# REDISCOVERING GOD'S IDEA & DESIGN FOR THE CHURCH

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**Rediscovering God's Idea & Design The Church?**
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**This training module is the product of many hours of hard work by volunteers in the Household of Faith and builds on the hard work of other like minded believers in Christ Jesus. This particular resource is based on our journey, discoveries, transitions & convictions as a spiritual family.**

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# INTRODUCTION

Every master builder starts with an idea which is then captured in a design.
Let's look at some definitions:
An **idea** is any conception existing in the mind as a result of mental understanding, awareness or activity.
In architecture **design** is the art of planning with aesthetics and function in mind.
How about apostasy? Its simply a deviation from a standard or drifting away from the truth.

We encourage you to read this module along with your Bible for all the scriptural references and further study sections of this module.
This is not just another book but a trumpet and a voice that seeks to lovingly awaken the body of Christ to God's ancient paths and patterns pertaining to the church. Captured in it is our journey, discoveries, challenges, transitions and convictions as the household of faith.

To all who have survived 'the misguided zeal', lifeless religion and have been found in Christ who is The Way, The Truth and The Life, welcome onboard. We trust that through this material believers will be re-calibrated and align themselves precisely with the character of the one we proclaim, Jesus Christ.

Our desire is that the communication or sharing of our faith may become effective in these last days as we acknowledge every good thing that is in us in Christ. We envision a church that is functional not merely existing, and we refuse to be just another number or statistic in our environment but rather salt and light. This is a wake up call to all those that are complacent in Zion.


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise, glory and honour be unto our God, the maker of heaven and earth for He has called, planted and assigned us for such a time as this and through the jars of clay He is spreading the fragrance of His knowledge. My sincere thanks to the brethren in the household of faith and the global connected community of faith, partners and friends who continue to shape & sharpen our understanding in the things of God and together we comprehend the multifaceted wisdom of God. We are so grateful for the grace to blow this trumpet and awaken the body of Christ to these realities. Many thanks to those who gather around the table for the insights shared in this resource.

# WHOSE IDEA IS CHURCH?

Since the beginning, God has always had the idea of a people who are called for Him. Abraham and the people of Israel, as well as Noah's ark, all convey the idea of creating a God community. In the New Testament, the Greek word that is used to translate the word church is ***ekklesia.*** If we look at this word and break it down, we see that ekklesia contains a prefix and a root. You don't have to be a student of Greek to be able to understand this, because the prefix, "ek", comes from "ex", which means "from" or "out of." In addition, the primary root of this word comes from the Greek word kaleō, which means "to call."If we look at the root meaning of the term "*ekklesia*" in the Scriptures, we see that, it means something that is called out of something else.

The reason the church is called the ***ekklesia*** is that the church is the company of people who have been called out of the world by God.

Jesus Himself inaugurated the concept of the God community and made it abundantly clear to us that it is not a specific race, tribe, or nation but rather a community wholly focused on Him. *(Further study: Mathew 2:15, Exodus 6:6)*

***Mathew 16:18(KJV)*** *And I also say that you are Peter, (The Greek word Petros means rock) and on this rock (Petra in Greek, meaning bedrock) I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The terms used above should be defined. "***Oikodomeo"*** is the original Greek word for "build," and it means "to found, establish, or promote growth. Gates were not only used to enter or exit a city, but they were also used by the elders to make decisions, hence judgments and verdicts were passed at the gates. It was the judicial system of the time.

The word *ekklesia* was also used for political gatherings. Jesus did not invent the word.
There were some *ekklesias* that were already in existence before He established His own, and most of them were political and had nothing to do with Jesus.
When Jesus says, "my church," He is claiming ownership, but when we say the same, we are simply identifying or belonging. The Pharisees and politicians had their own *ekklesias,* which is why Jesus had to build His and not join them for they were anti-Christ. It is possible to have an assembly or community that is not centred on Christ.

# WHOSE IDEA IS CHURCH?

God did not leave it up to our own choices and imaginations as to how the God idea will materialize because a God idea requires a God design in order to come to life.
It's crucial to keep in mind that, as God's fellow workers *(Read: 1 Cor 3:9)*, we are not free to create our own visions of what the church ought to look like. Rather, we must learn from and imitate the master architect's plan and strategy. Creativity and innovation is not a requirement but rather total obedience.

The book of Mathew 16 marks the introduction of the concept of church. Peter revealed the true identity of Christ and Jesus responded by saying "on this rock (Petra-bedrock) I will build my church".
The revelation of Christ was of utmost importance in the founding of the church and today still Christ remains the chief cornerstone and the firm foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets. (*Read: Eph 2:20)*. Anywhere today where the church emerges it has to be preceded by the revelation of Christ as a solid foundation.

*1 COR 3:11 (NKJV) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.*

Our nature primarily comes from what gave birth to us. Here are a couple of scriptures to ponder on concerning our new birth:

*1 Peter 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*
*John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*
*1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith.*
*John 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

The Household of faith exists as part of the global community of faith therefore we discover, comprehend and experience together with all the saints all the dimensions (length, breadth, height & depth) of God's love. *(Read: Ephesians 3:18-19)*.
God's love has dimensions, and your individual knowledge and experience of it is incomplete without the other saints. The fullness of God and the full knowledge and experience of His love is in community not with individuals. It's a shared knowledge & comprehension.

# INDEGINIZATION

Definition - it's the action or process of bringing something under the control, dominance, or influence of the people native to an area.

When things are passed down from one culture to another, or from one generation to the next, certain key components may be lost depending on the transporters' attentiveness, and some cultural elements may also be added. The African church predated the arrival of the missionaries in the 1700s. There is proof that there was an African presence in the early church. In Acts chapter 8, we read about an Ethiopian Eunuch who was reading the book of Isaiah on his way from Jerusalem.

The wide spread of Christianity as we know it now in Africa came following our experience with Europe. One of the first questions that comes to mind is how church was before our encounter with the European missionaries.

The word Christian comes from the Greek word "**Christianos**" which means, Like the anointed or follower of the anointed. Although it became the most popular term, it is only mentioned three times in the New Testament.

The early church never referred to themselves as "Christians," but rather saints (From the Greek word Hagios, which means, the holy ones, consecrated to God). "The Way" or "The Faith" was the name given to Christianity. Those who opposed Christianity labelled it "The sect or the Nazarenes.

The African church, as a case study, has indigenized and now has its own expression apart from the missionaries who fueled its expansion. It is now self-expressed, self-sustaining, and mostly self-financed.
The other question would be, how much of that indigenization is consistent with scripture and how much is a transplant of indigenous culture into the church experience. The gospel comes into contact with people in their environment and culture everywhere it travels, and one will impact the other. There is a connection between the church and the culture in which it operates.

# THE IMPACT OF CULTURE

Culture is strong and from it always come a strong desire and attempt to adopt certain idioms with no New Testament foundations into our church expression. Many auxiliary things which were used by the church to aid in the administration of specific challenges may end up taking center stage.

Culture is simply anything that is unique to a people. The gospel must influence culture so that it conforms to the ideals of Christ. When culture has a greater impact on the gospel, the gospel that is proclaimed will be reduced to a mere cultural expression. This is how the gospel which is God's power unto salvation according to *(Read: Romans 1:16)* is weakened and loses power or influence *(Read: Mark 7:8 & 13)* Our faith becomes a re-branded culture that has found a new "Christian" language to express itself.

Others have forged a middle ground of compromise where they can be of Christ and then smuggle what they are unwilling to forsake into their church expression and re-brand it. Everything we are and do must be centred on Christ and not compromise to do what's culturally convenient.

Since the church was first in operation in the hands of the apostles, their materials are worth considering. **The church at its base today, cannot be any different from what it was when it was founded.** We must however be careful how and what we build with. Will the material endure the test of time and fire? *(Read: 1 Cor 3:10-15)*

When the chief cornerstone was laid, a building supported by such a foundation was envisioned. Therefore the foundation is not independent of the building. It is just the first stage of the building process. We are not of a different faith today, nor are we of a different Spirit other than the one who was at work in the early Apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. We have no other gospel or message except that which was preached, nor do we belong to a progressive and culturally adapted Christianity that conforms to culture. Beloved, we do not worship a New Age God who doesn't have a firm identity, nor do we worship any other Jesus except the one who was crucified and rose again on the third day and triumphed over sin and death. We believe in a common (Koinos) faith and common salvation.

# MY TESTIMONY 1

Sydney Kuvarega

*From my infancy church was an integral part of my upbringing. With over 75% of our family at large identifying as Christians, the church played a central role in various activities such as birthdays, celebrations, graduations, weddings, and even funerals.*

*This upbringing shaped my perspective of the church. Being born into it, familiar with it, and even priding myself as someone who had mastered it. I made the grave error of assuming that I understood God's concept of the church. In my later involvement in ministry as a pastor, I made terrible mistakes and eventually gave up everything. In my wounded soul, I prayed to God, asking Him not to consider me as one of the ministers of the gospel, but rather as an ordinary member of the church. This was my understanding because there seemed to be a clear distinction between the clergy and the rest of the congregation.*

*It took me three years to heal, and towards the end of the third year, God spoke to me through Apostle Charles Magaiza, whom I deeply respect, saying, "**When you are ready, start**". In my heart, I knew exactly what that meant. However, I immediately rejected the idea, thinking, "No way! Me? Start a church? And in a foreign land, with no resources or endorsements? It's impossible!" That's when God began teaching me His true idea and design for the church, despite the many other ideas that exist out there, which do not align with His. I began documenting everything I heard and started putting it into practice. It was strange, different and didn't fit the general narrative. The congregation was my wife and our first child in one room and so the journey began.* ***To be continued...***

# COMMON FAITH & SALVATION?

**Common**

The Greek word "Koinos" means belonging to generality. It was originally used for anything freely available on the streets and the word is a father to a family of words.
Koinonos - companion, friend
Koinone - To share in
Koinonikos - Generous
Koinoo - To make common.
Synkoinonos - To participate.
Koinonea - Fellowship or, participation.

For the purpose of this study we will restrict our attention to "Koinos".
In certain contexts, the word is also used for gentiles and unclean things as specified in the Mosaic law.

## COMMON FAITH

*Titus 1:4 "To Titus, true son in our common faith.*

Paul writes to his son in the faith, indicating that though Titus was of a Greek background, they were in the common faith that is in Christ.

There is an affirmation in Paul's words of a mutually held faith that places them in accord with one another.
*Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, **who has made both one,** and has broken down the middle wall of separation.*

The common faith is equivalent to one faith mentioned in (Ephesians 4:5)
*2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained **like precious faith** with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Consider a few aspects of practical application:

- Do Christians share a common faith with the ancient Jews who contended that Jesus was an offspring of an adulterous mother and a Roman soldier? or those who claim that Joseph was His biological father?

- What of Islam's claim that Jesus did not die on a cross nor was he raised from the dead. according to **Quran 4:157-159**

- Can we identify with the Watch Tower Jehovah's Witness who state that Christ was nothing more than a perfect man.

# COMMON FAITH & SALVATION?

- Do we share a common ground with those who argue that the church was unknown to the Old Testament prophets and that it was an afterthought in the divine scheme of things that bears no relationship to whether or not one is saved.

## COMMON SALVATION

Why is salvation common? The short answer is, it is available to all people.

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

*1 Timothy 2:3-4 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

*Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,*

*Mathew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

You can also *(Read Mark 16:15)*
Common salvation is not only limited to the salvation shared by Jews and gentiles alike, but it also implies a common saviour *(Read: 1 Cor 8:6),* a common problem for all people (sin), a common necessity of submitting *(Read John 14:6, Acts 4:12),* a common body into which the saved are gathered *(Further Reading: John 10:16, 11:52, Eph 4:4, 5:26)*

We are all saved by one common means. The office and personality responsible for receiving and admitting people into the kingdom is Jesus Christ. Through Him we were delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of light (Read Col 1:13).

Salvation is not tied to any place but the whole world. It is not tied to any person but all who believe. It belongs equally to several individuals, it is both mutual and communal. The prevailing practice in today's religion is to celebrate the various sects that wear different containers, endorse discordant liturgy, subscribe to different creeds and engage in self prescribed worship. *(Read: Col 2:23).*

Pluralism is a philosophy that allows for a wide diversity of viewpoints and doctrines to co-exist within a single body. Because so many doctrinal disputes have emerged within some churches, they have tried to keep the peace and unity, and at the same time accommodate differing views within the church.

# COMMON FAITH & SALVATION?

Pluralism is an attempt to accommodate conflicting viewpoints. Such practices are an overt violation of the numerous Apostolic admonitions to be united. *(Read: Rom 16:17, 1 Cor 1:10, Eph 4:1-6, Phil 2:2)* not to mention the prayer of Jesus Himself in John 17:20-21 and the model of church when it began.

*Acts 4:32 Now the multitude of those who believed **were of one heart and one soul**; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*

As the church becomes more pluralistic, the number of contradictory viewpoints that are tolerated increases. In turn, organizational and structural unity become the central concern.

If you are a part of a church, denomination, why do you belong there? For quite some time now, we have noticed that people have a tendency to flip between denominations. The tendency is to go where they like the pastor, the preaching, the music, or a particular program. Sadly, we rarely find people paying attention to what the church believes. When the church was called to unity in the New Testament, we must remember that the Apostle Paul spoke of unity in these terms: One Lord, One Faith, One God, One Spirit, One body and One baptism. *(Read: Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Cor 6:17, 1 Cor 12:13-14)*

This unity is not something that is merely superficial in terms of being a unified organization or a unified methodology, but first and foremost, it is a unified faith in the person and work of Christ.

*Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*

This is what gives us stature in the Spirit.

There can be common faith and salvation when people yield to the divinely prescribed idea and design to serve the Lord according to His plan rather than capitulating to human desire. True unity is not in celebrating plurality and diversity of doctrine that ignores the teaching of Christ.

# Chapter 1 Questions & Reflections

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**01** How do you understand the concept of a God community or church as described in the scriptures?

**02** In what ways do you feel called to serve & contribute to the kingdom agenda?

**03** What role do you believe the Holy Spirit plays in the formation, operation and growth of the church?

**04** How can the church actively live out its role as salt and light?

**05** In what ways do you believe the church can maintain consistency with scripture while relevantly ministering to people of various indigenous cultures?

CHAPTER 2

# CONCEPTIONS & MISCONCEPTIONS

# WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

Wherever Christianity took roots, the people tried to define it from their standing point therefore, Christianity left the Jews as a fellowship and went to:

Rome - they made it a state religion
Europe - it became a cultural expression
America - it became a business enterprise
Greece - It became a Philosophy
Africa - it became a re-branded tradition.

Let's take a deep dive into some of the misconceptions. There are mainly concentrated in three areas: The identity of Christ, the church and the Christian faith. Failure to properly define these three is the source of religion and all kinds of confusions in our world today.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF CHRIST

There are vast numbers of portraits of Jesus in the art galleries of this world. These images are often conflicting and offer different impressions of what Christ might have looked like during His incarnation. There were no cameras back then, of cause, and we have no images of Him from His time, so any idea about Jesus' physical form is pure conjecture.
This multiplicity of images of Christ in art galleries parallels the widespread confusion about Jesus' identity that exists in the world today. The many theories about Christ's identity in circulation are attempts to answer a question that Jesus Himself once asked His disciples:
**Mark 8:27..."Who do you say that I am?"**

This question is so important that one's eternal fate hinges upon the answer one gives. Jesus inquired what people's sentiments were concerning him. Remember the scribes & pharisees were prejudiced against him and said that he was a deceiver and in league with satan. The disciples also, besides what Jesus taught them day and night, all they

# THE PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

witnessed, they still had access to other voices. In response to Jesus's question the then disciples said "some say Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist" etc. There were different opinions; some said one thing, and others another. Truth is one; but those who vary from that, commonly vary one from another. Thus, Christ came eventually to send division, (Luke 12:51) Many people who in their minds were not willing to accept him to be the Christ, wandered in endless mazes, and followed the chase of every uncertain guess and wild hypothesis.

Unfortunately, most ideas about Christ's identity today are born of empty speculation or created to squeeze into a philosopher's pattern rather than drawn from Scripture. The "Christs" that are born this way are simply a deception. A recycled Christ, a Christ of compromise, or an imaginary Christ that can redeem no one. A Christ who is watered down, stripped of power, debased of glory, or reduced to a symbol is not Christ but Antichrist because to supplant the real Jesus with a substitute is to work against Christ. They had honourable opinions and bespoke the respect they had for prophets of old, according to the best of their judgment. They all suppose him to be one risen from the dead and their notions arose from an excessive value for antiquity; as if it were not possible for an excellent man to be produced in their own age, but it must be one of the ancient prophets that has returned to life again. Note, It is possible for men to have good thoughts of Christ, and yet not right ones, a high opinion of him, and yet not high enough.

The portrait of Jesus in Scripture is so deep, because it defies human ability to grasp it exhaustively, any study of the person of Christ can only scratch the surface. The identity of Christ is unlocked by revelation. Phillip was in close proximity with Jesus +3years but still he was looking for another Father beyond Jesus *(Read John 14:8-10)* That proximity to the incarnate Christ could not deliver revelation to Him. We can know Jesus according to the flesh or by the revelation of the Spirit through His word *(Read Mathew 16:17, 2 Cor 5:16)*

# THE RESPONSE

The gospel narratives do more than talk about Jesus, His life, and His work; they also tell us how people responded to Christ.

## JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

We see the response of the shepherds, who came from the fields outside of Bethlehem at the announcement of the newborn baby Jesus *(Luke 2:8–20)*. We see the response of the aged Simeon, who came into the temple when Jesus was presented for His dedication. We see Jesus confound the scholars in the temple as a young boy. We are introduced to His public ministry by John the Baptist, who saw Him coming to the Jordan River. We see Jesus through the eyes of Nicodemus, who came at night to inquire of Him. He was a rabbi that amazed other rabbis. We see Jesus talk to an outcast woman by the ancient well of Jacob at Sychar in Samaria.

Finally, John provides a highly theological portrait of Christ, demonstrating that Jesus is the incarnation of truth, the light of the world, and the One in whom there is abundant life.

In short, we find the portrait of someone without a parallel in human history.

*John 20:31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*

Peter's answer was short, but it was full, and true, and to the purpose; *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"*. Here is a confession of the Christian faith. **This is the conclusion of the whole matter.**

Beyond what we find in the Gospel portraits, Scripture also gives us the testimony of the Apostles. The Apostle Paul unveiled for us the ministry of Christ as Savior. He explained the atonement, how Christ as our Mediator accomplished redemption for us. The portrait of Christ is filled out also in the letters of Peter and John and in the epistle to the Hebrews, where Christ is shown to be “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” *(Heb. 1:3)*, as well as superior to angels, to Moses, and to the Aaronic priests. From Matthew to Revelation, the central motif of the New Testament is Christ. We also find that Jesus Christ is the theme of the Old Testament, too. All the details of the Old Testament sacrificial system find their fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus. The historical books are filled with types and figures that point to Christ.

# MISCONCEPTIONS

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH

Wherever they are found and regardless of where they congregate, church is a people, not a building.
The church is a living organism rather than a company or organization where the pastor occupies the largest office and serves as managing director.

1 Cor 9:3 *For we are God's fellow workers;* ***you are God's field, you are God's building.***
***1 Cor 9:16*** *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*
***1 Pet 2:5*** *you also, as living stones, are being built up a* ***spiritual house,*** *a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*

***Read: Eph 2:19-22*** *".....having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a* ***dwelling place of God in the Spirit.***

> *Organisations they organize, Institutions institutionalize, Franchises do franchise.*
>
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Church is not a religious club. A club is a group of people with common interests. It's possible to be a relational community without Christ at the centre but other interests instead. A club requires that you join, pay registration fees, subscribe regularly to maintain your membership, get branded, you vote at the general assembly and your privileges in the community are according to your subscription tier. e.g. (silver, bronze, gold & platinum).

In the twentieth century there was what has been labelled "the ecumenical movement." This was an attempt through the World Council of Churches and other bodies to move in the direction of reforming the many denominational splinter groups into one centralized, ecclesiastical body.

The whole goal of the ecumenical movement was to restore unity to the visible church. As a result of this there was an increasing number of mergers between various denominations that formerly were divided.

# THE CONCEPT OF UNITY AND PEACE

Unfortunately, what often happens when two churches or denominations merge is that certain people don't agree with the merger, and they leave the newly formed denomination to create a new one that aligns with their values. So, in their effort to have fewer churches through unification, these movements simply create more churches.

This ecumenism sought to bring as much visible, organizational, and institutional unity to the church whereas in the wake of that movement, churches have found it necessary to broaden their theological base in order to accommodate various divergent teachings within the church. **This is called pluralism.** Martin Luther once said "where the gospel is preached, it divides and controversy ensues." People don't want controversy. We want peace. The message of the false prophets of Israel was one of peace. But their peace was an illusion.

They preached peace when there was no peace. Luther said that when the gospel is preached with passion and with accuracy, it does not bring peace. In fact, our Lord Himself said, "……..I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" *(Math 10:34)*

.

We are to be peacemakers, kind, and patient people. But if you look at the record of history, the true prophets of Israel contended for the truth, and every time they did, controversy emerged.

Probably no human being has sparked off as much controversy as Jesus Christ did. People were galvanized either for Him or against Him. The record of the Apostolic church in the book of Acts is that of ongoing and unabated controversy. The controversy focused on the preaching of the gospel. So controversial was the preaching of the gospel that the religious establishment of the Jewish community forbade the Apostles from preaching the gospel *(Acts 4:17-18)* at all because it was controversial, and it divided people.

In our generation we've been told that the highest virtue is peace. We're tired of disputes, tired of people fighting.

# MY TESTIMONY 2

Sydney Kuvarega

*In the first part i highlighted how we got started on this journey with my wife and our first child. We were only functioning by the conviction of the Spirit. We had Bible study and prayed together twice a week in that one room. We were the church in that house.*

*As we shared the gospel, more people joined us. However, our first challenge arose when we took our focus off God and sought validation from those around us. This was mainly due to the loneliness we experienced on this journey. Voices echoed in my mind, questioning whether we were truly a church or merely a cell group. We grappled with our identity and wondered who the founder was. People would ask us, "**Where do you go to church**?" and our response would be, "**We don't go to church; we are the church, and we gather in our house.**"*

*These doubts caused us to question ourselves and even doubt God because our actions didn't conform to the accepted norms within Christian circles. Consequently, we decided to pause. I approached one of my mentors from an established church and proposed that our group be absorbed into their ministry, thereby allowing us to identify as a branch of their church in our town. The goal was to gain credibility according to the commonly recognized standards. Consequently, I was ordained as a pastor. **To be continued....***

# GATHERING

We've learned to coexist with people with whom we are not in unity because we value that peace. But I'm afraid the danger is that we value it so much that we're willing to obscure the gospel itself. We have to be careful of speaking about unity when we really don't have it.

GATHERING

Do you have to attend a church gathering to be a Christian? We need to remember a few things. Christ commands His people not to forsake the assembling together *(Hebrews 10:25).*

In **Mathew 16:18** Jesus said "I will build my church, referring to the global universal community of faith to which every believer belongs. The word church is also used in **Mathew 18:17 but** the context is different. He says "Tell it to the church" - referring to a **local church.**

By God's design we must belong to both the global and local. The word church was never used for a regional or national organisation. When God constituted the people of Israel, He organized them into a visible nation and placed upon them a sober and sacred obligation to be in corporate worship before Him. If a person is in Christ, he is called to participate in koinonia - the fellowship of other Christians and the worship of God according to the precepts of Christ. If a person knows all these things and persistently and wilfully refuses to participate in them, would that not raise serious questions about the reality of that person's conversion? The word church is only used universally and locally therefore there is only the global and local church with nothing in between.

Synagogue is a Greek word that means to gather.

Syn - Come

Gogue - Together

He settles the lonely(solitary) into families. ***(Read: Psalm 68:6)***

Jesus came not only to save individuals but to also build them into a community called church. He delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

# GATHERING

It's from kingdom to kingdom. You cannot practice the Christian faith or fulfill the New Testament teaching alone, you must belong to a local church. Again by "local church" I mean a local community of believers where you can be edified and also be productive and be of service to other saints. Salvation is personal in the sense that you believe and receive it for yourself and at the same time you are initiated into a community. **You are first called to Christ and "in Christ" is not a lonely realm but a community of the one faith.** As many as received Him He gave the right to be called the children of God. We are called children because we are many. *(John 1:12)*
It's your responsibility to connect with the brethren. The book of Hebrews describes what happens exactly at new birth.

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and the church of the first born who are registered in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just man made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.* ***Hebrews 12:22-24***

Coming to Christ is coming into an assembly, its coming to the church. How then can I love Jesus and hate His church. You are born into a family; how then can you not belong.
The church of Jesus Christ is not a parochial body that is found only in a particular city or only among a unique people that are huddled together in some geographical location. It's not even something that's bound by national borders. Rather, the church of Christ is something that is found all across the world, made up of people from every language, tongue, and nation.
The New Testament says that when we are in worship together, we're not just worshiping in an assembly of a hundred and fifty people, but our worship is taking place in heaven. The scriptures tells us that in that assembly angels are watching and participating. Also, the book of Hebrews tells us that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses the saints who were first in the faith and have gone before us.

So, who is in your congregation that morning? Guess who was there? Isaac, Paul, Abraham, and Isaac showed up, and also Deborah, Sarah, Deborah and Joshua, Esther and Hannah and Peter were there.

# GOD THE BUILDER

The purpose of this study is to help us re-calibrate ourselves to align with God's plan & purpose.

*John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Millions of people claim to be worshiping God, but God is seeking not just for worship but true worshipers. Worship is everywhere but true worshipers are scarce. We need not worry about the kind of worship if the vessel and place from which the worship emanated from is a true worshiper.

*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. (**Psalm 127:1**)*

But wait a minute, how does God build? Only when the builders ***(God's workmanship Ephesians 2:10)*** build according to God's plan and standards can we say that God has built the house. Being the right person is the foundation of doing the right thing. Moses was shown the tabernacle in a vision and had to repeat line by line what he saw. God also gave Noah the specifications, dimensions and type of materials for the ark. Noah had to build according to God's design and that which is built according to His standard will accomplish what he said it would. When Jesus declares that that the gates of hell shall not prevail over the church it is because He is the builder of that church and there is something in its formation that renders the gates of hell powerless.

The error of our generation is that we ask God to bless our activities instead of asking God first what our activities should be.

**The church is not an entertainment house, a music theater, network marketing opportunity, event house or drama club**. Its a school of the Spirit where believers are trained, thoroughly furnished and equipped for the work of ministry. Glorified Sunday school theology is producing nothing but high maintenance Christians who are passengers and not participants in God's kingdom.

# SPRINGS AND CISTERNS

In chapter 4 of the book of Ephesians, I see the Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists as construction workers with different areas of specialty in the building of the body of Christ. None of them came to do their own thing, they all carry one message and follow one design.

SPRINGS vs CISTERNS

I wonder if today's generation with water pumped from filtration systems, can truly appreciate these words of Jeremiah. Do they know the difference between a Spring or Cistern?

*Jeremiah 2:13 (NKJV)*
*"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

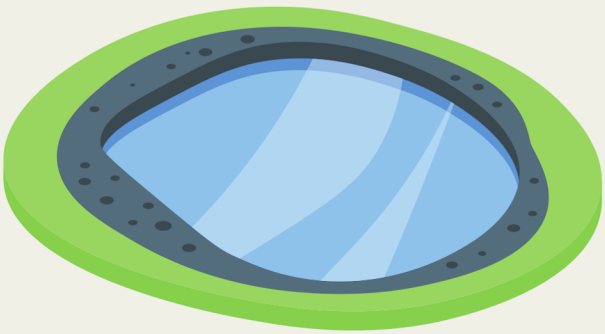
One of the first questions you must ask yourself whenever you come across an ancient settlement is what was their source of water. When choosing a location for a town, water availability was of primary concern in antiquity however that's not the case nowadays because of the ability to pump water over long distances. In Israel, there were four main sources of water for settlements. Surface water (Lake Kinneret/Sea of Galilee for example), springs, wells and rain collection. Lakes are obvious in meaning but let us discuss the differences between the final three.

Springs and wells tap into the same source of water, but at different points. After a rain, water seeps into the ground. It continues to pass through soil and porous rock until it reaches a layer that is impenetrable. This layer is known as an aquiclude. Water begins to gather above it, forming an aquifer, or underground body of water.
The water spreads to the sides, and wherever it finds an opening (in the side of a mountain, for example) it spills out. This is a spring. If, however, man digs a hole from the surface, down to the aquifer, allowing him to lower a bucket and draw the water up to the surface, this is a well.

# SPRINGS AND CISTERNS

A cistern is a large hole dug in the ground (usually in bedrock) that is designed to store rainwater. It differs from a well significantly in that it only holds captured rainwater, as opposed to tapping into an underground water source, as do wells and spring. So, when God says we forsake Him, the Spring of Living Water, and instead dig our own cisterns, He's describing something we could consider foolish. No one who has a good spring on their property would ever resort to a cistern.

A spring continually produces water. The one who drinks from the spring does not have to work to produce or gather this water. There is no need to store this water, because it is ever flowing.



On the other hand, a cistern has to be continually maintained and refilled.

In contrast with living water, stagnant water can become home to many different kinds of harmful microbes. It can be polluted if it is not carefully guarded. It is also not a source of water, but a place to store water sourced elsewhere. Unless it is continually refilled from another source, it will eventually run dry.

In ancient times the water source determined location of settlement therefore people had to arrange their lives around the spring. But there were some adventurous ones who longed to explore other areas away from the spring and dug cisterns instead. A spring cannot follow you wherever you go, you have to settle around it. It is permanently established. It won't abandon you, only you can abandon it yet the cisterns that Israel were digging out for themselves were broken and leaked water.

A cistern has one job: hold water. These cisterns could not even do that. Not only had Israel exchanged a safe and reliable water source (again, metaphorically speaking) for comparatively unsafe water storage facilities (without a source), the storage facilities did not even store water effectively.

# THE EXCHANGE

Today there is a major exchange. *(Romans 1:22-32)* Some exchanged truth for a lie, the glory of the incorruptible for corruptible, godliness for worldly gain and profit, God for idols, worship for entertainment, faith for religion, the supernatural for the superficial. Investing your faith and hopes in false gods does not make them God. The only seeming "disadvantage" of a spring versus a cistern is that a spring cannot be moved. It simply is where it is. If you are going to rely on its water, you have to build your life around it. Cisterns can be built anywhere (although it would be to store water rather than provide a source of water). Spiritually, the Israelites wanted control. They wanted God's blessings but on their own terms.

# Chapter 2 Questions & Reflections

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**01** How does the concept of the church as a "living organism" differ from the idea of the church as a company or organization?

**02** What are the seemingly disadvantages of a spring vs a cisten?

**03** How does the cultural context in which Christianity is found affect the way it is practiced and understood?

**04** In which areas today are believers incorporating creativity instead of following God's design?

**05** How can I show love and respect for the body of Christ, even if I have issues with certain aspects of the church?

# CHAPTER 3

# ZOOM INTO CHURCH HISTORY

# ZOOM INTO CHURCH HISTORY

## CHURCH AND STATE

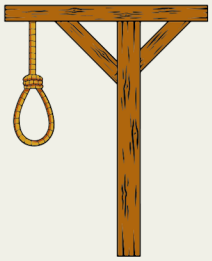
As a workman in the kingdom, you have to be acquainted with the history of Christianity and what it means to us today. For the first 300 years, church and state were at odds with each other, and although the Roman Empire persecuted the church, it did not stop its growth and influence. Even today, the church is growing in persecuted places.
The Roman religion was based on **syncretism** - that is the amalgamation, blending or fusion of different religious beliefs and practices into one new system. The Romans went on to set up a building still existent today called **The Pantheon (derived from the Greek words Pan which means All and Theos meaning gods)** - The temple of all gods. It is the oldest building in the world that is still in use today by the Roman Catholic.

It's interesting to note the number of famous buildings and monuments around the world whose architecture is modelled on the pantheon. Every country conquered by Rome had to also give their gods to be put in this temple. Already there was a problem with Christianity because how would you put God in a building. Jews as well refused a multi - religious system because they believed in one God. At first Christianity was thought to be Jewish but later it became evident it wasn't therefore it became deregistered and operated undercover for the first 300years.

Israel was first a theocracy and then it became a monarchy still based on a theocratic governance. God determined the King and prophets ordained the King. The political system therefore was subject to spiritual ordinance. In that context, if things went wrong the priest or the prophet could directly rebuke the King because they appointed or ordained him. Kings therefore ruled by divine right, but that is not the case now.
There are few theocracies and no absolute monarchy in the world today.

# PERSECUTION

Presidents are not Kings, and they have no divine right to rule. They are there by the right of the people and in their operations, they respond to the people. The church can still speak but not with the same authority as was in the case of Nathan and David.



**Persecution** was normal in the New Testament. It was the vehicle that took the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth in Acts 8.
Are we the church that can cope with such a kind of pressure. At the end of the 300 years the emperor Constantine became Christian. He claimed to have seen a vision of a cross during a battle at the Milvian Bridge as he prayed for assistance. According to Him there was an inscription (**In Hoc Signo Vinces)** translated, by this sign you will conquer. When he went to sleep that day, he also had a dream reaffirming the same vision. There is still much debate among historians and theologians as to whether Constantine's conversion was real or staged.

His conversion however elevated Christianity to political prominence and power through **The Edict of Milan.** Christians were relieved from state instituted persecution and Christianity became the official state religion under imperial protection. When Christianity was illegal nobody went to church but rather they were the church in their homes, underground communities and wherever they were found. They had no special buildings dedicated for worship since it could be easily identified by the state police.

As a result of Constantine's claims, the church shifted instantly from being a minority to a majority group and **this act filled the church with the world** as they flocked in joining the emperor's new found religion. Everybody in that geo political state became christian and this had nothing to do with whether they align with Romans 10:8-10 or not. Most of these people who came in did not abandon paganism and idolatry but came in with it.

The seeming blessing of freedom became the biggest obstacle in advancing the gospel. **The fuel that persecution provided was no longer there.**

# ZOOM INTO CHURCH HISTORY

Freedom of religion therefore slowed down and weakened the kingdom advancement while attendance was boosted. Constantine's imperial endorsement and favouritism for Christian leaders resulted in a new cultural permissiveness and secularism within the faith; and pious believers began to worry more about inner church immorality, abuse, and vice. Later on, different groups during **The Monastic Movement** protested and withdrew from the world church, some into the desert to form new little communities of pure undefiled church.

The first religion that Constantine prohibit after he became Christian was Judaism and there is a very sad history of antisemitism and persecution of the Jews. From his conduct it is evident that Constantine was religious at the core because state religion persecutes what doesn't fit.
He carried with him his political credentials into the church and instead of growing as a newborn baby in the Lord, he assumed authority both in the state and church. For the next 1700 years church and state were intertwined and one by one countries in Europe adopted Christianity.

In essence, it was not Christianity that persecuted Judaism, but the state in mock jackets of pretense and of cause the auxiliary support of compromising believers. The year 1000AD a lot of Christians expected Jesus to come back, and most countries became Christian to escape danger. The state rulers (not individuals) made decisions and anyone under their jurisdiction complied, and this produced nominal Christians. **Christianity became very professional** and mostly dominated by professional priests trained in college to lead. There was a sharp division between priests and people. Whereas the chief priest had to bribe Judas to identify Jesus among His disciples. He called His disciples friends because they knew what he knew.

*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, **for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. John 15:15***

State authority decides which religion people follow. There was a struggle as to who is top dog, state or church, the pop or the emperor. The Vatican is both a state and a church which is why the pop has two keys, in gold and silver.

# ZOOM INTO CHURCH HISTORY

In the 20th century everyone born in Finland was considered Christian and Lutheran. The state church says everyone born here not born again, is Christian. The same with state religion, if you are born in a Muslim or Hindu country you are Muslim and Hindu respectively.
The state churches survived for long because of state support. Where the state acknowledges Christianity, there is little to no persecution, in fact there are many privileges that Christians enjoy mainly because the state also controls it.

> **"The church is not the master or servant of the state but rather the conscience of the state"**
> Martin Luther King Junior

Conscience is an inner awareness that bears witness to the norms and values we recognize and apply.

Enjoying the right to worship God in civic liberty is a privilege not spiritual entitlement. It's never guaranteed in scripture or promised by God therefore, if available we must use it as an opportunity for kingdom expansion.

Outreach does not only mean out of the country but reaching out of the church or community of faith to the world of unbelievers.

THE ROAD AHEAD

In the near future some if not all the privileges and tax rebates will be taken away by those who legislate and make policies. There is going to be no help for the church from the state and we as the church must govern and support ourselves and this is not new but the New Testament order.

Any place where the state is not Christian, the church there looks like a New Testament church, a persecuted minority. We must move from maintaining church life to reaching the unreached and telling the untold about the good news of Jesus Christ. The enemy of our faith has learnt his lesson that opposition from outside only made the church stronger therefore he now wants to corrupt the church from within.
We are a household of faith and a house divided cannot stand.

# MY TESTIMONY 3

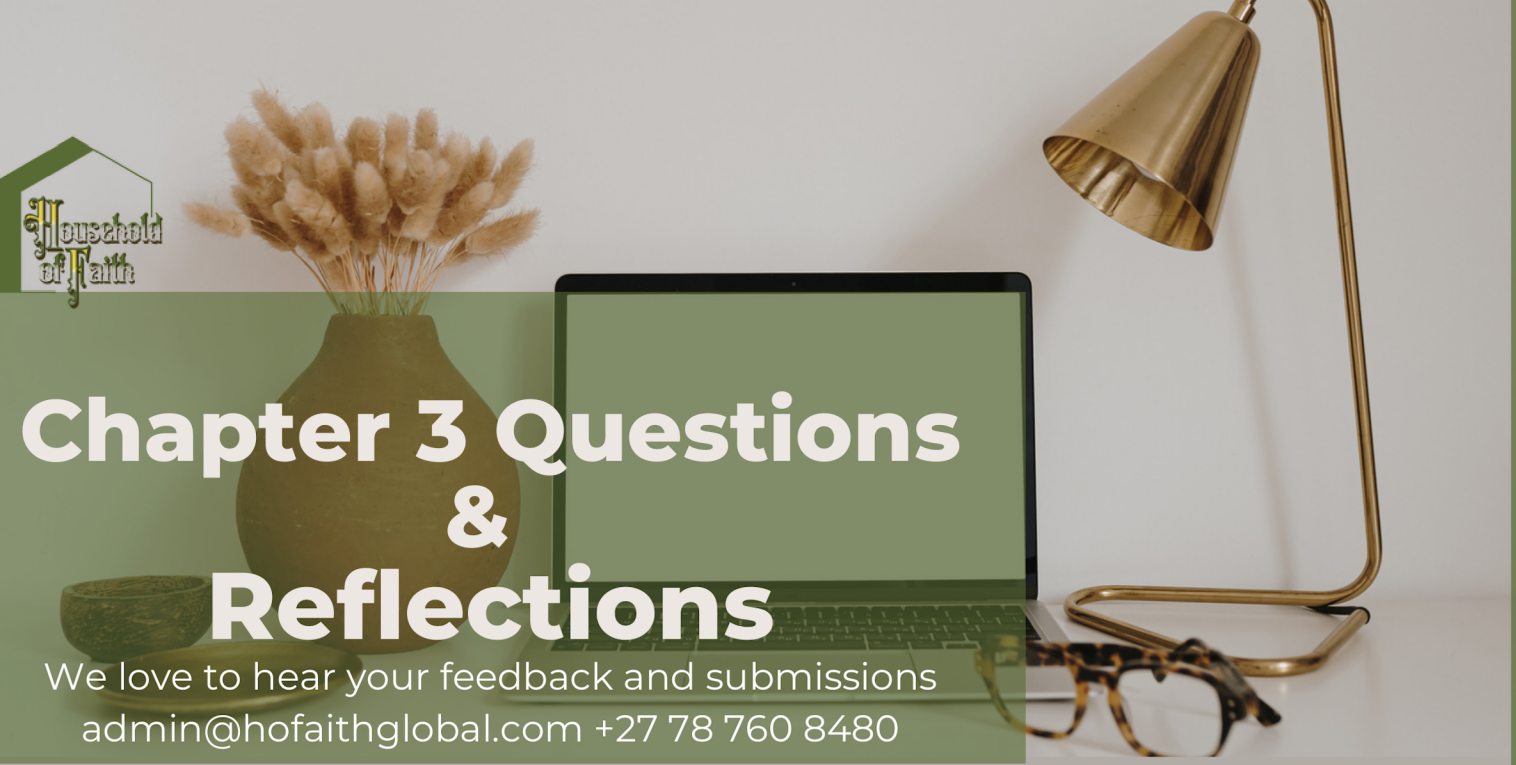
Sydney Kuvarega

*THE BORDERLINE*

*In the second part of my testimony, I left off at the point where I was ordained as a branch pastor in my mentor's church. Initially, it was an exciting experience, but soon I realized that history was repeating itself. It dawned on me that sometimes it's not a matter of right or wrong, but rather respecting that our assignments in God's field may differ. Both Moses and Joshua were called by God, with Moses serving as Joshua's mentor, yet their assignments were distinct, yet they still served the greater good.*

***One must confine themselves within the boundaries and jurisdiction of their specific calling and assignment**. After about four years, we found ourselves in the exact same place where God had originally shifted us from. My wife and I came to the realization that seeking to be absorbed into another assignment was another mistake—an act of losing confidence in our own calling.*

*To rectify this, we humbly sat down with our mentors and explained what was truly in our hearts. We requested to be released in order to pursue what God had specifically instructed us to do in the first place. Expressing this was challenging because conventionally, it is the mentor who initiates the release, not the other way around. However, for us, it was about realigning ourselves with God's purpose. Throughout this process, we also learned the importance of the church having a clear exit pathway. Not to encourage people to leave the church, but rather to send individuals out to carry out diverse assignments in different locations as directed by the Holy Spirit.* ***To be continued.....***



# Chapter 3 Questions & Reflections

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**01** How did the church respond to persecution & suppression under the Roman empire and what allowed it to continue to grow and influence society?

**02** What steps can we take to maintain unity and adherence to the doctrine of Jesus Christ within the household of faith?

**03** How does the history of Christianity's rise in the Roman Empire inform our understanding of the role of religion and politics in shaping societies today?

**04** How can the church maintain unity and effectiveness in its mission and outreach efforts in a changing political and social landscape?

**05** How did the professionalization and institutionalization of the church compare to the way Jesus called his disciples as friends and made known everything he heard from the Father?

# CHAPTER 4

# THE ESSENCE & PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

# THE ESSENCE & PURPOSE

Our Lord Jesus Christ came on earth not to make our institutions popular but rather with a one message *(Mathew 10:7)* of the Kingdom and a focused intention to build that kingdom. He came not to be a pastor or reverend but to set up a people and in three and half years He built them up.
Peter acknowledges this in **John 6:68-69. He confessed that** when Jesus called them to follow Him, they were not already knowledgeable in things pertaining to the kingdom nor were they believing, but after careful following, they came to a position of accurate knowledge and understanding which became the foundation of their faith.

The church does not have a mission or strategy outside itself. Mission is not an initiative, but it is built in. The church is God's strategy, instrument and vehicle for sharing the gospel.

*1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.***

I will give to you *(Jesus referred to the church not Peter)* the keys of the kingdom to bind and lose **Mathew 16:19**. In God's economy, the church is the only authorized entity on earth capable of shutting the gates of hell and establishing God's kingdom. **It is the executor of God's purposes on earth.**

*Ephesians 3:10 "..to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be **made known by the church** to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.*

*Galatians 1:15-16 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His **grace, to** reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.*

We as the church are custodians of a body truth and we ought to administer it as instructed by the Lord. Are we faithful stewards of these realities? When we awaken to these realities, His light will begin to shine and His glory will be seen on us, and then surely gentiles will come to our light and Kings to the brightness of our rising. *(Isaiah 60:1-18)* Before Jesus died and was resurrected, He was seen by all as He went about preaching and teaching.

# GIVING EVIDENCE

Many of those who saw Jesus with their own eyes, including those who were beneficiaries of His miraculous acts did nothing significant for the kingdom with all those encounters. The Bible specifically says that after resurrection Jesus appeared to the women that came to the tomb, Mary Magdalene, (Mary the mother of James, Salome, and Joanna), Peter, and two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He also appeared to the remainder of the Twelve Disciples with Thomas absent. Later he appeared to them with Thomas present. There was also an appearance to seven disciples on the Sea of Galilee. On another occasion he appeared to over five hundred witnesses at the same time. There is also an appearance to James.
Finally, Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus - the man who became the Apostle Paul. These appearances convinced His disciples, beyond any doubt, that He had risen from the dead.

The risen Christ did not need to show Himself to the Sanhedrin, Herod, Pilate, or any other scoffers. His kingdom is “not of this world” *(John 18:36)*, and people have enough evidence on which to base their faith.

Why waste encounters with people who won't do something with a kingdom relevance. Jesus appeared to the women, but not to the soldiers guarding the tomb. Apostles Paul in *Galatians 1:16* states that Jesus was revealed to Him so that he may preach Him.

He chose to reveal Himself to us so that we can make Him known. God is not hiding from anyone; He desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth *(1 Tim 2:4)* but He chose the instrumentality of the church to drive that agenda. His appearing is His glory, hence John said, "we beheld his glory", *(John 1:14)* He was manifested to us so that we can manifest Him to the world. Jesus limited the manifestation of his glory to the church so that the world can now be filled with the knowledge of that glory as manifested by the church.

*Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the **knowledge of the glory of God** as the waters covers the sea.*
It is a matter of great concern to see the church busy referring people to archaeology for an outward experience and seeking physical evidence and recommending objects.

# GIVING EVIDENCE

Notice that the writer of Habakkuk specifies that the earth will be filled with the **knowledge of the glory** not the glory itself. The world in its state cannot interact nor contain the glory of God, yet they can know about God's glory as they see it manifested by the church. For this purpose we are in the world, for the world to see and know of God's glory. The world can know that we are the disciples of Christ by our love not for the world but for one another. How then will the knowledge of God's glory flood the earth?

The answer is in:
*2 Cor 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and **through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.** For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*

The true proof that Jesus is alive is not the empty tomb nor the ruins of the Jerusalem temple. That is on a lower level of evidence.

BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

God in His wisdom has restricted and limited access to one protocol.

The Bible teaches that salvation is a gift of grace through faith it is not the product of learning a large enough amount of historical knowledge:

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" **(Ephesians 2:8–9)***

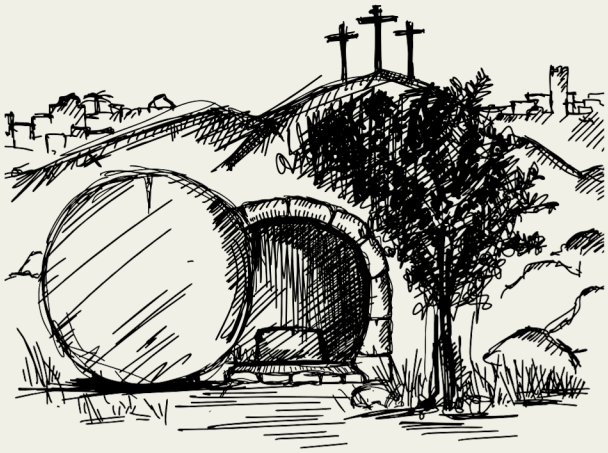
*"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" **(Romans 10:17).***

When we hear Scripture, the Spirit works in tandem with the Word in our hearts to bring us to the point of believing. There is a difference between evidence and proof. The Resurrection of Jesus was proof to the disciples, but they had to turn that proof into evidence and that's what they give to the world around them - evidence. People are still looking for proofs yet there are surrounded by so much evidence.

Having a lot of knowledge about the life of Christ and intellectually believing that He existed is not the kind of faith the believes to salvation. The faith that believes to salvation is faith that places trust in Christ's death and resurrection and results in action *(James 2:22).*

# GIVING EVIDENCE

The church is the heavenly Jerusalem. We are the living proof of the risen Lord for as He is right now, alive, risen, ascended, glorified and sited at the right hand of God, so are we in this world (not as He was before resurrection) We are trophies of Christ's victory on the cross **(2Cor2:14 Amplified Bible)** therefore He displays us to world to show forth the praises of His glory. **(1 Peter 2:9)** As the church, we do not depend on things outside the us to give evidence of our faith.



An angel appeared to two women who had come to anoint the body of Jesus at the tomb. What an experience it was for these two, with a mighty angel whose countenance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. *(Mathew 28:3)* The angel gave a brief message and indicated that Jesus was not there in the tomb because He had risen.

This was followed with an instruction:

*Math 28:7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.*

There was lightning and beauty in the experience, but Jesus was not there.

The instruction was clear. **Waste no time on this experience** or gazing on my shining garments, go quickly to Galilee where you will see Jesus, **tell His disciples that He is risen.** Why not tell the chief priests, Pontius Pilate or those who crucified Him? The women **(a representative figure of the church)** were not instructed to invite people to see the empty tomb yet today many people are still organizing trips to the tomb for an outward bodily experience.

By God's design the world should come to know Christ through the church. We are where God is working. There were many people who were not eyewitnesses to the resurrection who did in fact hear about it and believed.

# KINGDOM RELEVANCE

**Kingdom usefulness must be preferred above the pleasure of secret communion and experiences with God.** Those who followed Jesus only for what they could get were jealousy of sharing Him with others who needed Him, so they stopped the blind men from calling Him and hindered the children from coming to Him.

The women were entrusted with the correct message but on top of seeing an angel, Jesus also appeared to them. The guards on the other hand were part of the tomb experience and had the privilege of seeing the angel and overhearing the conversation but they never saw Christ. That angelic experience alone could not qualify them to preach Him for those who have not seen Him have no business talking about Him lest they misrepresent Him.

When the guards attempted to make a report about Christ to the chief priest immediately, they were bribed. So, by now the chief priests also knew that Jesus had risen from the dead! We find no indication whatever that they did not believe the guards. The honest thing would be for them to admit that they had been wrong about Jesus!

But they were politicians. Their opposition to Jesus had nothing to do with truth. They only wanted to preserve their own power and position. So, what do politicians do? They called a meeting to decide what to do about this new disturbing turn of events. Verse 13 - "They gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.

The kingdom agenda is urgent, and we cannot afford to waste time on experiences with no kingdom relevance or impact and focusing on projecting ourselves and popularizing our institutions and denominations. To understand this urgency let's look at the story of the Samaritan woman who met Jesus by the well.

Instead of spending more time with Jesus' drinking water immediately she realized that the water is inexhaustible and sufficient for all whole city.

# KINGDOM RELEVANCE

She preferred kingdom usefulness and abandoned her water pot assignment and ran into the city proclaiming (*preaching, heralding, inviting*) people to come and see Jesus and the whole city turned to the Lord at her invitation.

*Math 24:14 And this gospel of the **kingdom** will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

The gospel itself is kingdom focused. Some of the messages preached in the churches nowadays are nomadic and remedial.

NOMADIC - In the sense that they keep shifting focus for example from deliverance, to healing and money.
REMEDIAL - In the sense that they are developed mostly to remedy the damage in people's lives like fear, poverty, sickness etc.

We must always consider the foundations and not be following and responding to trends. We can still relevantly minister to people without departing from our core foundations. Miracles, success and prosperity can still happen while we preach Christ and not turning them into our message.

In the church's effort to remedy the problems of people, we no longer care about our base foundations.

***John 10:16*** Jesus is clear that He has other sheep who are not of this fold (non-Jews) and they shall hear His voice and become one flock under one Shepherd.

But how can they believe in whom they have not heard, how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach unless they are sent.

*John 17:20-23 I do not pray for these alone but also those **who will believe in me through their word..."***

Jesus prayed for all who would believe even before they believed. He could already see and envision the influence of the kingdom spreading and many people believing in Him through the word of the disciples. The word of God in the mouth of a man is still the word of God.

*Luke 1:37 AMPC For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment.*

# GIVING EVIDENCE

The word of Jesus' resurrection quickly reached the ears of the Jewish leaders via the Roman guards at the tomb. In addition, many deceased saints rose from the dead and were seen by many *(Matthew 27:52–53)*. The fact is that the Jewish leaders heard about the resurrection and had many confirmations from eyewitnesses, but they rejected the truth. We might assume that, if Jesus had appeared to more people after His resurrection, more people would have believed, but the availability of proof doesn't change a hardened heart.

Jesus taught that a man's heart can be so hardened toward God that even a resurrection will not sway him *(see John 11:53; 12:9–10)*. The rich man in Hades begs Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his five brothers of the need to repent and so avoid the torment he was experiencing *(Luke 16:27)*. The man's reasoning seemed logical:
"If someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!" (Verse 30). But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. . . . If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead" (verses 29, 31). Jesus' appearing to more people after His resurrection would not have been enough for those who refuse to believe.

# THE ESSENCE & PURPOSE

## BEING SALT & LIGHT

By God's design the church must be influential. Jesus uses the analogy of salt and light to describe that influence. **You are** salt and light.

SALT

Salt was never meant to remain in containers but rather to be scattered, dissolve and be absorbed. People don't enjoy salt itself but what's salted. Salt has to be different in order to be an influence, it means being increasingly unpopular and also losing people who want to align with religion and societal beliefs.

The church must not try to keep its place in society by following and going down with society. We ought to be showing a biblical kingdom culture and invite others into the same experience.

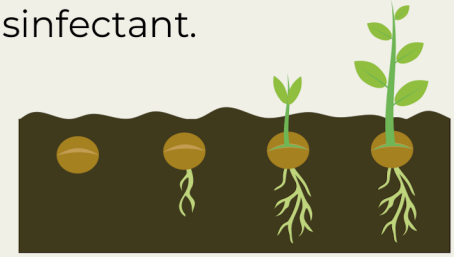
The despair of losing membership and desperation to try and stay with society is what leads to the greatest compromise we see across nations.
It is the church that must spread the influence of God's kingdom. We cannot use God to drive our own agendas but rather God is working in and through us to drive His agenda.

*Mark 16:20 And they went out and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them** and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.*

Jesus is the head, and we are the body. **What can the head do without the body?** The head exercises authority through the body. Though the physical Christ is not on earth, the Church which is His body is. **Jesus had to physically depart from this world so that we can become the body**, the physical expression of Christ. Every human being bears the image of God but not God's name.
Our faith is a conviction that seeks no convenience, not just an expression. We must do what God calls us to do even in the midst of persecution.
*2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*
Persecution is a consequence of involvement.

# FERTILISER AND DISINFECTANT

The acceptance and absorbing of many things from society into the church (e.g. homosexuality etc) is a report card of being shaped instead of shaping society. Salt had nothing to do with the kitchen in the context of its use in the book of **Luke 14:34.** "..if it loses flavour its not good for the soil or manure pile *(not the kitchen)*. In those days salt was used as a fertilizer in the field to promote growth and also because of no flush toilets, when people did their business at the backyard there was a box of salt used to cover the base as a disinfectant.



Fertiliser - Helps good things grow.
Disinfectant - Stops bad things from spreading.

The essentials of salt is the savour or influence, not colour *(pink salt is salt)* or grain size or shape *(coarse salt is salt)*. If we put a bunch of Christians in a warehouse the filthy language must change. Anywhere where there is 5% of true Christians, the society changes for good.

The kitchen use of salt is just a sprinkle but for fertilising and disinfecting you need a lot more than a sprinkle. If we can produce 5% salt, good things will grow and bad things go away. As many as received Him were given the right to be called the children of God. (*John 1:12)* We are God's people, and we are called by His name. Bearing both the name and image of God makes us witnesses. At the same time, we can also cause shame and disrepute to the name we bear. *(Read: 2 Peter 2:2, Romans 2:24, Titus 2:5)*

A name has significance only when applied to a person. A professed Christian who is not Christlike, whose conduct is ungodly, takes God's name in vain or scandalize His name. If your character is out of harmony with your name, your name is a falsehood or a lie. More about this in the module: **Blessed to be a blessing.**

The world through various means like shame and **social embarrassment** is trying to push Christianity into a private faith where you are allowed to be a Christian provide you don't invite or share your faith with others. This is the exact opposite of the Great Commission.

# SALT AND LIGHT

The world is comfortable with a church that has no influence, yet the church solemnly exists for the world to come to the knowledge of God's glory. We are not a secret society, and our faith is for sharing. We are not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power unto salvation. **(Romans 1:16)** Many can testify but only a few are witnesses. **Witness** - is the word **Martus** in Greek which is the root word for martyr. There is an aspect of death in being a witness. Death to self. We are not called to share a witness but rather to be witnesses.

*Mathew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself, and take up his cross,** and follow Me.*
***Rev 12:11** And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*
***Philippians 1:20-21** according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **Christ is exalted in my body whether by life or death.***

The apostles were persecuted not for being Christians but for spreading their faith.

As long as our being doesn't produce doing, then the enemy of our faith is content. In *Acts 4:16-20* the council wanted to stop the spread of the gospel hence they commanded the Apostles not to preach or teach anyone in the name of Jesus.

## THE MIX - ADULTERATION

Salt (sodium chloride) will always be salt and can't lose its saltiness. You can press it, crush grind but it will still be salt. How else then can salt lose its flavour?
There is only one way for salt to lose its flavour(influence) while maintaining colour and shape and it's called **adulterating** - mixing it with another white substance.
Having a form of godliness yet denying its power. **(***2 Tim 3:5)* It's possible to lose function and maintain the form. The number of churches and Christians per society seems to be increasing but not the impact. The level of evil per society seems to have no respect for the existence of the church but this is changing for the Lord is raising an army.

# LIGHT

The main goal of the enemy is not specifically for us to stop gathering or renounce our faith but rather to continue to exist as a church without impact. Jesus once spoke a parable of a farmer who planted good seed and the enemy came while men slept and planted bad seed.
It was going to be easy for the enemy to uproot the good seed, yet he chose to plant more seeds in the same field. The mix of good and bad helps with confusion to the laborers in the field. The only reason we need discernment in this world is because of the mix of good and evil posing as good. God's word has inherent power of fulfilment yet when its mixed, diluted, and polluted with tradition and religion it loses its effect or influence. (*Mark 7:13*)

LIGHT

*Mathew 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **Let your light so shine before men**, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

*Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but n**ow you are light in the Lord.** Walk as children of light*

1 *Thes 5:5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.*

Light is what God has made us to be. *John 9:5* As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
He is not in the world as Emmanuel but in us through the person of the Holy Spirit. That makes us to be light. Light shines, attracts and gives meaning to things.

*2 Cor 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, **who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ.*

In *Luke 15:8-10* there is short parable of woman who had 10 coins and lost one in the house. After losing the coin, the woman first reached out for the lamp because searching in the dark does not yield any results.
**The lost cannot find the lost because all are operating in darkness. The blind cannot lead** the blind lest they both fall in the ditch. There is need for light bearers to come on the scene otherwise all the search and rescue efforts will be fruitless.

Light has no substitute. Darkness hides and covers things but light exposes.

# LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

It is when light shines that it begins to attract. There are different dimensions of shining.
***Proverbs 4:18-19 (KJV)*** *But the path of the just is as the* ***shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day****. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.*
We are light but we must arise and awaken to that reality and begin to shine. Let us so shine that the world may wonder and glorify our Father. When that light begins to shine, the end results is glory accrues unto God.

***Isaiah 60:1-3*** *Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.* ***The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.***

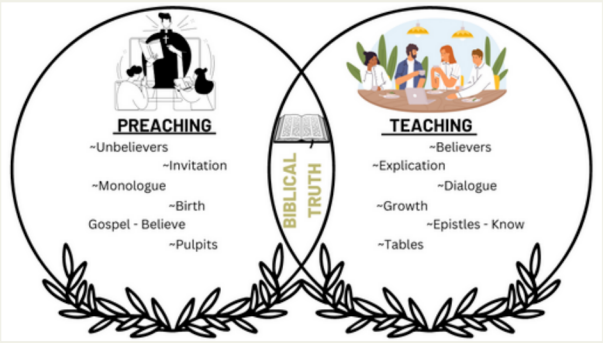
<u>Apostolic Admonition:</u> It is time saints for the church to arise to its God ordained place and refuse to be just another landmark or statistic in the records of men with no tangible impact. Awake awake!, God is calling all those who are sleeping in Zion. Awake from slumber, awake to righteousness, awake to holiness, arm yourself with strength and put on the garments of light. let your light so shine and shine brighter and brighter.

We cannot be praying for light to come, that would be unbelief, we are the light of the world. **Isaiah 60** said the glory of God will be seen upon you. Glory must radiate from the church to the ends of the earth.

# PREACHING AND TEACHING

## WHY PREACH AND TEACH

What is shared between preaching and teaching is the content, biblical truth. The difference lies in the mode and immediate goal. We can define preaching as the invitational and exhortational proclamation of biblical truth. **Teaching, by contrast, is the explanation and explication of biblical truth.**




The **preaching** biblical content is presented in a mode of proclamation with the immediate goal of invitation and exhortation.

The **teaching** biblical content is presented in a more detailed and systematic way for the purpose of explaining and unpacking complex issues, their interconnections, and their implications. There is overlap, but there is also distinction.

The availability of channels for communicating biblical truth and the guaranteed attention from people has also created an opportunity for many other ideas or messages contrary to the gospel to find inroads into the church.
Our preaching & teaching has to be Christ centred and focused at revealing Him and not promoting or projecting ourselves. We might have spectacular experiences but if those experiences don't reveal Christ, then they are unprofitable for the kingdom.

*Colossians 1:28-29 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.,*

Christ is preached because Christ is the central message of the scriptures.

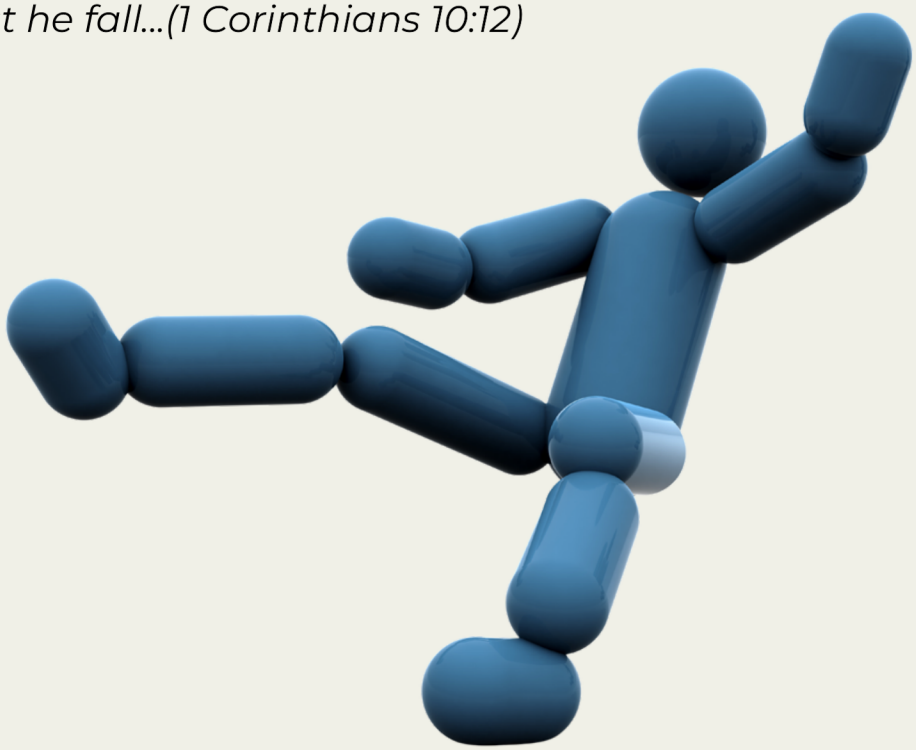
*Acts 8:5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.*

*Acts 8:35-36 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*

# MY TESTIMONY 4

Sydney Kuvarega

*With our very limited experience of life we have come to realize that your convictions will always be tested at different intervals therefore as the scriptures say "let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall...(1 Corinthians 10:12)*



*At some point as we were emphasizing that the church is a people not a building, one of our local church lost a building that they used for gathering. It was not a massive structure, but they started in the house, and it became smaller to accommodate everyone therefore they constructed a decent shelter which was excellent and costly in their context hence it was a quite a big loss.*

*They are many people who came in the group and tasted the fellowship of the saints and for others it was too radical, and for some the church had no vibe, it was too simple for them. Some thought it's just a new trend therefore they endured only for a while and fall off but as with the 12 disciples some remained. (John 6:68)*

*In all these things their convictions have only grew stronger and stronger. It was a glorious liberty for them to know and realize that they do not own the church, but it belongs to Jesus, and that they cannot lose what was never theirs.*

# THE MOUTH OF GOD

*Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be* that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please and it shall prosper in the thin for which I sent it.

What then is the mouth of God today? Is the church not the body of Christ and He is the head? Are we not His eyes, hands and feet? Has he not commanded you to lay your hand on the sick and they shall recover. He instructed Ezekiel to prophecy to the dry bones saying "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! (**Not the word of Ezekiel)** It is still the word of the Lord even though it's Ezekiel speaking because He prophesied as He was commanded *(Ezekiel 37:4-7)*

The Bible is one book communicating one message and Jesus Christ is the message which has been entrusted to the stewardship of the church.

*Psalm 68:11 The Lord gave the word, great was the company that published /proclaimed it.*

God's word needs preachers/ teachers/ publishers. When Jesus was born, the shepherds to whom the angels appeared announcing the news, they made widely known the saying concerning Jesus. *(Luke 2:17-18)*

After knowing Him, it became their responsibility to make Him known to others. The angel that broke the news to them did not visit every person in that city, yet the message spread wide through publishers.

***Rom 10:8** The word of faith is preached.*

Preaching gives wheels and movement for the message to travel from person to person. *Isaiah 52:7* How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. Preachers are guides and not the destination. Every map needs an interpretation. If God's word can be rightly divided it also means, there is a possibility to wrongly divide the word.
Jesus preached & taught from the scriptures which people had and did not understand - beginning at Moses he explained to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. *(Luke 24:27)* By doing so He opened their understanding. On the day of Pentecost onlookers tried to define the experience from outside and said they were filled with wine.

# THE ESSENCE OF PREACHING & TEACHING

Then Peter who was not a spectator but a participant, stood up to set the record straight and corrected the confusion "this is that which is written in the book of Joel" This shows they had the book of Joel and even read it, yet they could not discern that right before their eyes the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. They were comfortable with reading prophecies and never watched out for their fulfilment. The word is alive. *2 Peter 3:15-16* Speaks of people who distort the scriptures to their destruction.
Understanding is a key component in every believer that is why Paul mentions it as a prayer' that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened.

For example, when Jesus spoke there was more to what He said that required explanation. Most of the words were not literal. In *John 11:12-13 & John 6* some of the disciples misunderstood Jesus and others made a conclusion that he wasn't worth following and they stopped from that day, all because of their lack of understanding and patience to learn.

EXEGESIS -Letting the Bible speak to you and let scripture interpret scripture. The word exegesis literally means “to lead out of.” That means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text.

EISEGESIS - Reading your opinion and using the scriptures to back it up.
The word eisegesis literally means “to lead into,” which means the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants.

# Chapter 4 Questions & Reflections

We love to hear your feedback and submissions
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**01** **In what ways am I being a faithful steward of the truth of the gospel & administering it as instructed by the Lord?**

**02** **How can the Church balance being salt and light in the world without losing its distinctiveness & influence?**

**03** **How can the church effectively fulfill its role as the physical expression of Christ on Earth in the absence of Jesus' physical presence?**

**04** **What does it mean for the Church to be the body of Christ?**

**05** **How can we ensure the relevancy of our message and teaching to the listeners while still staying true to our foundational beliefs?**

# CHAPTER 5

# FIVE MAJOR THINGS THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THE CHURCH

# WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THE CHURCH

In this chapter, we will only look at the five major pillars in the discovery of God's idea and design for the church.

FAMILY

From His identity as "**Father**" God identifies with family terms because He is the originator of family. He is our Father and together we are His children. That makes us brothers and sisters or brethren in Christ. Nowadays one can connect with many people online, yes, but that is not a home.

**Brethren - Aldephos** means from the same womb. We are all born of God.

Jesus came to introduce this "**Father**" dimension of God and the Pharisees and Sadducees would not accept the possibility of man relating with God as their Father. For them even claiming to be the Son of God was blasphemous. God created everybody but He is Father to those He gave birth to through the gospel.

Nobody could call God Father until Jesus came, and the Father revealed Himself through Him. God became a man so that man can know Him. The church is the Father's family birthed after the resurrection.

Before Jesus died, He was the only begotten Son but after resurrection he became the first born among many brethren. ***Hebrews 2:10*** Jesus brought many sons to glory. Phillip is one of those who were not satisfied with the revelation of the Father in Christ hence he had further quests "Show us the Father and that will be enough"***(John 14:8)***

*Eph 3:15 I bow my knees to the Father....from whom **the whole family in heaven and on earth is named.***

The church is God's family on earth, and we also have other family members in another dimension of existence called heaven. They are the cloud of witnesses surrounding us. A family must have relationships or else it's just a crowd or any anonymous audience. Family loves deeply and only the people who are deep in your heart also have the potential to hurt you deeply. Family members have responsibilities. The church or family of faith which is the body of Christ is so dear to Him that is why whatever is done to His body whether good or bad it's done to Jesus.

(***1 COR 8:12)*** speaks of sins against the brethren because the brethren are priority.

# WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THE CHURCH

Outside the church the priority is always gospel poverty not humanitarian relief. Jesus was anointed to preach the good news to the poor. He went about doing good *(Acts 10:38)* and the good he did was preaching, healing and casting out demons. The word good in **Acts 10:38** is **euergeteo** in the Greek which means to be philanthropic. Yet the physically poor of Jesus's time considered Him to have done nothing good unless and until he multiplied fish and bread.

Preaching, teaching God's word, healing the sick and setting people free from demonic oppression = **euergeteo, philanthropy.**

*Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, **especially** to those who are of the household of faith.*
Brethren care for one another *2 Cor 8:14. Y*our plenty supplies the needs of others. *(2 Corinthians 11:9)*

The brethren of Macedonia not the government, supplied what Apostle Paul lacked. Certainly there were many other people with capacity to help Paul in Macedonia, who were not brethren hence they were not concerned with Paul's affairs. In the book of Acts the church took care of those who were orphans & widows in the church but even so, not all met the requirements to receive help. *(1 Tim 5:3-16)* There was a criterion employed to determine those who should get that help. Apart from being widows there were other factors which they considered. Before we ship the blankets, and food parcels, have we considered these things?

*Acts 4:32-35 ".....No-one lacked anything among them..."*
We love to quote this but remember, this was not the general situation with everyone in that city but those within the community of faith.

*John 13:35 **By this** all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

Those outside the church must see love happening between the brethren and that draws them to the family in order to also partake of the same experience.

# FAMILY FIRST

*(Read 1 John 3:16-18, 1 Thes 4:9-12)* How we treat each other as believers is a critical report card to those outside the church, not how we treat the world. In fact, the fact that we mostly do good to those outside the church and and not within the family, hence outsiders would rather stay outside because if they become family, we will treat them the same way we are doing other saints.

Love is what binds us together. *Colossians 3:13-15* Love is the bond of perfection. *Eph 4:1-3* encourages us to bear with one another in love, keeping the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. *Colossians 2:2* Describes how the saints in Laodeciea were knitted together in love resulting in them attaining to the full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God. We may be different colours but being knitted together we form one material.

Saints, there are realities that are exclusive to those who are in Christ.

This exclusivity is the basis for our invitation for other people to come in. What we see today is a church making efforts to export those realities for the world to enjoy from outside. The parable of the wedding banquet *(Luke 14:16-24)* gives us a glimpse into kingdom dynamics. The tables were set, but when people gave excuses, the table and food weren't taken to the streets but rather the invitation was extended the streets, highways and hedges. Even the poor, lame and blind were ushered in because the supper was prepared in the house. Tables are always found in the house not on the streets, but we need pulpits on the streets to invite people to the table. There has been a switch in our generation, pulpits are now in the house and tables on the streets.

Going to the world is very important in the great commission but Jesus gave us clear instructions on what to do when we get there, make disciples not dependents. The father of the prodigal son loved his son, yet he never sent food to the far country where he was in prodigal living. Hunger and remembering how even servants who abode in the house ate & had surplus made him come back to his senses.

# FAMILY FIRST

When you are in the house, the definition or title of your assignment is of no importance, everyone qualifies to feast from the father's table. Family looks out for each other's interest. Read *Philippians 2:1-4* This passage of scripture can only be a reality if we are family and function as such.

Salvation is personal in the sense that you believe and receive for yourself and through that you are immediately introduced to a family. Your personal relationship & identity with God is the foundation for your corporate or in this case community identity. The cross depicts our relationship with God as the vertical bar, and our relationship with God's people as the horizontal bar, all joined together. This is one of the reasons why your love for God is demonstrated by your love for His people.

*1 John 4:20 If someone says, 'I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen.*

Relationship marks the boundaries of activities. *1 Tim 4:16* tells us to instruct the brethren.

As the church we only instruct the brethren, but we can preach to the world and pray for the authorities. John the Baptist attempted to instruct and correct Herod and landed Himself in trouble. Understand the jurisdiction of the church, not all people are brethren.

*2 Thessalonians 3:2.*

*1 Pet 2:17 Honor all men, respect the King, love the brethren. Fear God. Honor the king.*

Respecting the authorities has nothing to do with personalities or correctness but the offices which they occupy.

## FLOCK

The scriptures also define the church as a flock of sheep with shepherds who are all accountable to the Great Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. By God's design shepherds don't own the sheep but they are stewards and overseers. Shepherds model their leadership after Jesus Christ. Their responsibility is to feed and watch over the flock because Jesus supplies the feed and entrust it to the shepherds.

# A FLOCK

Jesus demonstrated this when he gave the fish and bread to the disciples, and they gave to the people who were gathered in groups of 50. It's easy to keep track on who has eaten or not in a small group than trying to feed +5000 people at once. What we normally see today is that the pastor dishes out food to a congregation of thousands of people with the assumption that all are eating. More about that later.
Feed my sheep is not the same with feeding on the sheep as some shepherds did in ***Ezekiel 34*** who only took care of themselves at the expense of the sheep.

*1 Pet 5:2-4 Shepherd the flock of God, serving as overseers not lords over. (**Psalm 100:3 & 95:7**) We are the sheep of His pasture therefore he determines our diet. We follow his leading to the green pastures and still waters.*

***Acts 20:28*** Watch yourselves and the flock.

It's interesting to note something about the staff of the shepherds of old. It had a hook on one end so as to draw the sheep that is going astray to himself and also a sharp edge on the other end to fight predators that wants to prey on the sheep.

FELLOWSHIP -KOINONIA

In ***Acts 2:4*** Fellowship is one of the things that the early church devoted themselves to.
Koinonia is intimate, binding communion and a closeness of a true, never to be broken commitment to one another. The word was also used for Siamese twins born joined together sharing the same blood stream and sometimes even certain organs. Sharing the same life is greater than friendship. The Siamese twins can't do anything or live without each other. This is the original idea and design for the church, we have koinonia in the Spirit.

*1 Cor 6:17 He who is joined with the Lord is one Spirit with Him.*

Proximity, Frequency and Duration are key in fellowship.

*Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,** as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

# FELLOWSHIP: KOINONIA

Sharing and caring among the brethren is an outflow of koinonia.

The essence of gathering is fellowship with one another not just with God for our fellowship with God is not limited to gatherings. However, our fellowship with one another must still be God centered.

*1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light,* ***we have fellowship with one another,*** *and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Fellowship helps us to serve one another in love and also community decision making. In **Acts chapters 6 & 15** the church gathered together to make important decisions about their future direction. These required community prayer and close discussions Fellowship is essential for spiritual growth. The under girding of the church's fellowship in the book of Acts was Jesus's command to love one another.

The church was joyful Acts 2:45-47 from house to house praising God. The Lord added daily to the church those who were being saved because the church was on a daily mission because mission is built in. Its not "mission week" once a year or evangelism once every 6 months. The strength and depth of their fellowship is evidenced by their practices. Those who had lands and possessions sold them and distributed to the needs of the saints.
They lived a communal life and had everything in common. The church is a relational community with Christ at the center. People relationships in that community are also important. The church is a love community, and you cannot love someone you don't know. It is a love nation; we love because He first love us.

*Further reading on love:*
*Romans 12:10*
*Romans 13:8,*
*1 Thessalonians 3:12,*
*1 Thessalonians 4:9,*
*Hebrews 10:24,*
*1 Peter 1:22,*
*1 Peter 3:8,*
*1 Peter 4:8,*
*1 Peter 5:14,*
*1 John 3:23,*
*1 John 4:7,*
*1 John 11-12,*
*2 John 1:5*

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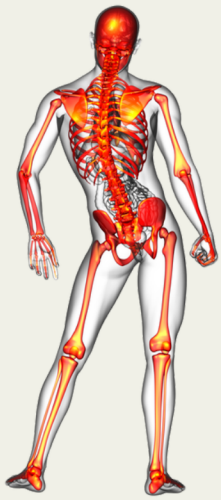


Saul before he became Paul the Apostle as we know him today, persecuted believers and on one of his journeys to Damascus to do the same, he encountered light brighter than the sun and Jesus asked him why he was persecuting him. **Acts 9:4)**

Saul never destroyed any buildings because the church had none except homes. (**Acts 8:3, Phil 3:6)** Paul never thought the evil he did to the believers was done to Christ Himself, for at that time he was ignorant of the fact that the church is a people and it's the body of Christ.

***Romans 12:5*** *we being many are one body..*
***Eph 4:4*** *There is one body.....*
***Eph 5:30*** *Members of his body*
***Eph 1 :22-23*** *The church is his body*
***Colossians 1:18*** *He is head of the body.*

Jesus loves the church as his own body.

He emphatically does not hate his own body, but he nourishes and cherishes it *(Ephesians 5:29).*

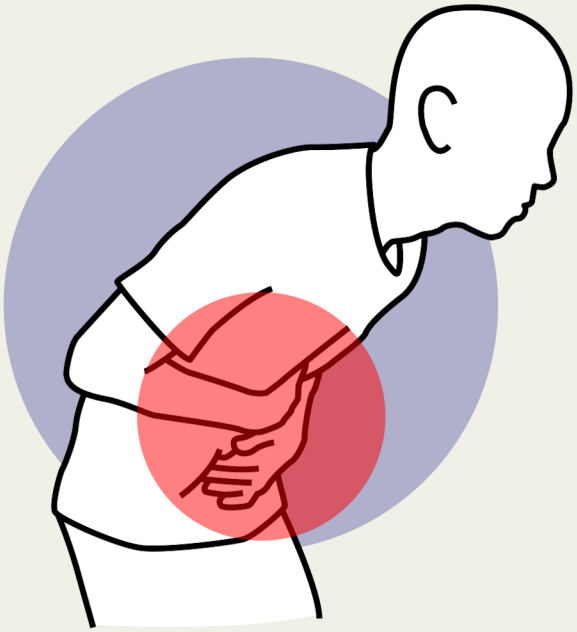
Jesus cherishes his church. He adores her, cares for her, gladly devotes his attention to her. He has pledged his loyalty to her, to be one flesh with her, to hold fast to her, to not give up on her, to never leave or forsake her. “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25).

Members of that body are not names in a register but people providing a function for others in the body. No member or body part is just a place holder or without purpose or function. Every part provides a function for the body.

The essence of body parts is the body itself. The body is the reason for their existence. Every part gives and receives from the body. Members of the body must therefore be actively functioning and be of service to the body. I recall when Nehemiah heard of the plight of his people and what had happened to Jerusalem, and he cried in pain for days.

Why did this news trouble Nehemiah? people connected by love share all things including pain and discomfort.

# BODY



When one member is in pain or suffering the whole body shares the discomfort and when one is honoured the whole body is honoured (1 Cor 12:25-26) There should be no schism in the body and members should have the same care for one another.

Dismembering the body causes pain. One of the very important things concerning the body is communication between all the different body parts. The body communicates pain through the nervous system.
Failure to be sensitive to what is transpiring in the body is because of two possible things:
A superficial attachment to the body without real connection and spiritual leprosy.

## SPIRITUAL LEPROSY

Leprosy destroys the nerve tissue of the body. When the nervous system is destroyed, the body becomes insensitive and unresponsive in many parts. Even pain can no longer be shared in the body because the pathways of that communication are destroyed.

**Heb 13:3** Remember those ***(the context here is believers)*** in prison as if you are fellow prisoners because you are in the body.
I've seen people receiving medication prescribed for a headache, yet they take it with a hand, swallows with the mouth and it goes to the stomach through the oesophagus and from there its broken down further by healthy bacteria and absorbed into the blood stream then the head is cured because of the connectedness of the body parts.
Members of the body are not the same so are their functions yet every one of them is useful and valuable. Difference is good but problems come when we put wrong value on difference e.g., tall is better, short is best, this skin tone is better. Paul planted, Apollos watered - we are all of Christ and Christ is the fullness that fills all and is in all.

# BODY

Individualism and indifference, the I don't care attitude is an error. We train our people to be selective e.g. as long as it's not my church (referring to a denomination) I don't care. We must be body conscious and not celebrate the shortcomings of fellow brethren in Christ.
The sin of the rich man was not doing wrong things but doing nothing, apathy and complacency. He was not cruel to Lazarus and made no objections to him sitting by his gate.

He noticed Lazarus but accepted him as an unfortunate part of life and his landscape. He thought it was perfectly natural that Lazarus should live in pain and hunger while he wallows in luxury.
Is it not the picture of the church in freedom which focuses so much on revival while the greater part of the body, that is the church in persecution is simply battling for survival. How is it possible that with all the resources available to the church, 2.5 billion people are still waiting to hear the gospel? People yearn for comfort in their lives and spend time, energy and resources to increase their comfortable lifestyle. Churches are no exception, softer seats with armrests, fancy equipment, disco lights, are now the new goals of the church.

What will we say on that day when the master will require us to account for our faith and all that the Lord has entrusted to our care. Ponder on these things.

# MY TESTIMONY 5

Sydney Kuvarega

*FOCUS ON BEING*

***James 1 :22*** *encourages us to be doers of the and not hearers only. Despite the abundance of easily accessible knowledge today, there remains a distinction between general knowledge and the specific knowledge of God's will. People may possess vast knowledge but lack the understanding of God.*

*A few years ago, i was privileged to be one of six brothers, hailing from diverse cultural, church, racial, national, and socio-economic backgrounds, who made a collective decision. We chose not to engage in endless discussions, sermons, or written books on cross-cultural initiatives, as these had already been extensively explored. Instead, we resolved to embody the principles we believed in a more impactful form of preaching.*
*In accordance with Jesus' teachings that the world would recognize His disciples by their love for one another, we shared meals, resources, prayed together, and even vacationed together. This endeavour was not without challenges, but we embraced the notion of learning through failure. We witnessed the good, the bad, and the ugly, but the lessons derived from those experiences now enable me to freely connect with God's children from various cultures, races, nationalities, and denominational backgrounds.*

*Key Lessons Learned:*

1. *It became evident that many individuals are busy promoting concepts and perspectives they acknowledge to be true in books, sermons, and speeches, yet they themselves have not experienced those realities firsthand.*
2. *The possibility of cross-cultural interactions was affirmed, but it was crucial to approach them with intentionality rather than pushing them due to prevailing trends like, The Cross-Cultural Movement, House Church Movement etc.*
3. *The realization dawned that one can never truly recognize their own cultural biases until they engage with something different. The invaluable richness derived from diverse individuals has no comparable substitute.*
4. *Talk is cheap. The significance of actions over mere words became clear, as many individuals are adept at selling empty talk lacking substance.*

# BRIDE OF CHRIST

One of the important metaphors given to describe the church is that of the bride of Christ. The implications and applications of this metaphor are towering.
To understand this analogy fully, it helps to understand marriages during biblical times. This will shed some light and help you see the imagery of the bride of Christ, possibly in a way you haven't seen before.

How did marriages work in the bible? There were a series of different events culminating in a marriage ceremony. Let's consider them:
The Betrothal – This was more than an engagement like we think of today. The betrothal was actually just as binding as being married. The woman who was betrothed to her future husband was bound to the husband. She was considered married even though the actual wedding ceremony would probably not take place until later. In fact, within the Mosaic law, a husband who was betrothed to his "wife" was exempt from military work.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S FRIEND.

The bridegroom would choose a close and loyal friend whose responsibility was to assist the bride in preparation for the wedding. He would stay by her side throughout this entire betrothal period and make sure she was ready for the bridegroom on the wedding day. That is the work of Holy Spirit according to John 14:26 What an incredible gift Jesus the bridegroom has given to you who are the bride of Christ. This shows you how much Jesus loves you and how committed he is to help you get to the ceremony. When the Holy Spirit has done his job, Jude specifies result of the work of the Spirit: **Jude 1:23-24.** "..He presents you faultless before His presence.

In Paul's love for the Corinthian church (**2 COR 2 11:2**), he took on this role as friend of the bridegroom. While ultimately this is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit, in God's wisdom he will sometimes send people into your life to help accomplish this task.
The Procession – On the day of the wedding, the bridegroom would leave from his father's house and proceed to the house of the father of the bride to receive his bride.

# BRIDE OF CHRIST

The bridegroom would not announce in advance the exact moment when he was coming, so the bride had to be prepared, ready, and waiting for the bridegroom.

The Ceremony and Feast - Once the bridegroom had received his bride, they would proceed to the house of the father of the bridegroom. They would then have a wedding ceremony followed by a spectacular wedding feast. These feasts could last up to a week and sometimes even longer. After all the preparation and getting ready, we finally will get to the ultimate culmination and the true reward for you who are the bride of Christ.

(**Eph 1:13**) The moment you heard the message of the gospel and received salvation you were in a sense betrothed to Christ. Your eternal life began that very moment. However, as the betrothed bride is considered married to her bridegroom, the same principle applies to you. You belong to him both now and forevermore. Marriage demonstrates to the world the beauty of Jesus Christ relationship the church. This is one of the reasons why divorce smudges the picture of God's unwavering commitment to His bride. The bride is subject to the head. Jesus is saviour of the bride that is why He loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (**2 COR 11:1-4**) Christ is the one husband of the church.

*Rev 21:9-11 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."*

The church is the beloved of God - (**Rom 5:8**). Sally Lloyd Jones explains that the bible is a love story about a brave prince who leaves His palace, His throne and everything else to rescue the one He loves. **Rom 7:3-4** The woman, who is a metaphor of the church cannot be married both to the law of Moses and to Christ at the same time.

The law was not the official husband of the church, but before the Holy Spirirt 0c0ommenced His work, the law was employed as our tutor to Christ the true husband. Verse 4 of Romans 7 says we became dead to the law through the body of Christ so that we may be married to another, the risen Lord. Throughout the biblical narrative, God has pursued His people with a relentless passion.

# BRIDE OF CHRIST

He humbled Himself, came in the flesh, died the death of a criminal in order to win them back. Salvation is also called reconciliation - God was in Christ reconciling man to Himself.

*2 Corinthians 5:18-19 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the* ***ministry of reconciliation,*** *that is, that* ***God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,*** *not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

Through Christ's sacrifice intimacy with the Father was restored. Jesus is the one who prepares, sanctifies, cleanse the church, presents and receive her to Himself in splendour. There are many other ways that the church can soil herself and compromise her faithfulness to Christ and in 2 Cor 11 Paul mentions false teachers, another gospel, other spirits and false Christs as things that spoil the bride.

**Make no mistake, the church is his bride**. When we admire a man, respect him, appreciate him, and reverence him, we are careful what we say about his wife. We check our suspicions. We are vigilant to not let personal disappointments fester into a global cynicism toward her. We show little esteem for a groom when we insult his bride. The church is the Father's choice. In the Old Testament fathers chose brides for their sons. The Father chose the church for his Son before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Not only did the Father choose the church for her salvation, but also to be an instrument of divine revelation in the world. And not just an instrument, but the central vessel in making God known in the world in this age. The vision of the church is astoundingly, almost uncomfortably, high in Ephesians 3.

When offers praise to God the Father, he says, “To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.” We expect “in Christ Jesus” as the focal point through which God’s glory is displayed — but here she is, his wife, side by side with Christ himself, the bridegroom: “to him be glory in the church.” Disappointed as we may be with an unfaithful leader or hurt as we may feel by particular people or ministries in a local community, we would do well to remember such a vision of the church, Christ’s own vision of his church.

The church, worldwide and throughout the ages, is not mainly bringing reproach upon Christ.

# BRIDE OF CHRIST

Rather, the church, alongside Christ, is bringing glory to the Father and making his wisdom known to all the powers, earthly and heavenly.

Christ's vision and concern for his body boggles, stretches, and defies human explanation. Jesus's awareness of his church's flaws and failures is far more extensive than any human's. He knows every detail of ongoing evil. No one takes sin in the church more seriously than Jesus. He knows the depths of her sin and died to secure, sanctify her and make her holy.

Part of cleansing the church means correcting her, but correcting her does not mean despising her, or painting her sins in broad strokes. Jesus doesn't sit back in his armchair issuing criticisms about the church and there is no hopelessness about the future of the church.

Christ is preparing his church for the wedding, adorning his bride for that day when she will be presented to him, and every eye will see her, at last, in unparalleled majesty. We trust that that as you continue reading the following chapters of this module, you appreciate that the contributors to this material love the body and also exists as members of the same and strongly desire to see the body rise to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

# Chapter 5 Questions & Reflections

We love to hear your feedback and submissions
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**01** How does our personal relationship with God inform and shape our corporate identity within the church community?

**02** How does frequency, proximity, and duration play a role in fellowship?

**03** In what ways does the imagery of the church as the bride of Christ demonstrate the beauty of Jesus' relationship with His body, the church?

**04** Of these five church metaphors discussed, which one is lacking today?

**05** How does the concept of the church being the "body of Christ" relate to the idea that each member has a specific function and purpose in the community?

CHAPTER 6

# HOW DO WE GET THERE?

# LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

It is true that the church is not the clergy **(professional Christians)** neither does it depend on professionally trained people or middle class educated leaders. The church was built by simple ordinary people with supernatural empowerment.

(Acts 4:13) Peter and John were uneducated and untrained of cause according to the religious customs & standards because Jesus had trained them, and He was satisfied with their progress after 3 and half years. When we therefore speak about training, we have to investigate further as to clarify training in what? It's evident that "the Jesus training" was not accredited by the Sanhedrin. There is a place for the supernatural in our training. And many at times in the absence of the supernatural people tend to shop for the natural only.

The great businesspeople go on the deacons' board and people with names in the world and certain credentials become church leaders. Sooner or later, old time religion becomes show time religion, and "well done good faithful servant" will be replaced with "well done my skilful and successful leader.

There is no perfect church governance system. Every situation demands a response in that response a system is put in place. In the book of Acts we see the beginning of church governance. There was problem with food distribution and a system was developed so it took time. The early church mimicked the Jewish governance system because it was rooted in a Jewish society. **Governance doesn't do the work but help the saints do the work**. Ephesians 4:12 says "saints do the work of ministry".

DEACONS

Can be men or women and they serve the practical needs of the church e.g. finance, security, music, charity, maintenance. Both practical and spiritual qualities are essential. Deacons also work as teams.

Pastors and teachers can settle in one place, but prophets, apostles and evangelists were always on the move. In the early church the prophet would stay 2-3 days and move on. Apostles move as soon as the church is established, and they plant another one. They break virgin territories. Paul was an Apostle and did not stay to supervise the churches he had planted.

# APOSTLES

Evangelists also are always on the move, going out and coming in bringing all kinds of people for the pastor and teacher to build them up and present them mature in Christ.
There are five kinds of Apostles in the bible. Let's look at some definitions first. Apostle is **Apostelein** in Greek meaning to send. An apostle is the sent one. In Latin its translated **Mittere** meaning missionary or missile. A Ballistic missile sent on a mission.

FIVE KINDS OF APOSTLES

1)**Jesus** is the first and chief Apostle - sent one. No Apostle ever worked alone therefore he chose 12 students in order to also send them after training as Apostles.

2)**The 12 Apostles** directly sent by Jesus. The primary witnesses of the resurrection. They knew Jesus before and after he rose.

*Acts 1:21-22 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men* ***who have been with us the whole time*** *the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning* from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

3) **Apostle Paul**

He acknowledged the 12 and he was the 13th. His Apostleship was unique and he wrote scripture. No apostle today can write scripture. These first 3 kinds of Apostles are no longer around.

4)**The church planter**

The church of Corinth had their own Apostles and sent them out to preach. Any church can send out Apostles, they are not self-appointed. They are uniquely gifted to plant new churches. The disciples had to both declare and demonstrate the kingdom.

5) **Epaphroditus**

He was sent by the church to be Paul's housekeeper while in prison and Paul calls him Apostle. Though the main use of the word apostle today is church planter, any Christian sent by the church from A to B to do the work of the Lord were apostles.
This was possible because the New Testament believers were not title conscious but service conscious.

# ELDERS

There is one man who had three titles applied to him: Episcopus, Presbyters and Deaconus and surprisingly its Judas Iscariot. You have to read Acts 1 in the original Greek language to see it.
Leadership of a local church is never one man in the New Testament. If you are a one-man leader, the church you lead will be a clear reflection of your strengths and also your weaknesses.

A synagogue was led by a group of elders not elderly but ahead spiritually. Elders shared responsibility. All leaders were generally called elders.
The name bishop has transitioned and now has a different meaning. Today when church planters plant a church, they sit over it and change their title from Apostle to Bishop. Oversight is always local in the New Testament church and it's not personal but family.

We should not build a hierarchy organisation or a pyramid. Episkopus/Bishop is a local function in the New Testament. There were many bishops at one church, nowadays a bishop has many churches under him. The Roman empire was arranged in a pyramid or hierarchy of power and the church later absorbed that system into its operations.
Any church arranged in a pyramid is vulnerable to attack because the enemy only needs to hit the top head.
**Episcopos (bishop)** means oversight or overseer. The other name for **Episcopos** is **Presbyters** which simply means elder. Therefore:
**Episcopos = Bishop = Elder**

Elders are always plural not one. They supervise the spiritual needs and direction of the church and that includes discipline. One man cannot discipline the church that is why many one man led churches are full of indiscipline.
A church first needs elders and deacons. There may be teaching elders and also pastoring elders.

*1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.*

# MY TESTIMONY 6

Sydney Kuvarega

*Christians should not merely be counted, but, more importantly, they should be evaluated. God Himself possesses a special instrument that weighs the hearts and motives of individuals. (Proverbs 16:2).*

*I recall an incident from years ago when someone joined our fellowship and announced to the congregation that they had completed a three-week course in prophetic ministry, received certification, and now intended to sell their spiritual gift to us. However, we did not entertain their offer. Instead, we encouraged the person to sit, learn from Jesus, and submit to His process.*

*It became apparent that sitting and learning proved to be a challenge for this individual, and before we knew it, they departed from the fellowship of believers. This reminds me of the story in Luke 9:57, where someone volunteered to follow Jesus wherever He went. In response, Jesus explained, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." The volunteer lost interest, yet in the next verse, Jesus chose another person who was going about his business and invited him to follow Him.*

*God has made us capable ministers of the new covenant; it is He who has equipped us (2 Cor 3:6). We did not come with any inherent ability. He transformed His disciples into fishers of men. As we grow in our faith, certain things are naturally drawn to the person we are becoming.*

# THE WHAT AND HOW

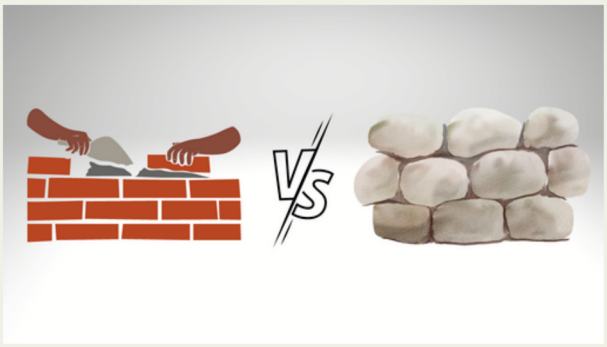
At first elders are chosen by the church planter. Don't lay your hands quickly or appoint people that are not proven. Paul instructed the appointment of elders at least one year after planting the church.

**Hebrews 13:17** talks about submission, which is translated "be persuaded" by those who lead you or give way to their leadership. Discipline is one of the marks of a New Testament church. Timothy was instructed to rebuke, correct and instruct those out of alignment.

Qualifications for elders: family life, not greedy for money, mature, good report from outsiders, one wife. Discipline both in the home and church is the job of man. Fathers set the standard for children of cause with the full support of the wife. God is interested not only in the what but also the How. For example:
**WHO** : Worship God
**HOW** : In Spirit and truth.
**WHAT** : Receive Salvation
**HOW** : Believe with your heart in the Lordship of Jesus and confess with your mouth.
I have developed a habit of questioning people who claim to be born again, how they got born again and the answers I got were shocking.

As the church we are not called to be successful but faithful witnesses. Our aspirations should therefore never be to achieve great things for God but rather to walk worthy of our calling.

BRICKS VS STONES




Bricks are man-made and showcases the creativity of man while stones are readily available without man's effort. Storms test the strength of the foundation and fire testes what sort of building material was used.

In **Genesis 11:3-4** The builders used brick instead or in the place of stones - **substitution**. They also wanted to make a name for themselves, **(get all the credit)**

Their attempt was to take God out of the picture from the idea, methods, implementation all the way to the result.

# THE WHAT AND HOW

The church is a people called by God's name. Built on rock and Jesus is the chief corner stone not brick. We are not sufficient in ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. We do not supply material but coordinate the material that Jesus the master builder has specified and provided.

If we seek worldly success, we will also align ourselves and rely on worldly methods of marketing and fund raising. David showed us an example of how the Father builds. He envisioned building a temple, but the project only commenced when Solomon took over since David was now of age.

David left enough raw materials, resources including the design and all specifications. He also made a provision of human resource. Solomon's responsibility was to coordinate what his father made available and follow the given design.
In **2 Chronicles 7:1-2** The Shekinah glory which filled the temple was God's confirmation that his pattern was kept, and his design was followed.
Our God is a God of specifics and absolutes. In His design there is no room for other things to find expression.

He declares that no flesh should glory in His presence. He gave specific instructions to Noah, e.g. the type of materials, the position of the windows and doors, the dimensions etc. To Moses, he showed Him the design of the tabernacle and he had to reproduce it on earth following His design.

## HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

Are churches trying too hard to be relevant and attract people inside? We are witnessing time and time again across the globe as some churches are turning to the marketing industry to help them draw people rather than rely on the gospel which is God's power unto salvation.
Jesus did not say if people reject the gospel try entertainment or drama, but He said go to the next town. Already it is inevitable that our message won't be accepted everywhere. Jesus never said try a different message.

# SUSTAINABILITY AND SUCCESSION

In an attempt to be relevant, entertainment begins to take centre stage while God's word occupies the back seat if not the luggage compartment. We end up replacing an army of soldiers with a band of entertainers and motivational speakers to pacify our audience into feeling good.
The strength of the early church lied in their weakness (weakness according to the world's perspective) and their relevance was in their irrelevance. They were misfits.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The church is not run by state donations. It must support its own activities and get its resources be it finances, from its people. We worship God with our everything, that's sacrificial living and its different from making contributions.
It's interesting to note that there is a lot of discussion in the New Testament about money as compared to prayer and faith combined. We are not taxed but instructed to give regularly, sacrificially, proportionally, cheerfully (voluntary) eager, generously. God does not want anything from you unless you want to give it. Under the old covenant, the average Jew gave 25% of their income therefore remember that before you emphasize tithe, which is 10%.

We go more in detail in the module titled: **Kingdom Giving.**
It's a shame and gross misrepresentation of Christ and His church to see believers begging for donations from state institutions to finance church programs. They'll give you and yet at the same time that act is enough reason for them to never be part of the church.

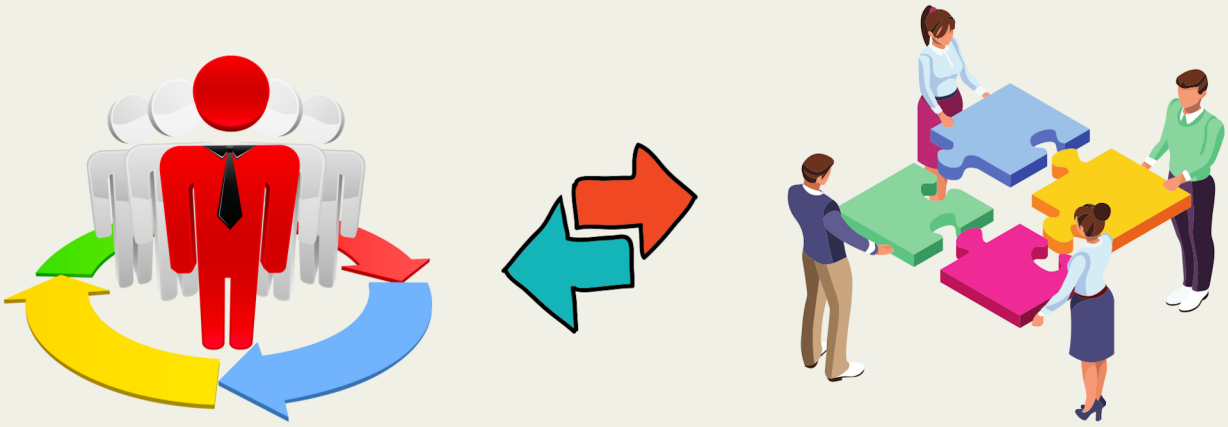
Whoever sponsors you from outside normally will also with that sponsorship give you direction and a message. Only the church can sponsor its own message and activities with no strings attached. Asking God to bless our activities without asking Him first what our activities should be is not smart.

## SUCCESSION

Right now, the biggest charismatic circles will experience the first leadership transition from the founders.

# TRANSITION

Most of the churches were formed before we were born but now we are witnessing the formation of church. How ready is the church for the transition?



The church has to move from a person to the family and have systematic decision making. Transition goes beyond a person handing over power, there is also a ministry concept transition. Founders must know that what was required to found the church may not be the same as what's required to settle it and make it grow therefore they must transition.

# TRAINING

God's grace abounds in our weaknesses and you realize that at the beginning of the church God picked untrained people and used them mightily, therefore where there were absent in knowledge, they may have a word of knowledge or prophecy while still being ignorant of many other dimensions.

We therefore mistakenly assume training is not necessary and this is how it should be for all generations not knowing it's God's compensation for a lack that a person has and at a certain point we have to regularize training for the next generation. The training must be rigorous because if you can give a doctor shady training, the patients will suffer. A pastor for example handles human life therefore giving shabby training is endangering lives.

It is on this premise that God inspired us to pen this material to capture our convictions, experiences, failures and triumphs making it easy to bring others onboard and also allow others to build on it by the leading of the Spirit. We hope this material answers to some degree who we are, what we do and why we do it in the Household of Faith.

**Raising a succeeding generation is different from founding a generation**. Many founding fathers started very small when there were not many churches, and they grew into things. Those who are starting today are starting big on what others have built and this is what necessitates training. Taking over something already established requires training. Formalized training is a way of shortening the learning curve.

Call is invitation and its different from service. Jesus called his disciples to be with Him and be discipled (training). They did not start fishing immediately. He said, "I will make you fishers of men".

Many people today are not seeking for training but just endorsements. The impartation of Elisha was not the jacket but the years of instruction, yet many are busy looking for jackets. There are people making serious efforts to try and recapture a certain ethos that was developed at a time of the founding of certain dimensions but with time they only find themselves unable to respond to the new challenges in their generation.

The questions that the founders asked may not be the same that succeeding generations will ask.

# TRAINING

It is important to note that the church in Acts was in infancy stage and it was growing into maturity, but we cannot keep the church in a babyhood stage all because of the expertise of people whom the Lord used to establish it. There are people that God used to birth very big things, but those things cannot be sustained by what gave birth to them. As much as God used you to start something, your idea is not the beginning and end. Others can help expand beyond what you have started. Building churches and running them with a personal ministry philosophy is not wise.

People with shallow training are easily swayed by anything. Many people today for example, they develop their theology as they preach therefore there is little to no reflection hence, we see a lot of sloganeering preaching with no application. Slogans are not divine statements no matter how exciting they sound.
A theology that is only based on experiences is simply a glorified Sunday school and very dangerous. The early church was devoted to the Apostle's doctrine not Peter's doctrine. If we continue to praise the personal above the corporate, then all our efforts will be one generational.

There are people who are called but not formed. Formation comes after calling, when one subjects himself to proper training and discipline. Every called person must allow themselves to be trained so that their deficiencies are addressed, and they come out competent. Jesus did not only teach doctrine to the disciples but also help them to form character, how to treat people.

The capacity of the church and demands overtime are good grounds to consider if a person wants to go full-time. Paul wasn't always tent making at all levels of church growth. Imagine when a child is born, there is celebration and jubilation and it's a good thing.

Let say for example an illiterate mother conceive and give birth to bouncing baby girl. She can train her child certain things like standing, walking eating but at a certain age when the child needs help with school homework, she cannot help.

# TRAINING

At that point even though she gave birth to the child, the child has become bigger than her in that space, not in everything, therefore the child has to be introduced to someone else for the homework.

The child will grow more away from the mother. We err if we insist that because we gave birth to it, we must train it at every level and this hurts development. The church is bigger than any person privileged to participate in its establishment, growth and expansion. What was required to give birth is not the same with what's needed to mature it. The same people used as vessels and instruments in the birthing and the establishment of a church can become a hindrance to its growth and maturity.

## BEYOND THE JORDAN

***Deuteronomy 3:27-28*** *Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But command Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.'*

Moses was able to articulate God's intention to the Israelites and usher them out of captivity, journeying with them through the wilderness yet still as mightily used of God as he was, he could not take them into the promised land. Joshua who by the way was trained by Moses, was the one to take them in. When God made this known to Moses that he was not going beyond the Jordan, he never protested but prepared for the transition by strengthening and encouraging Joshua, that's a leader. You crossed the red sea but do not go beyond the Jordan.

# EVANGELISM

The church did not start as a mass gathering. Remember that Judaism had already taken roots and synagogues had been built when the church was established. When the Apostles tried to preach in the synagogues, they were thrown out hence they had to meet in homes.
When we gather as brethren, we do so to be encouraged, empowered, trained and equipped for the work of ministry *(Ephesians 4:12)* which overflows from our love for God and starts in the homes, into our immediate community, work and places of work. In Paul's farewell the elders from the church at Ephesus, he instructed Timothy to do the work of an evangelist *(2 Tim 4:5)*

The gospel we preach is disruptive in nature. It demands that people change their ways for God's ways. Its not suggestive but absolute which is why when Jesus spoke, the religious people of His time perceived Him as offensive and insulting. We represent God and his interests wherever we are. Paul and Silas were in prison chained yet free to worship and bear the witness of Christ to the prison guard and his family. He said God's word cannot be chained. *(2 Tim 2:9)*

The world knows its corrupt and full of wickedness therefore there is an expectation for the church to be different. The world must see what heaven is like by our lifestyle, conduct, attitude, response to situations and most importantly how we treat each other. Conduct is the first language which all unbelievers understand. They shall know that you we are the disciples of Christ by our love for one another *(John 13:35).* If you do not love one another who would want to be part of you? This is beyond preaching.

*Further reading on conduct : 1 Peter 2:11-12, COL 4:5-6, PHL 1:27*

We need to close the gap between what we believe and what we live. Our lifestyle reflects our alignment and the gap between what we claim to believe and what we live needs to be closed.

We must align ourselves precisely with the character of the one we proclaim, Jesus Christ. There must be a balance between sharing the message and application of truth. We cannot learn more than what has been taught or revealed to us. We also cannot expect of others what we are unwilling to give or do.

# EVANGELISM

Nobody got saved unless they heard the truth of the gospel, therefore if we don't evangelize our communities they will evangelize us. Jesus was called a friend of sinners because he had a way of contacting the world and still not be contaminated but rather be an influence.

The nature and mandate of the church requires that it grows both in depth and length of coverage.
Growth must occur but it will not be the same for everyone. The early Apostles were Jewish therefore the furthest the Jerusalem church could go was the Jewish community or people that were sympathetic to Jews like Cornelius. Paul by God's grace could appeal to non-Jews. The vehicle that carries the gospel might not appeal to certain demographics therefore equip yourself to go beyond your culture and most importantly equip others who are native to those demographics to be an influence there.

Nobody can reach everybody, and no church can by one approach reach all the people they are supposed to. Online, family relationships, crusades etc are all different approaches. It is possible to be so committed at preaching the right message and yet so ineffective because the people reached, and the approach used are not in harmony. We go in depth with this matter in the module: **Blessed To Be A Blessing.**

# WORSHIP & MISSION

The gospel that has not impacted me cannot impact others through me. How is that we expect greater response to what we say when we ourselves are unresponsive to the same message. Pastor, your people will not evangelize unless they see someone do it.

As the church, we are the flock of God but fishers of men. When you find fishers in the church, don't load them with any other responsibility but send them out fishing.
Every new Christian is a good evangelist normally for the first 3 years of their Christian life because they still have a lot of access into their former circles. Mathew brought many fellow tax collectors to Jesus. Unfortunately, the longer we are in Christianity the more we model ourselves with other Christians.

The best prayers for example, are the ones we made when we were new believers, unscripted, not much jargon but heartfelt. Put together 10% seasoned evangelists with all new believers and let them go fish. Don't wait for anything for believers to fish.
New believers make great evangelists because they talk in a real way, theology can happen later.

## WORSHIP

Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church. The essence of the cross was the glory of God.
Mission is not all about the lost, unsaved and unreached but all about God's kingdom and the destination is the glory of God.

> **Mission exists because worship doesn't.**
>
> Jonathan Edwards.

The New Testament worship is corporate because we are a family.

Corporate worship must be corporate.

# WORSHIP & MISSION

It's not proper therefore to say to people who have gathered in one accord "if you want to sit, dance, lie down just do as you please", That's dividing the people, it's not corporate. A good worship leader leads people to do things together, sing, clap, dance and pray together. We come together not to do personal things but corporate things. Most of the songs we sing were written in personal devotion therefore they are full of "I", and how I feel about God not "we". Here are some essential ingredients of worship which can be done is so many ways:

Adoration
Thanksgiving
Confessions
Petitions
Dedication

Worship is not only singing, but also a dialogue. There are good song leaders who are not worshipers. If all you can do is sing that makes you a singer not a worshiper. Many at times when people come into a gathering, they take some time to settle in and aren't ready to worship. In Jesus's time they would start with the word and end with worship. Therefore, after hearing what God has to say, our worship comes as a response or reply. Don't just send people home, **allow them to respond to the word.**

# Chapter 6 Questions & Reflections

We love to hear your feedback and submissions
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**01** How does the emphasis on natural qualifications, such as education and professional experience, affect the leadership and governance of the church?

**02** How can the church effectively pass on its message and mission to the next generation?

**03** How does the lack of title consciousness and emphasis on service consciousness affect leadership and governance in the church?

**04** How can we align our personal response to the gospel with sharing it with others?

**05** How can church leaders effectively manage and plan for leadership transitions, to ensure the continued growth and success of the church?

CHAPTER 7

# THE SHAPE & SIZE OF A CHURCH

# THE SHAPE AND SIZE OF A CHURCH

**Ephesians 4** speaks of what we now know as the fivefold ministry. Often people who do not fall within these five spheres consider themselves as not ministers. The fivefold ministries are not exclusive or above other believers in Christ but rather given to the saints for training in the same ministries and multiplying those ministries in the church.
Apostles - help the church to be apostolic.
Prophets - are there to make the church prophetic.
Evangelists - help others become evangelistic and reach out to the world around them and so does pastors and teachers.

*2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses,* ***commit unto faithful men able to teach.***

Paul was already looking at impacting three generations.

*Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers,....."*

Teachers are students first, but they grow to a level of exchanging ideas. There is a phase in the relationship where the student is only receiving and as they grow, they become upgraded in their knowledge and understanding so as to deliberate and also share ideas.

Paul co-wrote some of his letters with his perceived children in the Lord. It's good to continue relating with the one who mentored and fathered your understanding but no longer spending the same amount of time as before otherwise its either the student is not learning, or the teacher is not teaching well. You cannot be in an endless classroom.

Jesus instructed His disciples in Mathew 28 to teach others to obey what he taught and commanded them. Make disciples who make disciples. You can only discover your ministerial assignment by observing and following those who are fulfilling the same assignment.
We will go in depth on this, in our discipleship module as we talk about The Priesthood of all believers: check it out.

SIZE

Question: Is it possible to be too small or too big to be a New Testament church?

# THE SHAPE AND SIZE OF CHURCH

The size of a gathering will directly impact the priesthood of all believers. We must build congregational life and that is ideal for the development of gifts. Church is where you give and receive ministry. The bigger the gathering size, the fewer gifts and participation needed. Much time and resources are spent in organizing the logistics of that gathering and putting order hence event organizing becomes the work of ministry.

There can only be one preacher at a time therefore size can create spectators and not ministers, passengers and not participants. Generally speaking an average person can know about 200 people by name, but professionals can do more. Generally speaking, this means above 200, a church gathering may easily become an anonymous gathering. Kindly note that when it comes to numbers, we are not definite, but you get the idea.

Every Christian need 3 levels of fellowship to balance.
A CELL, CONGREGATION & A CELEBRATION

<u>CELL</u>

Anything up to about 20 people is acceptable depending on the congregational size and the available meeting space.

A cell is too small to have all the gifts in it considering the 9 mentioned in Corinthians and an additional 9 totalling 18. Therefore, you will need 18 people each with one gift to be a balanced church because the gifts are not concentrated on one person.
In any case all gifts are available in the body but not necessarily in your congregation therefore being open to the bigger body of Christ helps with cross pollination etc. The ideal shape is a circle for people to be able to see each other. It's usually in a cell that people discover and develop their gifts.

Interactive discussions, question and answers are all possible. It is easy to notice when someone is not in attendance.
A cell is led from among the people. When a cell goes beyond 20 people it's advisable to divide. Growth comes by division and multiplication.

# THREE LEVELS OF FELLOWSHIP

CONGREGATION
THE LOCAL CHURCH.

Recommended shape of a gathering is half a circle. It's vital for people to be able to see each other's faces. Back of heads is not an ideal shape and sitting plan. A congregation is led from the centre. We must build congregation life. This is the local church. A local church has to be local such that believers can also meet each other during the week and near each other to be able to meet outside programs and do life together. **We need constant contact with other believers in places where we work and live.**

The further you are from a congregational gathering, the more imbalanced your giving and receiving of ministry will be. You will tend to lean on one side. Either you will receive more and give less, or you'll give more and receive less as in the case of a travelling preacher. All epistles were written to local churches or assemblies, and not for freelance distribution. Gathering together with other believers also serves as a proof of your faith. In (I Cor 1:9-10) Paul pleads with the brethren to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, judgement or discernment and speaking the same thing.

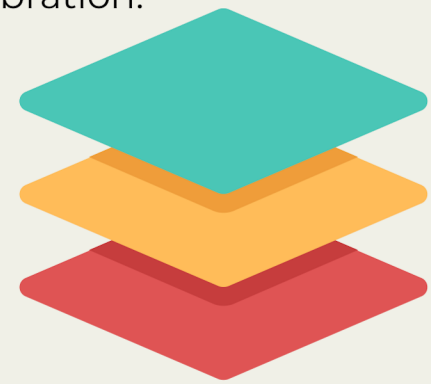
Anywhere human beings gather misunderstandings are bound to happen. There are answers and solutions built in the church.
(1 COR 6:1-6) Paul expected the church to solve grievances between brethren and further said it's an utter failure to go before the courts to seek justice from the unrighteous. Going to court means the church has failed. Paul was introduced to a company of believers after he got born again. 1 COR 1:11 the next thing for everyone that received Christ is to identify with local brethren for fellowship. It is said if you find a perfect church, please don't join it because you will spoil it.

God wants all people not only to be saved but also to come to the knowledge of the truth, that is spiritual maturity. After salvation, what you feed on is of utmost importance. The local church is the assembly of brethren in Christ where the believer fellowships, serves and is taught and trained. A church where Christ is the diet, is a centre of truth and fertile ground to grow. A local church is where one can be edified and also be productive. 1 Tim 3:15

*(Further reading on spiritual growth. 2 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18)*

# THREE LEVELS OF FELLOWSHIP

Serve and be of service. **(1 COR 7:7)** Each person has a proper gift and no gift is improper.
**Math 28:19** Make disciples of all nations....." This means disciples will differ in location, race, language and culture. There will be different assemblies of believers in many locations. The disciples of Jesus Christ, when they entered a city, they first looked for a local person with a home in that locality and partner with him/her. Some people want to stay in their social level therefore we ought to plant a church among them and let them be light in that environment rather than try to pull them out. Render unto them all the necessary support and to be the church in that community and from time to time cross pollinate with other believers in a bigger celebration.



Existing churches may be confined to one or two layers of society and yet there are many other people groups that are not being touched by any church.

There is a danger in allowing our perceptions to shape our realities. When we think that our own trends are the norm and that our experiences are the means to measure the norm we err. Be open to the body. Many people live in their own confined experiences and statistics believing that's the norm everywhere and not realizing that we are worlds apart from reality.
Look outside your frame of reference and see the bigger picture of what God is doing across the globe beyond the boundaries of your ministry, culture, race and nation. **We need churches not only in different geographical areas but also social levels.**

We do not need branches but organic local autonomous churches free to follow God and be functional in their context without struggling to measure up with a certain standard. Your church is public but needs requirements as to who gets accepted into fellowship. It's not enough for someone to just attend a gathering. Nobody can be part of the New Testament church if they are not born again. Pastors of different local churches should have regular contact with each other and spare themselves from all the butterfly Christians.

# A CELEBRATION

CELEBRATION

A mass gathering up to any size. As you get bigger the leadership should be stronger. Needs to be led from the front by few people.
This is a large anonymous inspiration gathering and requires seasoned and developed ministers. The platform is not open to learners, it's not a training ground. It needs to be led by mature gifts from the front. Most churches are organised as a one big celebration with little cell groups whose only purpose is to serve as recruiting points to grow the celebration.

A cell group or relational congregation can react sympathetically to someone struggling to preach because they know him well therefore, they encourage the person to continue but a large crowd will be highly critical.
Celebrations are good from time to time for inspiration, updates, testimonies and discovering opportunities to serve the body of Christ in other places but it cannot be your default regular meeting. For example, this could be when Paul or Peter comes to a city, all the churches in that vicinity gather in a big celebration. A celebration cannot practice *(1 Cor 14:26) W*henever (frequency) you come together each of you has a psalm, teaching or a song.

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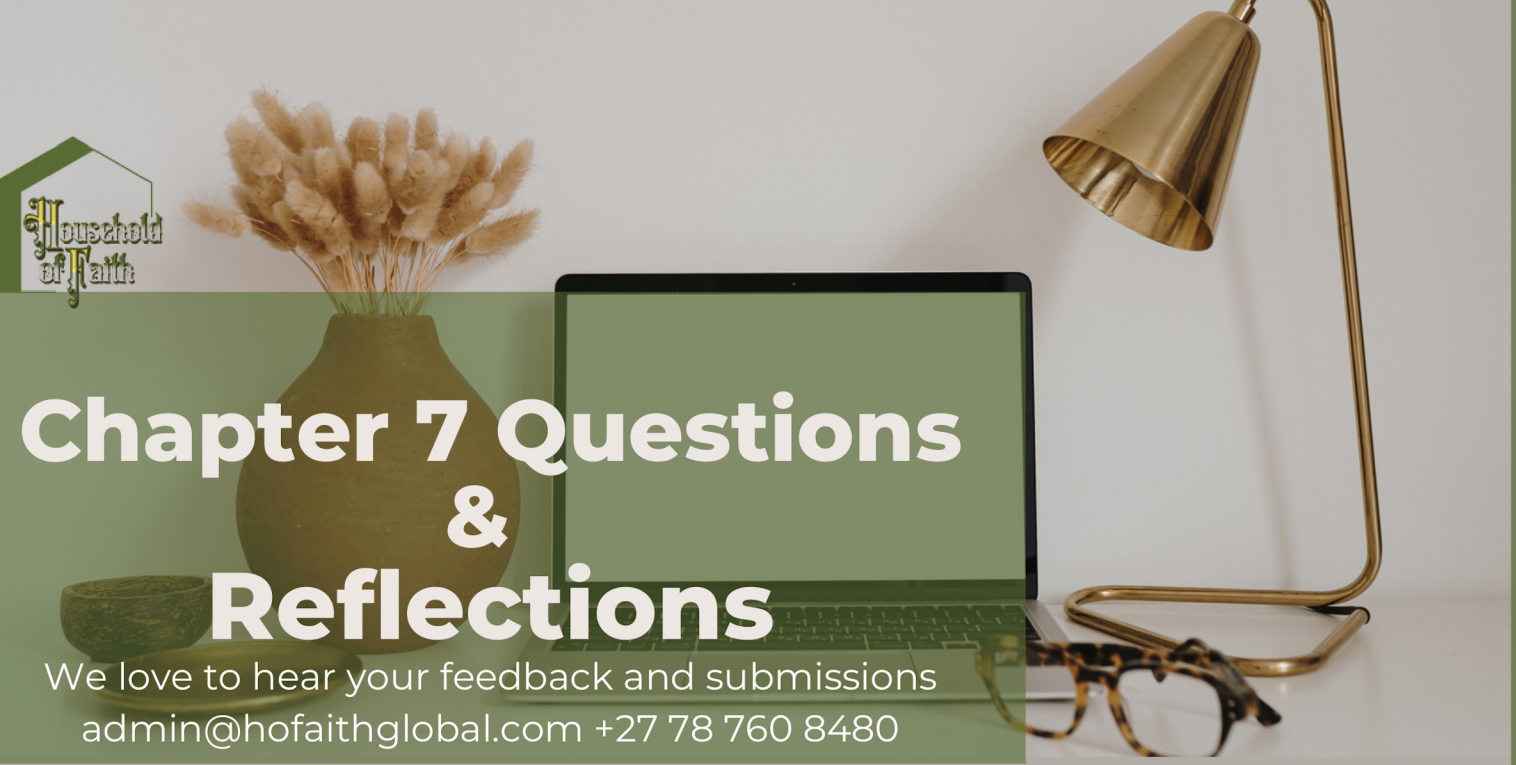

# Chapter 7 Questions & Reflections

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**01** How can the church help its people to discover their ministerial assignment?

**02** Why is it important for Christian fellowship to have different levels of fellowship?

**03** How does gathering size impact participation & the development of gifts in congregational life?

**04** How does serving and being of service in a local church aid in spiritual growth?

**05** How should a church balance the benefits of large anonymous inspiration gatherings with the importance of small, relational congregations?

# THE ASSIGNMENT

*Sydney Kuvarega*

My name is Sydney Kuvarega. I am a husband to one wife, and together we are blessed with two girls and one boy: Emmanuel, Michelle, and Joy. I have embraced the love of God for me, which was expressed and demonstrated through the person of Christ Jesus. Therefore, with that same love, I also love God's people. But enough about me, let's discuss why this material was compiled.

As a survivor of misguided zeal and lifeless religion, I heard the Spirit of God whispering in my heart to trace back the ancient paths which I followed in my escape and re-establish the landmarks and signposts that have been covered with the debris of religion and tradition. This way, it becomes easier for those who are still trapped to navigate and find their way out. The assignment given is to awaken, train, equip, and support shepherds (pastors & leaders) of small flocks in small towns, townships, villages, farms and wherever they are found, who may think they are too small, insignificant, and under-resourced to be a church because they measure themselves against certain standards of what is generally acceptable.

We want our brothers and sisters in Christ in all these places to know that they are also accepted in the beloved and are members together with us in the household of faith—the church of Jesus Christ and also release them from unnecessary pressure.

**Who wants to join us on this faith adventure?**

God said to me, "No excuses, all things are ready therefore go to the streets, the highways, and the hedges. Bring in the poor, blind, and crippled, and let my house be filled, for nothing that I have prepared will be wasted. On this faith adventure, what comforts our hearts is knowing that He walks with us. This is our blessing, the adventures of faith that few dare to enjoy. The dawn of a new season, walking with God into the unknown (unknown to us but foreknown by God), means encountering dimensions of His faithfulness that we've never seen before.

# THE CONCLUSION

*Jeremiah 9:23* *Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgement and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight says the Lord.*

*Jeremiah 6:16* *Thus says the Lord: "Stand in the ways and see, Ask for the ancient paths where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said,' We will not walk in it.'*

To those who are tired of chasing shadows, misguided zeal, lifeless and empty religion that shifts goal posts every time so that you keep chasing and are never at rest and those who seek to align themselves with the simplicity in Christ and be the church in your community, kindly reach out for further information.

We are also available to serve the body of Christ in any part of the globe, if you desire to have your people trained and equipped for the work of ministry.

**Related Materials**

*Weaned From Placeholders
*Blessed To Be A Blessing
*Kingdom Culture
*The Essence of People
*Kingship & Priesthood
*The Simplicity in Christ
*One God
*The Local Church


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