



Sound Doctrine: Applying Core Beliefs to Everyday Life

Ecclesiology: The Church in 3D

“...On this rock will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
Matthew 16:18b

Introduction:

- Systematic theology formulates an orderly, rational, coherent account of the doctrines of the Christian faith—what the Bible as a whole teaches about various topics.
- A systematic approach to Christian doctrine first appears in 2nd-century baptismal confessions that later formed a basis for the Apostle’s and Nicene Creeds. Major works of systematic theology were produced throughout the Reformation, e.g., John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.
- Doctrines ultimately point us to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. “Understood rightly and framed within the entire storyline of the Bible, the Gospel is a perfect and beautiful whole...Every part contributes to and is inseparable from the whole” (*Give Me Doctrine or Give Me Death!* Greg Gilbert, 2010).
- Today we continue our summer series: “Sound Doctrine: Applying Core Beliefs to Everyday Life” as we address 3 D’s of the church (Ecclesiology).

The Church *Defined*, the Church *Described*, and the Church *Dynamic*

1. The Church *Defined*

- The word “church” is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.”
- The church is not building, a place, a meeting, rather the church is a **people** who by grace have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8)
- The church is a people who are forgiven (Col. 1:14) declared righteous (Rom. 5:1, 8:1) and who are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).
- The church is a people who have received “every spiritual blessing” (Eph. 1:3-14)
- The church is a people who are chosen for the greatest position and purpose possible (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

- The church is a people who have been called by Jesus, are being changed by Jesus, and are committed to the mission of Jesus (Matt. 4:19).
- The church was born on the day of Pentecost (A.D. 30) as a fulfillment of Jesus' promise (Acts 2:4).
- The church's founder, builder, and head, is Jesus Christ himself (Matt. 16:13-18; 1 Cor. 10:3-4; Col. 1:18)
- The church is led by pastors/elders/overseer who shepherd the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-2), teach sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 2 Tim. 4:2), direct the affairs of the church (1 Tim. 5:17), protect the church from false teaching (Act 28:28-32; Titus 1:9-11), pray for the sick equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-16), and deacons who serve in practical ways (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- In unity (John 17:20-23), the church imitates God (Eph. 5) and serves as an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).
- Church practices, as outlined in the New Testament, included believer's baptism (Acts 2:38; Matt. 28:19) a devotion to the apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (Act 2:42).
- The church is considered in two senses: **universal**—all believers (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25) **and local**—believers meeting in one locality (e.g., Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2)
- The church is the organism through which God accomplishes his mission in the world. It is the main agent for all ministry of the Word, including the ministry of discipleship and counseling.

2. The Church *Described*

Metaphors in Scripture:

- Flock of Sheep (John 10:1-15; Acts 20:28)
- Branches Connected to the Vine (John 15:1-10)
- God's Building (1 Cor. 3:9)
- Dwelling of God (1 Cor. 3:16)
- Pillar and Support of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15)
- A Kingdom (Rev. 1:6)
- Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23)
- Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-27)
- God's Household / Family (1 Tim 3:15; Eph. 2:19)

3. The Church *Dynamic*

Dynamic (def.): marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change; energetic, forceful; of or relating to physical force or energy; a force that stimulates change or progress

- We WORSHIP (Prov. 9:10; Psa. 95:6, 100:4-5; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 1:18)

- We NURTURE (Col 2:6-8, 3:16; Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Pet. 3:18)
- We DISCIPLINE (Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:11)
- We EVANGELIZE (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Pet. 3:9)
- We are committed MUTUAL CARE (spiritual gifts, “one anothers”)
- One Anothers: Love one another (John 13:34-35), be devoted and give preference to one another (Rom. 12:10), admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11), comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18), serve one another (1 Pet. 4:10), be patient with one another “forebear” (Eph. 4:2), confess your sins to one another and pray for one another (Jas. 5:16), forgive one another (Col 3:13), bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), exhort one another (Heb. 10:25), teach one another (Eph. 5:19)...
- *Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Heb. 10:24-25)*
- *Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27)*

Application Questions:

1. How would you define *the church*?
2. A friend is moving out of town and asks you, “What should I look for in a church?” How would you answer?
3. What are the harder parts of being in a church family? What steps will you take to more fully and faithfully engage God’s people for God’s purposes here at Christ’s Church?
4. Who will you reach out to this week to encourage in the faith? How and when will you reach out?

Recommended Resources:

Expository Listening by Ken Ramey

How to Walk Into Church by Tony Payne

Life in the Father’s House by Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely

The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church by Dustin Bengé

Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever

The Master’s Plan for the Church by John MacArthur

31 Ways to Be a One Another Christian by Stuart Scott

