for they are spiritually discerned. Bible study and bible teaching are not for the unconverted. Those who have the Spirit of God and compare spiritual things with spiritual things ascertain truth. Christianity is a revealed religion. We either accept its teachings or reject them. There is no room for argument or for man's opinions. God's truth is not open for discussion. We are not entitled to our own opinion on a matter where God has already spoken! The apostles were infallibly inspired, and by comparing spiritual things (the Bible truths) with spiritual, we too can have the mind of Christ, and we can all speak the same thing. It really is possible if we all humble ourselves and just accept what God has revealed. Intellectual pride is the greatest obstacle to uniformity in doctrine.**

**We need to repair this stone of Bible Study among those of God's people who will humble themselves to accept the Bible's interpretation of itself. A weekly bible study where all members of the church can contribute by comparing Scripture with Scripture is essential for the unity of the body. If the church did this on a regular basis it would discover things which God has prepared for those who love Him: Things which the eye has not as yet seen, nor the ear heard, nor has even entered the heart of man.**

### *Discussion Questions*

*1 What constitutes 'persuasive words of man's wisdom?' And what is meant by excellence of speech?*

*2 How should we approach the Word of God since Paul came in weakness, in fear and in much trembling?*

*3 Why is Bible study only for the converted and NOT for the unconverted?*

*How can we have the mind of Christ?*

#### **Mark number five – SPIRITUALITY AND DISCIPLINE**

**(1 Corinthians 3:1-3; 5:6-13)**

**The carnal mind produces and thrives on strife, envy, and division. Carnality has crept into the church and put many a saint fast asleep. While the boat is in the water, everything is OK, but when the water gets into the boat we are in big trouble. The church must remain in the world to be effective, but when the world gets into the church, we are headed for disaster. To be spiritually minded is life and peace: to be carnally minded is death. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God. To have peace in the church we must first be in subjection to our heavenly Father, and then be in subjection to each other: especially wives to husbands; children to parents; and members of the church to the elders (overseers) and teachers of the Word of God.**

**How do we repair this stone? The answer in one word is, Discipline. The process may be grievous but, after it is completed, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. All unholy alliances must be broken. We must not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. A friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. We cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. In fact, we should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. We need a lot more teaching about worldliness, separation, and holiness. "Come out from among them and be separate', says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean."**

**Pride is our number one enemy. God gives grace to the humble. Therefore, we should humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift us up. We must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts of all that is of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We should not love the world, or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. We may use the world but not abuse it. We must pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.**

**We must restore the practice of loving discipline to correct and restore the wayward. One rotten apple in a box of good apples, if left alone, will soon cause the rest to go bad. We must purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness. We must not keep company with any professing Christian who is a fornicator, or covetous, or idolater, or reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.**

**We do not judge outsiders, but we must exercise discernment with those who are inside the church, and put away from ourselves the wicked person. We are urged to note those who cause division and offenses, contrary to the doctrine, which we have learned, and avoid them. In fact, we are commanded to withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition, which we have received, from the apostles. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to the doctrine according to godliness, he is proud. We are told to withdraw ourselves from such people.**

**Loving corrective discipline, with discerning withdrawal of fellowship, will remove carnality and restore spirituality and the fruit of righteousness (peace) to the church.**

### *Discussion Questions*

*1 What does it mean to be carnal?*

*2 Why does carnality affect the peace of the church?*

*3 What does it mean to be in subjection to one another?*

*4 What does it mean 'to have no fellowship' and 'to come out from among them'?*

### **Mark number six – THE FOUNDATION BUILDERS**

#### **(1 Corinthians 3:5-23)**

**We who are members of the Household of Faith have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. A true minister of the gospel will consider himself a nobody telling anybody about Somebody who cares for everybody. We who are ministers are but servants and fellow workers with God. We are nothing. Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. If this is the case, it would then be sinful to elevate any minister by giving him a title, a superior office, or elevate him in special religious dress. Our Lord clearly taught against such practices. He said, "Do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ." He also gave a second reason, "For you are all brethren". In saying this, Jesus denounced the use of all religious titles. Since the elders feed (pastor) and protect the flock of God by teaching, the title 'Pastor' is equivalent with Teacher. The two terms are used jointly in Eph.4:11.**

**Rom. 12:7 & 8 speak of four similar gifts: Prophecy (telling forth the word of God); ministering (serving); teaching and exhortation. Some evangelists and some elders will display different gifts. Some will plant, some will water, and some will reap. However, the major thing is that all must take heed HOW they build. It is God who gives the increase: and if anyone defiles the church (corrupts its teachings and adds rubbish [man-made rules and doctrines of demons]), God will destroy that person. We should not build the church with straw (unconverted people) but only with those who are being saved (who receive the word of the apostles and are baptized).**

The apostles and prophets have laid the foundation for the gospel and for the Lord's church. They were given special signs, wonders, and mighty deeds to authenticate their teachings. The Lord said He would confirm their word with the accompanying signs. God bore witness to their testimony with signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. It was through the laying on of the apostle's hands that many signs and wonders were done among the people.

Simon foolishly and sinfully desired this apostolic power.

The master builders have passed on to their reward, having completed their task of laying the foundation and leaving us a record, and a model, for all ages to reproduce and build upon. Now it is left for the evangelists and teaching elders to gather in the living stones and cement them in place so that the building may be completed: not with wood, hay, and straw, but with precious stones that will endure faithful to the end. It is not for us to lay another foundation (start another denomination) but to go back to the original teachings of the apostles and build on those doctrines and practices found in Acts and the Epistles.

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 Who is the chief Pastor of the church?*

*2 Who are the under-shepherds?*

*3 How should ministers be honoured?*

*4 Upon the foundations of which denominational creed should we build today?*

#### **Mark number seven – APOSTOLIC POWER**

**(1 Corinthians 4:1-21)**

**Puffed-up teachers and preachers take note: what the apostles taught was universal and for all ages. The apostles, like no others, were given a holy trust, but this did not mean that they were to be elevated or revered. In fact, while appearing a spectacle to the world, these men were often persecuted; they often sacrificed the normal pleasures of life; they were rubbished by others and treated as filthy junk. However, they possessed a power, and that power was in the authoritative teaching they received from the Lord through the Holy Spirit.**

**No elder or preacher has any authority of himself, as an individual or as a group. Our only authority comes through the apostle's teaching. We read that the early followers of Christ continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine. Timothy's authority resulted from his reminding the Corinthians of Paul's ways in the Lord. Those ways are what Paul taught everywhere and in all the churches. Paul writes a little later of the things he ordained in all the churches, and that the things he wrote about were the commandments of the Lord. He praised the Corinthians that they remembered these things and kept the ordinances as he delivered them to them.**

**Ministers of the model church will be humble servants. They will not throw their weight around. They will not ride rough shod over the saints. They will not be as lords or bosses. They will not act as superiors. They will not be puffed up. They will serve willingly and voluntarily. They will do it eagerly, not for dishonest gain. Money will not be a consideration in their motive for serving. As the preacher once said, 'I do not preach for money, but I do need money in order to preach.' Paul said, 'Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel, for necessity is laid upon me.' While Paul received financial support from God's people, robbing other churches, so to speak, he always preached the gospel of Christ without charge.**

**The difference is subtle but important. The church has a responsibility to financially support its missionaries and teachers. However, money should not be a consideration of the preacher in motivating him to preach. We need to return to the biblical practice of supporting our missionaries and evangelist through love gifts rather than a hire system. Our Lord taught that 'the hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep'. The salaried clergy tend to care more about their paycheck, and material benefits, rather than the eternal destiny of lost souls. They are tempted to be more interested in tickling ears than telling the truth.**

**The evangelist has the authority to appoint elders and set churches in order, and the elders have authority to rule and oversee the church. However, this authority results only from their adherence to the teaching of the apostles. As they faithfully teach the Word of God, the effect and changes will take place. They do not sit on Boards and make binding decisions on the church. By their godly and humble example, they inspire allegiance. The flock will submit to shepherds who feed them and tend to their souls. We must restore this true mark of church leadership.**

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 What right has a church leader, or leaders, to change an ordinance of the apostles to suit the local customs and culture?*

*2 What is the power and authority possessed by a preacher?*

*3 What inspires members to obey, submit to, and follow the example of their teachers?*

#### **Mark number eight – MORAL PURITY**

**(1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9-20)**

**The lives of the adherents of a church will speak louder than any sermon spoken by the preacher. Those in the company of the saints that are known to be covetous (greedy to the point of dishonesty), revilers (one who insults or berates another), extortioners (taking unfair advantage of others), as well as those displaying a predominance of malice, envy, strife, deceit, evil mindedness, whisperers (gossipers), backbiters, proud, boasters, disobedient to parents, and those who are undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving and unmerciful, all of these kinds of people who profess faith in Christ, along with what we normally associate with immorality,**

**must be disciplined. We must keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. We should not share intimate fellowship or eat with such people. We should not keep company with such people but put them away from us. We do this by warning, appealing, correcting, threatening, exposing, and finally, withdrawing our fellowship from them.**

**This is the kind of accountability required by Scripture. The unethical and immoral person is a blight on Christ and His church. They are, according to Jude, hidden reefs or stains on our love feasts. They are clouds without water, trees without fruit, and wandering stars.**

**It is hard to imagine how members of the church can be puffed up over sin in the church. To help understand this, let me relate what a minister said recently.**

**Speaking about an elder who has just for the second time divorced a wife, he proudly said how pleased he was that the church was so accepting of this situation. It almost sounds like the brethren in Rome who wanted to continue in sin that the grace of God might be embellished. Yes, God does comfort the disturbed, but He also disturbs the comfortable. According to the information given to me, the case above fits into the last of these two categories.**

**God does, and the church should, show compassion on those who fear God and love Him. However, God is angry at the wicked every day, and He does hate all workers of iniquity. The boastful shall not stand in His sight. God is a just judge. The church needs to restore the true knowledge of the God of the Bible. Loving-kindness is not a license to sin. It is not tolerance toward sin and false teaching. God also exercises judgment and righteousness in the earth. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God, for He is a consuming fire, and we must worship Him in reverence and Godly fear. Eternal life is knowing and understanding this One and only true God of the bible.**

#### ***Discussion Questions***

***Are boasting, lack of discernment, untrustworthiness and an unwillingness to forgive, sins that are as bad as murder or fornication?***

***How do we discern who are 'spots' in our feasts?***

***How should the church deal with sin in the fellowship?***

***How do we explain that God both loves the world and hates the wicked?***

#### **Mark number nine – DISPUTES AND LITIGATION**

**(1 Corinthians 6:1-8)**

**When disputes arise between brethren, the natural tendency is to rush off to court. On the other hand, God's people have the opportunity to take such matters to**

brethren in the church who can give council and make judgments. Not only is it a poor witness when a brother takes another brother to court, but it is a waste of money - the Lord's money. Of course, the ideal is to forgive and suffer wrong.

However, where a dispute needs a judgment then we should seek out those fair-minded individuals in the church who can give an impartial judgment. To say there are no such men is an indication that something is wrong, since we will judge angels, the least esteemed in the church should be able to judge between brethren concerning the things that pertain to this life.

Everyone knows that the covetous, the revilers, and the extortionists will not inherit the kingdom of God. This makes our task of discerning right from wrong so much easier. We also know that addiction to the flesh is sinful. While laws, do not govern us, as to our personal conduct, we should nevertheless avoid all harmful things that have addictive power – especially sexual immorality. A true and proper judgment concerning these issues becomes obvious to all. There should be no need for expensive litigation.

The church needs to make it known that it stands ready to assist all who need help in these matters of worldly disputes and judgments. People who suffer from different forms of addiction that effect their bodies, which are temples of the Holy Spirit, should first seek help from God's people. Wise council and the fervent heartfelt prayer from the humblest of saints makes tremendous power available. Let us revert to bearing one another's burdens, confessing our faults to each other and praying for each other.

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 Who, in the church, besides the preachers and elders, can arbitrate between brethren?*

*2 What advantages are there to be gained by seeking solutions to disputes out of court?*

*3 When is it necessary and Scriptural to take a brother to court?*

#### **Mark number ten – MARRIAGE OR CELIBACY**

**(1 Corinthians 7:1-40)**

Celibacy is good, but not always practicable. The person who has this gift, and is able to exercise self-control, should be encouraged to remain single. There are two reasons for this. The first is due to what is termed 'the present distress'. The unhealthy emphasis on sex and the lack of commitment to vows, couple with the liberal divorce laws, today, could well constitute distress. The cataclysmic events to come upon the earth, as we approach the time of the great tribulation, could be another distress factor we need to consider.

The second reason is a simple fact of being single-minded and serving the Lord without distraction. We need to restore the value and dignity God gives to celibacy

for the Lord's sake and the gospel's. Young men and women should be encouraged to care about the things of the Lord and remain holy in body and spirit. Even those who are married should be encouraged to live and serve the Lord as if they were single. They should not become entangled in the affairs of this world. As important as family life is, Christ and His gospel must take first place. This is clearly one of the demands of a disciple. It is also a requirement for eternal life and eternal reward.

**This priority must be restored.**

Marriage brings its own trouble. All the things of this world will pass away, only what is done for Christ will last. The only thing that really matters in the end is keeping the commandments of God. We should not forget that our Lord said, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you." He also commanded us to preach to the people and to testify. Christ and His gospel must have first place in our lives, and then all other things will fall into place.

### *Discussion Questions*

*1 What value is there in remaining single?*

*2 What distractions and distress are there in marriage?*

*3 Which is the correct order: God, family and the church, or Christ, His gospel, and our family?*

### **Mark number eleven – LIBERTIES AND RIGHTS**

**(1 Corinthians 8:1-10:13)**

Children of God are answerable to God alone and possessing a freedom which is only restricted by loving consideration for our brethren. Taking thoughtless and careless liberties so as to offend a brother is defined by God as a lack of love and is sinful. Members of the New Testament church will always ask themselves the question, 'Will what I am considering doing become an obstacle to my weaker brethren?' If we indulge in doubtful activities, not only will the brother for whom Christ died perish, but the one who has the bolder conscience sins against his brother, and in fact sins against Christ.

Do I have a right to my personal and social life-style? If I give thanks for my food, am I not at liberty to eat anything and everything? Am I bound to esteem certain days (such as Easter and Christmas or the Sabbath) above other days? Is it not true that nothing of itself is unclean, and all things indeed are pure? We must, of course, answer 'Yes' to all these questions. However, many followers of Christ have doubts and a weak conscience concerning lots of things. The strong mature disciple must not hold such brethren in contempt. We must not grieve such brethren by our boldness, but in love, we must seek peace and do those things which will edify our brethren rather than cause them to fall, and so destroy the work of God.

So whether it is eating certain meats or drinking wine, or anything that causes my brother to stumble, be offended or be made weak, I must surrender my rights and

liberties for the sake of the kingdom. What movies I watch, what music I listen to, what places I go for entertainment, what functions I attend, what company I keep, what clubs or organizations I join, what habits I indulge in, what books I read, what cloths I wear, what language I use, what charity I support, what car I drive, what kind of a home I live in, how I relate to my family, all these things must be examined in the light of how my liberties will effect my weaker brother. I must not let the knowledge I possess cause me to become puffed up and my weaker brother to perish. Whatever in my life-style which causes him to stumble should be sacrificed for the good of the kingdom.

Even the right to demand financial return for spiritual ministry, as commanded by the Lord, should be given up where it may cause offense or a hindrance to the gospel. Everything we do must be for the gospel's sake, even if it means becoming weak in order to win those who are weak.

As a spiritual athlete, I must be prepared to go without certain legitimate things. Lust, sexual immorality, discontentment, and complaining were among the things that caused God's ancient people to fall and be destroyed. They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play (dance), and were called idolaters.

How many professing Christians today are worshipping at the feet of the golden calf of worldliness. We who have been baptized into Christ have a table prepared by the Lord. We have spiritual food and drink that satisfies the soul. It is not necessary to partake of the devil's table. All things are not helpful and do not edify, therefore we must be very discerning in our life-style. We need to restore the practice of teaching the saints about the kind of life-style, which does edify rather than destroy, and lift the taboo presently placed on this sacred cow.

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 What kind of life-style is lawful for a Christian to practice?*

*2 What restrictions are placed on the child of God?*

*3 What happens to those we cause to stumble, be offended or made weak?*

*4 When is it right, and when is it wrong, for a preacher to demand financial support for his ministry?*

**Mark number twelve – ONE BREAD - ONE BODY**

**(1 Corinthians 10:14-32)**

Reference to the Table of the Lord includes both our daily spiritual sustenance, and the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. The one loaf on the table represents the ONE body of Christ – the church. Individual bits would therefore be symbolic of our fragmented and divided state in christendom today. We need to keep the unity of the Spirit, and have before us a continual reminder of that unity, which true

**baptized believers have in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is right and proper to have, at least on the table, ONE loaf.**

**This loaf should be unleavened. Leaven is used in Scripture to represent the effect of teaching and influence. It is used mostly for false teaching and a symbol of the fermenting effect of sin. The most important thing when breaking and partaking of the Loaf, is to do so without the leaven of malice and wickedness but with sincerity and truth. The unleavened loaf also reminds us of the sinless life that Christ lived in the body, and the spotless sacrifice He offered to God. Communion is also called the Breaking of Bread. That is what we do when we come together – we break the bread together. It is good to hold and all partake together, which is not only good manners but also another expression of our unity in Christ.**

**The fruit of the vine represents the blood of Christ, which is the blood of the new covenant. This is God’s testament and agreement with us that our sins are forgiven. The one-cup is not symbolic of anything, nor is it necessary to hold individual cups and drink together. Christ’s blood was poured out. When the disciples drank from the cup they did not all drink together but one at a time. Christ said of one of the cups at the Passover Feast, “Take this and divide it among yourselves”. When Christ said in Luke’s account, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood’, He spoke of the cup as representative of the contents. According to Matthew, Christ said, “For this is My blood of the new covenant”. The fruit of the vine, cut off, bruised and squashed out, represented the blood of Christ that flowed from His bruised and battered body, as His life was also cut off. We are not told to drink the cup but to drink of it or from it. As the contents are poured out, we also have another reminder of how the life-blood of Jesus Christ was poured out for us at Calvary.**

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 What is the significance of ONE unleavened loaf, and what does a plate full of broken pieces tell us about the state of the church?*

*2 What is the significance of eating together?*

*3 What represents the new covenant, and by pouring it out, what significance is observed?*

#### **Mark number thirteen – HONOURING CHRIST AND MAN**

##### **(1 Corinthians 11:1-16)**

**Paul introduces this passage by speaking of the traditions he delivered to the churches. These apostolic traditions or ordinances were given to all churches everywhere, and they are for the entire Christian age. They are not affected by culture or local customs. Wherever man is in the world, during this age of grace, he is NOT to cover his head while praying or prophesying. Prophesying in the New Testament means 'to stand in front of'. In some cases, it means to 'announce ahead of time' but mostly it means to proclaim out in front what God has declared.**

**While women are engaged in praying and prophesying, they should cover their HEADS. Women are NOT permitted to teach or usurp authority over man, and must remain silent in the churches for it is not permitted for them to speak, but they are to be submissive. When women lead in prayer or speak on behalf of God in their homes, or when teaching the younger women in classes, they should wear a covering - a symbol of authority on their heads.**

**The question is often asked, ‘Are women permitted to speak in the church?’**

**By comparing 1 Tim. 2: 9-14 and 1 Cor. 14: 33-38 we see very clearly that women are to learn in silence and with all submission. In this present Scripture, 1 Cor. 11: 3-10, we read, “the head of women is man”, and “For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but the woman for man.”**

**From the two parallel Scriptures we learn three things: that women are not permitted to speak in the churches; that they are not permitted to teach; and they are not permitted to take or assume authority over man.**

**We also learn that there are four reasons for this: Adam was first formed then Eve; the woman, not Adam, was deceived and fell into transgression; women are to be submissive as the LAW also says; and finally, the commandment of the Lord.**

**Let us look at each of these. It is shameful for a woman to speak in church: this is defined as teaching in the general assembly – when the church is gathered together.**

**Older women are instructed to teach the younger women. Women, generally, are told to bring up children and guide the house. When they pray, or speak on behalf of God (prophecy) they must cover their heads – have a symbol of authority on their heads. Since the Scripture does not contradict itself, this must be on occasions other than when the church is assembled together.**

**The Scriptural reasons that prohibit women from teaching in the assembly are: Firstly, because of the order of creation. God created man first and then created woman for man. This order should be maintained, especially in the church where men are called upon to teach and women are to be in silence. Women are not to have authority over man.**

**Secondly, women are not permitted to teach, as she was the one who was deceived in the transgression. This could be due to the fact that it is part of God’s punishment, or that because of her nature she is more easily deceived. Teaching is one area where the devil can deceive the saints. Teachers must not be gullible as some women were referred to in Second Timothy.**

**Thirdly, women are to keep silent in the churches because this is what the law says, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” This is very much the result of punishment God has placed upon woman for her part in the transgression. It is something she must bear just as man has to bear his punishment. If the woman wants to learn something, she must ask her husband at home.**

**The final reason given, is for the benefit of those ignorant smart-alecks who think they know everything. They need to realize that these things are the commandments**

of the Lord. They are not based on cultural practices or assumed conduct, they are not confined to one locality or to the first century alone, they are general eternal commandments given to all the churches of the saints in every place for the entire Christian age.

*Discussion Questions*

*1 How does woman honour man?*

*2 What is the meaning of the word prophecy as used in the New Testament?*

*3 What are the three Scriptural prohibitions, and what are the four reasons given for these prohibitions?*

*4 Are these teachings based on culture or commandments?*

**Mark number fourteen – BREAKING OF BREAD SERVICE**

**(1 Corinthians 11:17-34)**

God says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling (gathering) of ourselves together...but exhorting one another...” And again, “Let all things be done for edification.” It is good and right to assemble ourselves together. However, to receive God’s praise we must gather for the reasons stated, and conduct our meetings according to His will and design. Even the timing of our meetings is important. We must meet at a time when all can make it together.

The weekly gathering of the church was never called a worship service. It could better be described as an exhortation service, or a stirring service. We are to stir up love and good works on such occasions – and nothing stirs up love more than the Lord’s Supper. At this table, we are reminded of our Lord’s love for us and are compelled to respond in sacrificial surrender of our lives to His service.

While Paul was anxious to continue his journey to Jerusalem, yet he waited a whole week in Troas. He waited because when he established the church there he had obviously taught them to gather together on the Lord’s Day to break bread. The inspired historian states, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” The primary purpose of the assembling of the church on the Lord’s Day was to break bread. The Lord’s Day comes around on the first day of every week - not every month, quarter or year.

Communion is not something tacked on to the end of a ‘worship’ or evangelistic meeting but it is the central object (theme) around which we gather to stir up love. It is an occasion for exhortation. By dwelling on its many-faceted themes, through words of meditation, related Scriptures, prayers, and hymns we can easily spend

one hour around this table. Time also must be allowed for personal examination and meditation.

Since Christ instituted this Supper, we should not attempt to alter the significance of its arrangement. The practice can be understood universally if we follow the simple pattern given by Christ who took the bread (an unleavened loaf), blessed it and break it and gave it to His disciples. He then took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them.

The significance of the one loaf is our oneness in the Body of Christ. Breaking the bread together signifies the sacrificial death of Christ upon the cross. Unleavened signifies the purity and sinlessness of Christ's offering of Himself. The fruit of the vine – the contents of the cup, not the cup - signifies the poured out blood of Christ to atone for our sin. It is divided among us signifying individual and universal application to all born again baptized believers. The Lord's Table is only for the Lord's people who partake in a worthy manner.

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 If we gather together on the Lord's Day for fellowship, preaching, singing, and prayers, have we fulfilled God's purpose and will?*

*2 How do we show loving consideration for the elderly and those with young families when organizing a time to meet for breaking of bread?*

*3 What purpose is accomplished by changing the simple order of communion, established by Christ, when He instituted the Supper?*

*4 How does one become guilty of the body and blood of Christ?*

#### **Mark number fifteen – THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS – A FUNCTIONING BODY**

**(1 Corinthians 12:1-31)**

The model church will be distinguished by the fact that all members are diversely, yet equally, gifted for ministry. The clergy system, or one-man ministry, is an invention of the devil. Every child of God is a priest. We should all pray for one another. There is only one mediator, the Man, Christ Jesus. We are told to teach and exhort each other. Every member should have the same concern and care for each other. While the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, the disciples went everywhere preaching the word. Every follower of Christ has been endowed with at least one gift that can be used in the building up of the church of Christ.

Therefore, we see that the evangelistic and pastoral work of the church was not left to one man but ALL members shared in this ministry. The administration of the sacraments was not the exclusive prerogative of a trained class of men called the clergy. As the disciples led people to Christ, they baptized them. Their homes were then used as a place where they could break bread with those who were obedient to the gospel. These gatherings allowed opportunity for each member to exhort, edify, and encourage one another.

Gifts were not given for the individuals own good but were given, rather, for the profit of all who are in the body of Christ. To the apostles and prophets the Spirit gave the sign gifts in order to confirm the new covenant as being of and from God. Some were endowed with the gift of evangelism as they dedicated their lives to preaching the gospel; to planting and establishing churches in the faith. Others, with the gift of teaching, devoted themselves to labour in word and doctrine.

Training, education, and experience can enhance ones ability to function more effectively in the body, but can never substitute for the Spirit endowed or anointed gifts. The church needs administrators, helpers, liberal givers, diligent leaders, cheerful dispensers of mercy, distributors of needs to the saints, providers of hospitality, as well as teachers, preachers and exhorters. The model church will encourage and provide opportunity for all members to express and use their gifts for the building up of the body of Christ and for the glory of God.

#### *Discussion Questions*

*1 Where did the clergy/laity system come from?*

*2 If all members are to evangelise and teach each other, why do we need gifted evangelists and teachers?*

*3 How can our gatherings be more user friendly to allow everyone opportunity to exercise the gifts God has given them to build up the body?*

*4 How significant are the gifts of helpers, administrators, hospitality providers, liberal givers, distributors of needs to the saints, and mercy dispensers?*

**Mark number sixteen – THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL**

**(1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13)**

The Scripture states: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”; “...in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart”; “And above all things have fervent love for one another”; “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference

to one another”. The badge of every follower of Christ is brotherly love. ‘Look’, says the world, ‘how they love one another’. We should love not in word and tongue but in deed and truth. You can hug and say ‘I love you’ until the cows come home, but you will never really love your brother until you share what you have with those fellow disciples who have not. This also includes sharing the truth and being truthful with our brethren. Yes, you can give eloquent and highly learned ovations, set fire to yourself for your pet cause, contribute to your favorite charity, but without love, first for God, and then for our brothers and sisters in the household of faith, we are nothing – just an aggravating and obnoxious noise.

This brotherly love is not to be confused with the sacrificial love we have toward lost sinners. This is an intimate fervent love shared by those who have a new heart and a new spirit. This kind of brotherly love indicates that God abides in us. It is a brotherly love shared by those who are members of God’s family. We are told to love as brethren, having compassion one of another. Charity begins at home. Paul writes, “but if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.” The mark of a true church is seen in the way it takes care of its own members.

The social obligations we have as individuals should never substitute for brotherly love. We naturally do good unto all men, but our first consideration must be to members of the household of faith. Within the early church proceeds from the sale of possessions were distributed according ‘as anyone had need’. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked. It is no wonder that we read, in this context, that the apostles witnessed with great power. The world is waiting to see a church that takes care of the needs of its members, whether at home or abroad, before it will say, ‘Behold, how they love one another’. From the days of the apostles, this greatest of all gifts, along with faith and hope, has continued until now.

### *Discussion Questions*

*1 Why is the person who speaks with the eloquence of men and of angels; who has the gift of prophecy and understands all mysteries; who has great faith and is full of charitable deeds; and who is prepared to die as a martyr, a useless objectionable nobody?*

*2 When prophecies, tongues, and knowledge cease and vanish, what three things continue to the end, and how long have these gifts been in the church?*

*3 What is the difference between a love for all humanity and brotherly love for God’s family, and how do we express these differences?*

*4 Does the church have an obligation to use its finances and resources to take care of the worldly, especially while members of*

*the household of faith, at home, or in other parts of the world, are in such great need?*

**Mark number seventeen – GATHERING FOR EDIFICATION**

**(1 Corinthians 14:1-40)**

**“Let all things be done for edification”. The true church will be distinguished by conducting meetings where all things will be for edification, exhortation, and comfort to men (humankind). All things will be done decently and in order – one by one - without confusion of any kind. Women will be in subjection and not permitted to speak (teach in the assembly). Only those things, which edify the church, will be permitted in their gatherings.**

**Contrary to popular opinion, the marks of a model church will NOT be the charisma of the preacher; the musical talent of leaders; the public show of piety; the quality of the electronics; or the amount of praise time, but rather, the awareness of the divine presence; the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit; and the ability to understand everything that is said in order to express an agreeing ‘Amen’.**

**Whenever the church comes together, it will allow opportunity for members to share a Psalm or some teaching. What has already been revealed through divine knowledge and prophecy will be taught in a mature, not childish, manner. One, or two, persons will not monopolise time spent together. Music will be minimal, unless being used evangelistically outside the church. When a Psalm, a hymn, or a spiritual song is presented within the church gathering, it will be for teaching and admonishing one another.**

**These gatherings will provide members with the opportunity to stir up love and good works; to exhort one another; and to remember the greatest love of all, by sharing in the communion of the body and blood of Christ, at the Lord’s Table. Members will be encouraged to eat at home and not make the church a place of shameful carousing and gluttony.**

*Discussion Questions*

*Where do the New Covenant Scriptures speak of a ‘Worship Service’?*

*What place does the New Covenant Scriptures give to congregational, or choral, singing and praise?*

*3 If an unbeliever or uninformed person comes into a church gathering what will be the impact upon such a person?*

*4 How is it possible for ALL to share without things getting out of hand?*

*5 What features in the modern church are NOT biblical, not edifying to men, and are not conducive to all sharing and stirring up each other to love and good works?*

**Mark number eighteen – A HOPE REASSURING CHURCH**

**(1 Corinthians 15:1-58)**

**The true church will be constantly proclaiming the gospel of God’s grace to the lost, and reminding the saved concerning the glorious hope of the gospel. As often, as the church spreads, and partakes of the Lord’s Supper, it proclaims the Lord’s death until He comes. Weekly, is not too often for proclaiming the atonement. Peter wrote of the abundant mercy of God who has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He wrote to stir us up by reminding us of these things. The church must constantly remind its members of these eternal truths of the gospel. Our Christian lives are not built on psychological and relational concepts, but rather they are built on the doctrines of our faith. The model church will spend its time around the Lord’s Table exhorting, edifying, and comforting its members in faithfulness and godliness.**

**The true church will also constantly, in season and out of season, proclaim the gospel to the lost. Surely, once a week is not too often to publicly proclaim the gospel message. However, it should not stop at that. The early church is noted for its DAILY activity. At all times and in all places we should take the opportunity to proclaim the glorious news that Jesus saves, regardless of how inconvenient or embarrassing it is to us. At the sick bed, at funerals, at weddings; privately and publicly; in travel or at home, we should with great urgency press home the claims of Christ. The model church will use all facilities, both its own and others, to proclaim this gospel.**

**The New Testament church was, and is, an evangelistically minded church. The words of its Captain, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”, will pulsate through all its activities. Whatever the cost, it must remain steadfast and always be abounding in the work of the Lord. The mark of a true church is its evangelistic emphasis and outreach. Its preachers will be soul winners; its members will be soul winners; its programmes and its finances will be predominately geared to preaching the gospel and winning the lost, both at home and abroad.**

***Discussion Questions***

***1 How can the church constantly remind its members of the hope of the gospel?***

***2 How should the church apportion its time and activity at the breaking of bread gathering?***

*3 What daily activity will the model church members be engaged in?*

*4 How can the church organize its activities to carry out the great commission?*

**Mark number nineteen – SHARING FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL**

**(1 Corinthians 16:1-24)**

**The word fellowship means far more than getting together and having a good time. As we converse with each other, we learn of needs that must be met.**

**The model church will make provision for this in its weekly offerings.**

**Through correspondence, newsletters, and the Internet, it will be kept abreast of the needs of all God's children around the world. The church will be recognized by its fellowship in the ministering to the saints. It will be a missionary minded church.**

**Giving is not a matter of compulsion but of love. No one is forced to give a certain amount, but is encouraged to give freely and willingly as he may prosper. Our gifts are accepted according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. When one member, or one church, is short of finances others who have abundance can step in and make up what is lacking.**

**Missionaries are messengers of the churches. Paul robbed other churches to do service to non-Christians and new churches. The early missionaries went out taking nothing from the Gentiles – non-Christians. Their lodgings and travel expenses were taken care of by those who were able.**

**Greetings and salutations were personal. The concept of faith based, church supported, living-link missionary work is not a novel idea. Church, and faith supported ministry, is real fellowship in the gospel. Workers were free in Christ and accountable, first to Him, and then to those who supplied their needs. This kind of fellowship is an acceptable sacrifice and well pleasing to God, who will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

*Discussion Questions*

*1 Upon what bases will the church be encouraged to give?*

*2 How can we have fellowship in the gospel with missionaries and evangelists?*

*3 What place do missionary Boards have in the process of accountability?*

*4 If missionaries are content with what they have what value is there in giving and sharing with them?*

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