

The Muscles and the Flesh, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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INTRODUCTION

My life is the church. I don't have a nine-to-five job; my job never ends. A minister of the Lord Jesus Christ never stops working. As believers, none of us stop working. Every waking moment of my life has to do with God's Kingdom, work, people, and Word. Those things totally saturate my life.

A. The Accountability Stated

I've been called to a unique calling. I understand that, and with gratitude express my appreciation to God. Although there's a tremendous joy and wonderful privilege involved in ministering, there's also a serious and weighty responsibility. I'm often reminded of different heart-searching passages in Scripture related to the responsibility I have. James 3:1 says, "My brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment." James is saying, "Don't be in a hurry to be in a position of spiritual responsibility, unless you are ready to deal with the consequence of failure." Hebrews 13:17 says that spiritual leaders "watch for your souls, as they that must give account. . . ." Spiritual leaders are accountable to the Lord for the people that they lead. There is serious accountability in pastoring and shepherding the church of Jesus Christ. Even though there is great joy and blessedness derived from shepherding, there is also a lingering sense of the immense seriousness involved in leading a church.

B. The Accountability Specified

First Corinthians 4 gives us a perspective of the accountability involved in ministry. Paul shared with the Corinthians in that chapter about his place in the ministry.

1. THE REQUIREMENTS

a. Being a Servant Paul says in verse 1, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers [Gk. *huperetes*=`underrower, or the lowest of slaves'] of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." In other words, he was saying, "When the time comes to evaluate us, let it be said that we were servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." The "mysteries of God" are those great truths that God imparted to Paul in the New Testament, and a steward is someone that manages something owned by someone else. Paul wanted to be thought of as a slave of Christ, and a steward that aptly managed the truths of God. b. Being Faithful Verse 2 continues, "Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Paul wanted to be a faithful slave of Christ. He wanted to handle what God gave him in a trustworthy way. He was faithful to God's call. c. Being Objective Paul says in verse 3, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self." Paul wasn't concerned about other people's opinions of him. He wasn't even concerned about his own opinion of himself. The reason he wasn't concerned was because nobody really knew his heart. He knew that he didn't know his own heart, either, because his sinfulness made him blind to some of his weaknesses. The Corinthians couldn't judge Paul, and he couldn't judge himself. Paul adds in verse 4, "For I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord." Paul was aware that even if he couldn't find a flagrant sin in his life, that didn't justify him. He knew that only the Lord could judge him. That's serious!

2. THE RESTATEMENT

Summed up, Paul says, "I'm in the ministry, and let it be said that I was a slave of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God. I'm not concerned about the judgment of men because men don't

know my heart. I'm not concerned about trying to evaluate myself because I am biased and don't know all about myself. The One that judges me is the Lord. " Everyone that serves Christ will be judged by the Lord. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive judgment for the things we've done, whether they were good or useless. Paul says in verse 5, "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. . . ." The real issue in serving Christ is what's in your heart. God won't judge you based on your cleverness or how dynamic a leader you were. God is going to evaluate your heart. Other people can't see your heart, and even you aren't always able to know your own heart. When God makes "manifest the counsels of the hearts. . . then shall every man have praise of God" (v. 5b). So, I confess to you that ministering to the church carries with it a great amount of seriousness for me. I am under double condemnation for my failures, as well as all others that minister and teach the Word. I must give an account to God for how I have shepherded and fed the flock. Ultimately, I will be judged by the Lord Himself. I don't want to live under the illusion that I can be satisfied with kind evaluations from men or positive self-evaluation. I'm sharing with you from my heart the burdens that I bear--that everyone that serves Christ bears. I need you to bear that load with me.

Review

We've been talking about what God wants to see in His church. It is important that we understand that these things are not optional. We've been using Paul's analogy of a body, and looking at the church in a topical way. The church, like a body, can be divided into four elements: the skeleton, the internal systems, the muscles, and the flesh.

I. THE SKELETON

II. THE INTERNAL SYSTEMS

III. THE MUSCLES

The muscles represent the functions of the church. Once we understand our foundation and have the right spiritual attitudes, then we need to know what to do. We need to know the functions of the church--how it ministers and operates. Let's review the functions we've already studied:

A. Preaching and Teaching

In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul instructed Timothy, "Preach the word. . . ." In that same verse, Paul also said, ". . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Preaching and teaching are basic functions of the church.

B. Evangelism and Missions

Christ mandated that we "go. . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). Paul said, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. . . ." (2 Cor. 5:11a). In other words, because we know the impending doom on the ungodly, we are to go out and warn them. We're called to evangelism and missions.

C. Worshiping

We are to be worshipers, both individually and corporately. We are to worship in the heart: ". . . we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). We are to be true worshipers that "worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). We are the temple of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 3:16); God dwells within the praises of His redeemed people (Ps. 22:3). We worship not only individually, but collectively. Hebrews 10:22 tells us to draw near to God with a pure heart.

D. Praying

The church is to be functioning in prayer. That is a priority. When Paul described the armor of the believer in Ephesians 6:10- 17, notice that he ended in verse 18 with the words, "Praying always. . . ." Prayer is the ultimate weapon of the believer. Even with the armor that I have available to me, I am still utterly dependent on God in prayer. When I have all of my armor on and the sword of the Spirit in my hand, I still need to pray. No matter what I may know or who I am, I cannot function

independently of God, who is my power source. I must be praying always.

In the early church, the Apostles said, "... we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Ac. 6:4). Prayer is mentioned first because it's a priority. We must always be fused with God. If we aren't plugged into God, then we are operating in the flesh, and the flesh can't do anything good. Paul emphasized to Timothy the priority of prayer when explaining how to set the church in order: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). He also said, "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands. . ." (v. 8a).

Now let's look at some other functions of the church. The next one I'd like to talk about is. . .

E. Discipling

1. THE DEFINITION

In Matthew 28:19-20, our Lord said, "Go therefore and make disciples [Gk. *matheteusate*=`make learners, or make disciples'] of all the nations, baptizing them. . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. . ." (NASB). Discipling, then, is bringing people to Christ and leading them to maturity in Christ. Jesus was involved in discipling. In Matthew 27:57, we read that Joseph of Arimathea was discipled by Him. That's a wonderful thought.

2. THE DESCRIPTION

a. Introduced In Acts 1:1, Luke wrote, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." He said that the book of Luke is about what Jesus began to do, and that the book of Acts is about carrying on Jesus' work. Christ discipled the Twelve, and in the book of Acts, we see them working with others. Two thousand years later, you and I are carrying on the work Jesus began. Jesus gave the baton to the Apostles. They passed the baton on to others, and others have passed it on to us. We are to continue that succession: "... the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Every Christian is in a relay race. Each of us is to take the baton, then hand it on to others. None of us are in a solo effort. We're all in a flow of ministry. Somebody invested the gospel in us, and we are to invest it in others--we are to be discipling others. You say, "I don't know much." Find someone that knows less than you do, and tell him what you know. Find someone that knows more than you do, and listen to him. Teach and be taught. I pour my heart into the people I disciple, and I learn from others. All of us have to be in that flow. We're not to be isolated; we're a chain all linked together. b. Illustrated In 1 Corinthians 4 are some verses that give us a wonderful, indirect insight into the discipling process. Paul was writing a letter of rebuke to the Corinthian church, which he himself brought into existence by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit. He was rebuking them because they had departed from the basics of the faith and were involved in sinful things. He wanted to correct them. In verses 14-15, Paul wrote, "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors [Gk. *paidagogos*=`moral guardians that give spiritual advice'] in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." He said that because the Corinthians were wondering what gave him the right to rebuke them. Paul explained why: He was their spiritual father. He brought their church into existence. That brings us to the first element of discipleship: 1) Evangelism You can't have discipleship without having evangelism. If you don't evangelize, then you won't have anyone to disciple. You have to have someone to disciple before you can build someone up. The best way to begin discipling is to lead someone to Jesus Christ. When you do that, there will be a special link between you and the person you witnessed to. You may have strong links with other new believers, but there's something special about the link between a believer and the person that he brought to Christ. The new believer will have a sense of indebtedness, responsibility, and love toward you. It will be easier for you to say sensitive things to someone you've led to Christ that you would hesitate to say to others. A new believer will have a special bond with you if you were God's agent that brought him to Christ. Now, all of us have

probably disciplined someone that another person led to Christ. That is wonderful, too. We need to keep doing that. Discipleship begins with evangelism. The next element required in discipleship is. . . 2) Love In 1 Corinthians 4:14, Paul called the Corinthians, "... my beloved sons..." Discipleship is to be done with an attitude of love. Now, love is not an emotion; it's a commitment of self-sacrificing humble service to a person with a need. Discipleship needs to take place in an environment of love. You need to be able to say, "I'll give my life and time for you. I'll pray for you and give you my insights." If you don't care about a person and are not willing to make sacrifices for him, then the discipling process will not reach its richest potential. The third element I'd like to point out is. . . 3) Admonishment Paul told the Corinthians in verse 14, "... I warn you." The Greek word there is noutheteo, which means "to admonish," or "to warn people to change their behavior so that God won't chasten them." Discipling is corrective. It starts with bringing someone to Christ; it exists in an aura of love, and it's marked by warning. It's just like raising a child. You have to warn your children what to stay away from. You can't just give children positive instruction; they need negative instruction, too. Paul said to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, "Therefore, watch, and remember, that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Ac. 20:31). He knew the importance of admonishment. Someone asked me, "How important is a ministry of warning?" I told him that it was essential. When we're discipling someone, we've got to be able to tell people what to do and what not to do. That's a part of discipling. The most important element in discipleship is. . . 4) Guidance Paul said in verse 16, "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me." The person you are discipling is to follow your example. You say, "That's where I bail out! You mean I have to tell someone to be like me?" That's right. You have to be further along the path of spiritual development than the person you're discipling. You have to be able to provide leadership. Our Lord isn't asking for perfection; it's direction He wants you to provide. He wants you to lead the person you are discipling in the right direction. Your imperfection will reinforce how important it is to follow your example. I wouldn't be able to follow a perfect person; that would be too difficult. It's the imperfections of a person that help me understand the path that I'm supposed to walk. Discipling requires for you to be an example. Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). You need to tell the person you are discipling, "I want you to follow me the way I'm following Christ." You don't say it proudly; you say it humbly, understanding your own weakness. Another element of discipleship is. . . 5) Teaching Paul mentioned another element of discipleship in 1 Corinthians 4:17: "For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." Paul sent Timothy to teach the Corinthians. In discipleship, there has to be an imparting of divine truth. People function on truth. So, discipleship involves bringing a person to Christ, building a relationship of sacrificial love with him, admonishing him to change his behavior if it's going to bring God's chastening (or forfeiture of blessing), setting a model that he can follow, and filling him with the truth of God. That's why Paul talked to the Corinthians the way he did. In fact, he told them that if they didn't change their behavior, he would come to them with a rod (v. 21a). If they did change their behavior, then he would come to them in a spirit of love and meekness (v. 21b). Paul was raising spiritual children. At Grace Church, we're committed to those principles of discipleship. They are the heart of our church.

3. THE DEDICATION

Jesus said that when a man is fully disciplined, he "shall be as his teacher" (Lk. 6:40). We are to reproduce ourselves. One of the characteristics of life is reproduction. Life that doesn't reproduce isn't life; it's death. You're to pour yourself into other people, whether it be your spouse, your children, a friend, a person you led to Christ, or a class you teach. You're to invest your life in another person, and be accountable to him. If someone is asks you, "Show me how I'm to live," then make sure your life is right so that you'll be the example you should be. Accountability is good. First John 2:6 says, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

Our model is Christ, and we're to nurture people along in their walk with Christ. We're committed to that at Grace Church. Discipling is a function that everyone must be involved in. It isn't optional. We're all to bring people to the knowledge of the Savior and go through the process of developing them. We're all to disciple people that the Lord brings across our path. You will probably have different kinds of relationships with the people you disciple, but discipleship is nothing more than building a true friendship with a spiritual basis. It's not being friends with someone because you both like baseball, the same music, the same hobbies, or work at the same place. You're not friends because of a superficial thing; you're friends because at the core of your friendship is an openness about spiritual issues. That's what carries a discipling relationship along.

4. THE DESTINATION

When you disciple someone, you're basically teaching him to live a godly life-style. You're teaching him biblical responses. A person is spiritually mature when his involuntary responses are godly. That's how to know if the Spirit of God has control in someone's life. In discipleship, you're to bring a person to the point where he doesn't have to figure out how to act right, but where he can react right spontaneously. Another function that the church has to be involved in is. . .

F. **Shepherding**

1. THE APPLICATION OF SHEPHERDING STRESSED

Everybody in a church has to care for one another. We must be involved in mutually caring for one another and meeting needs. Three times Jesus asked Peter, ". . . lovest thou Me? . . ." (Jn. 21:15-17). Peter responded every time, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." Jesus said, "Then feed My sheep." He was saying, "You're a shepherd, Peter. Take care of My people." Shepherding involves feeding and leading the flock. First Peter says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it. . ." (5:2a). Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God. . . ." We are all to care for one another. First John 3:17 says, ". . . whosoever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassions from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" How can you say you love God if you don't care about people? You have to be involved in the shepherding process. Each of you interacts with other people, and you've got to find out about other people's hurts and needs. If you've got enough food on your plate to feed others that don't have any food, then share it. If you have insight that a wandering person needs, share it with him and lead him back. Everyone is to be in the shepherding process. First Peter 5:4 calls the Lord "the chief Shepherd." The implication there is that we're His undershepherds. We're all involved in caring for the sheep.

2. THE AVAILABILITY IN SHEPHERDING SUSTAINED

Sometimes it's hard to shepherd people. Some people that have needs escape the notice of others or are overlooked. It always breaks my heart when someone tells me, "I was sick, and no one called me. No one cared." Sometimes I get letters from distraught people that say, "Such-and-such happened and you didn't call us. You didn't care. No one from the church helped us." My heart aches when I hear that. Sometimes people's expectations are too high; I can't be everywhere at one time. But most of the time people are overlooked because no one makes himself available when a need arises. For example, when someone has a death in his family, everybody immediately swarms around that person to comfort and support him. But after the funeral, when the real depression hits, that person is left alone. We lose our sensitive touch when it's most needed.

3. THE ACTIVITY OF SHEPHERDING STUDIED

We need to be the kind of shepherd that Jesus is. In John 10, He said, ". . . I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the good shepherd. . ." (vv. 7b, 11a). Jesus was speaking of the way a shepherd cares for his sheep. When the sheep went into the fold at the end of a day, the shepherd would examine each one as it passed under the rod that he held across the entrance to the fold. If he found any bruises or scratches, he poured oil on them. That's what David was referring to in Psalm

23 when he said, ". . . Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. . . . Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (vv. 4b, 5b). The shepherd is to care for his sheep. That's his responsibility.

4. THE ACCOUNTABILITY IN SHEPHERDING SHARED

There are some wonderful, quiet people in our church that don't get shepherded because they're quiet about their needs. There are other people that are always living in sin and they've got shepherds hovering around them all the time trying to help them. Sometimes we have committee meetings where eight elders will get together to figure out how to shepherd someone. For example, there was one man that was unfaithful to his wife. We approached him several times about it, but he kept going back to his sin. We wondered, "What are we to do with him?" We prayerfully took the situation to God, because we didn't know what to do. We still shepherd him, even though he doesn't want it. In the midst of that, there are quiet people in our congregation that have needs that aren't known about. That's why it's important for all of us to see ourselves as sheep and shepherds caring for one another. Church leaders can't be expected to handle all the shepherding needs themselves. We are accountable before God to care for one another. Grace Church is not my church; it's everyone's church. It's Christ's church. The Lord has made everyone at Grace Church the stewards of His church. Shepherding involves mutual caring, meeting needs, and making sure we're all living right spiritually. The first thing I did when I starting pastoring at Grace Church was develop a way that we could shepherd people. I knew we could feed them; I just wanted to make sure we could lead them because a shepherd feeds the flock and leads it to Christlikeness. Another function of the church is. . .

G. Building Up Families

1. THE PERSECUTION BY SATAN

I believe that God uses the family as a unit for passing righteousness on from one generation to the next. That is made clear in Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25, where God ordains the family as the basic unit to preserve righteousness in the world and pass on His truths from generation to generation. However, Satan attacks whatever God has ordained to preserve righteousness. Basically, Satan has attacked three things: the government, the church, and the family. Wherever God has ordained a government that punishes evildoers and does good to those that are right, Satan will assail it. Wherever there is a church that exalts Christ and proclaims the Word, he will attack. Satan doesn't want families to pass on righteousness; therefore, he tries to disintegrate them. The three basic units of preservation in society are the government, the church, and the family. People say, "Do you think there is a conspiracy to ruin our government?" Yes, there is. Our society is going downward. Why? Because most of the people in our society are godless, and that makes them pawns that Satan can use to make our government system collapse. Some people say, "Do you think Satan is attacking the church?" Yes, he is. Some churches have become very liberal. The National Council of Churches has just published a "nonsexist" Bible. For example, in that Bible, they changed the phrase "the Son of God" to "the child of God. " They have absolutely no concern about whether or not the Holy Spirit called Jesus "the Son of God. " That attacks the church. Satan is using the immoral, lust-filled society we live in to attack the family. He has made it hard for the family to survive. The church has to preserve the family. We're committed to that as a function at Grace Church; we teach and disciple children and young people. I get thrilled when I see men in our church discipling sixth-grade boys one on one. It's beautiful to see the adults of our church working with the younger people, because the younger people are responsible for preserving what they learn and giving it to the next generation. I want our young people to know what God's standards are for marriage and the family. I'm grateful that we have counselors, family ministries, a family center, and other things that work toward the preservation and building of godly families in our church.

2. THE PRESERVATION BY THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:18 says, ". . . be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. "

Paul was talking about religious drunkenness: The cultists of his day thought that they could ascend

to communion with their deities if they got drunk enough. They were like some peoples of the Orient who get high on drugs to commune with their gods. In their drunken stupor, they had lustful orgies with temple prostitutes, and they thought they were communing with their gods. But Paul said, "If you want to communicate with God, you can't do it through drunkenness. You have to be filled with the Spirit of God. That's how you commune with the living God. When people are filled with the Spirit of God, they submit to one another. In a family situation, that means that wives will submit to their husbands, and husbands will submit to their wives by loving them with a nourishing, cherishing, and purifying love. Children will submit to their parents, and parents will submit to the needs of their children by not provoking them to wrath but by nurturing them and bringing them up in the ways of Christ. Submission flows from Spirit-filled lives. The church is to make sure that families are controlled by the Spirit of God so they can experience blessedness from everyone's submission to one another. If everyone in a family is fighting for their own rights, then any possibility of meaningful relationships is destroyed. The families of a church should uphold each other. They should help each other with their children; they should pray for each other's children. What is your reaction when you see unruly children? Do you pray for them? Do you help other parents by teaching their children proper behavior? A church must care for its families. That is one of its functions. The next function I want to look at is. . .

H. Training

The church is to equip people for a ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ."

At Grace Church, we're trying to train people for ministry. That's our desire. We don't only want to teach spiritual truths; we want to train people to use what they learn. For example, by teaching a course in evangelism, people can take all the Bible verses they know and learn how to use them to present the gospel to unbelievers. That kind of course gives people a new zeal, because then they know how to witness. If someone feels in his heart that God is calling him to become a missionary, we don't send him out somewhere right away. We spend a few years training him so that when he does go out, he will be maximally equipped. The church has to be constantly equipping people for ministry.

We have courses in our church for training people to eventually become deacons and elders. We have courses in evangelism, missions, and youth work. We have seminary courses on our campus and a Bible institute to train young people for ministry. We don't just want to give people general information; we want to prepare them for a specific ministry.

Children need to be trained so that they know how to be good parents and spouses. They need to know how to be good leaders. People need to be developed. They need to be trained so that they are useful. Training is essential; that's what equipping the saints is all about. Allow yourself to be trained for a ministry that is consistent with your giftedness.

Another function of the church is. . .

I. Giving

1. THE PRINCIPLE EXPLAINED

How committed are you to giving? The Macedonians gave abundantly out of their deep poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Giving has nothing to do with how much you have. People say, "If I had more, I would give more." That's not true, because giving is not a matter of how much you have; it's a matter of your heart. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:6, "He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." If you give a little, you will get a little back. If you give abundantly, you will receive much back. God returns to you the interest on whatever you give. It's like investing with God. Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. . ." (Lk. 6:38a). God wants you to know that you can trust Him with your money. It's the reverse of what He's doing to you: He gives you money

and asks you, "Can I trust you with this money?" You must prove that He can trust you with the money He gives you by giving it back to Him. How well do you manage God's possessions? The best lesson you'll ever learn about stewardship is that you don't own anything. Everything you have belongs to God. The only reason you have anything is because you are to manage those possessions--you're to prove whether you are a worthy steward. If you can't manage what God has given you, then He won't give you "the true riches," according to Luke 16:11. You've got to learn that the things you have don't belong to you. When you trust them to God, you become free. Then all you have to do is manage those things. If you own something that someone else needs more than you do, then give it to him. That's the spirit of Acts 2:44-45: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

2. THE PRACTICE EXAMINED

a. Giving Meagerly Some people don't give at all. Other people give little token amounts. I don't know why. The church doesn't really need their money. But the people that don't give miss the opportunity to be obedient and receive multiplied blessings. Some people give a little. They'll throw a couple of dollars in the offering plate each Sunday. Usually those that give minimally do so because they're spending their money on earthly possessions. That's sad. I grieve for them. I want people to give generously so that they will be able to experience God's blessings. Don't just throw God tokens. When King David wanted to buy a threshing floor from someone so that he could build an altar on it to the Lord, the threshing floor was offered to David for free. But in 2 Samuel 24:24 he said, "Nay, but I will surely buy it. . . at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. . . ." It would have been mockery to take the threshing floor for free. b. Giving Properly How committed are we to giving? One man told me about a church that's one-half the size of Grace Church, yet it gets twice the money Grace Church does in its offerings. He asked me, "Why is that?" I said, "I don't know. If they're giving for the wrong motives or if they are giving legalistically, then they won't experience God's blessing. Their offerings are meaningless. But if they're giving abundantly from their hearts, then that's great!" I don't know what the answer to that situation is, but I do know this: There are many people in Grace Church that aren't doing what they should do every week. 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him. . . ." I have had to struggle with that before because there have been times when I haven't given. Giving is a function of the church. We are to give not just to support our own churches, but to support God's work in the world. The ministry of a church should include a goal of advancing God's Kingdom. The money a church receives should be invested in God's work in the world. Churches aren't supposed to try to amass a fortune. We are to be good stewards of the money God gives us for our own use, and use the rest of the money God gives us to train other people and reach others with the gospel. God gave, didn't He? Christ gave. How can God's people in Christ's church not give? The last function I'd like to look at is. . .

J. Fellowship

Fellowship is essential. Fellowship means "a common life together." In a way, it sums up the other functions we've talked about. Fellowshiping involves being together, loving each other, sharing life with each other, and communing together. Fellowshiping includes listening to someone that has a burden, praying with someone that has a need, visiting someone in a hospital, sitting in a class or a Bible study, and even singing a hymn with someone you've never met. Fellowshiping also involves new Christians sharing their joy and people sharing prayer requests. It's having everything in common.

Do you fellowship? Do you open your life to others? Do you share your problems with others that have problems so that you can minister together? Be committed to fellowshiping!

The essential functions of the church are preaching, teaching, evangelism, missions, worshiping, praying, discipling, shepherding, building up families, training, giving, and fellowshiping. Are you

involved in shepherding? Are you praying? Are you discipling someone? Are you helping build up the families in your church? Are you being trained for a ministry or training others? Are you giving? I ask myself those questions and say, "Lord, am I doing what You want me to do?" I want to be sensitive to the Spirit of God as He encourages me to be more faithful in everything. I want to use up all my energy for God. I don't want to go to heaven full of energy. Henry Martyn, a nineteenth-century missionary to India and Persia, said, "Let me burn out for God; I just want to go when I'm spent. " I want to do my best in all that God wants me to do. There are so many Christians that get involved in superficial things; they don't make any major investment in the functions of the church. Consequently, they have no sense of accomplishment. Eventually, God will hold them accountable for how they used their time.

So, we've talked about the skeleton, the internal systems, and the muscles. Let's talk now about. . .

IV. THE FLESH

It's not important what the flesh of a church is like. Using the body analogy, when a man looks at a church, he looks at what's on the outside; God looks at what's in the heart (1 Sam. 16:7b). It's what's in a church's heart that makes a church. It's important that a church have a skeleton: It must be committed to high view of God, the absolute priority of Scripture, doctrinal clarity, personal holiness, and spiritual authority. A church must have internal systems; it must have certain spiritual attitudes present in it. A church must be committed to certain functions. But when a church has all those things, it doesn't really matter what it looks like on the outside or how its programs take shape. When God, by His wonderful grace, first brought me to Grace Church, I said, "God, I know that if we are what You want us to be, there will be no trouble ministering effectively. " It's what's in our hearts that's important, not what we are on the outside. Sometimes after pastors visit Grace Church, they try to implement the flesh of our church in their churches. But it won't work, because the flesh can't stand without a skeleton, and it can't live without the internal systems. Once a church has a skeleton, internal systems, and muscles, then the flesh will take form. The true beauty of a church comes from its insides. The flesh takes its form after all the things on the inside are right.

Life Centers on the Church

I believe that God has called Grace Church into existence and made it a unique place. Almost every Sunday at the reception we have for first-time visitors I meet people from other states. Recently we had people from Michigan and Florida here. A typical conversation will go like this: The visitors will say, "We're from Michigan. " I say, "How nice! Are you visiting here?" They'll say, "No, we moved here. " I'll ask them why, and they'll say, "To come to this church. " Then they'll say, "Do you know where we might be able to find a place to stay until we get a house and a job?" We've had people just pack up and move to come to Grace Church! Sometimes they'll have children, too. Why do they do that? One good response I've heard is, "We believe that life centers on the church, not the job. " That gives me a lump in my throat, and makes me realize the tremendous accountability we have before God to be the church He wants us to be. We want to be His church built His way for His glory.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Explain the three requirements of a servant detailed in 1 Corinthians 4:1-4.
2. On what basis is God going to judge what kind of servant you were? (1 Cor. 4:5)
3. Define discipling. (Mt. 28:19-20)
4. Explain what Paul was saying in 2 Timothy 2:2.
5. What are the five elements of the discipling process?
6. What is the best way to begin discipling someone?
7. Describe the nature of the relationship between a new Christian and the person that led him to Christ. What is one advantage of that special relationship?
8. What attitude must you have when you are discipling someone? Define that attitude.

9. What does it mean to admonish someone?
10. What do you need to be able to provide for the person you are discipling? Will your imperfections have a negative effect on your ability to do that? Explain.
11. What do you need to tell the person that you are discipling? How are you to communicate that? (1 Cor. 1:11)
12. In discipleship, there has to be an imparting of _____.
13. Discipleship is nothing more than building a true _____ with a _____ basis.
14. What are you basically doing when you disciple someone?
15. What does shepherding involve? What does the fact that the Lord is called "the chief Shepherd" imply (1 Pet. 5:4)?
16. What is the most common reason that a person's need is overlooked?
17. Who are responsible for shepherding the flock?
18. What did God ordain for the family to do, according to Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25?
19. What is Satan using to attack the family? Who is to preserve the family?
20. What kind of life does submission flow from? What does a family that practices submission experience? What is destroyed when there is no submission?
21. What must a church equip people for? Why do people need to be developed?
22. Explain what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 9:6. What must we prove to God? How?
23. What is the best lesson a person can learn about stewardship? Explain.
24. What do the people that don't give miss out on?
25. What does 1 Corinthians 16:2 tell us about giving?
26. What does fellowship mean? Give some examples of fellowship.
27. Does it matter what form the flesh of a church takes? Explain.

Pondering the Principles

1. Look over the five elements of discipleship mentioned on pages 5-7. Take each element listed, and discuss what would happen to a discipling relationship if that element were missing.
2. Are you involved in the shepherding process at your church? In the past month, how available have you been to the people in your Bible study or Sunday school group? Get the phone numbers and addresses of the other people that are in your Bible study or Sunday school group. Keep contact with those people frequently enough so that if a need arises, you or others will be able to take care of it immediately.
3. Are you involved in preserving the families at your church? What can you do right now to minister to them? How can you help the children of your church grow up to be godly men and women? What kind of example are you for them? Whenever you are with any of the children at your church, remember that you are responsible for helping them pass on righteousness to the following generation.
4. What is your attitude about giving? Why? Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. How should you not give? How should you give? What is your motive for giving? Ask God to help you give unselfishly with the desire to advance God's Kingdom in the world.

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