

THE LIFE OF A CHURCH

Matthew 16:18 “And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Intro: The church that Jesus build during His earthly ministry is a living, breathing, organism. The local, visible church is called the body of Christ because it is alive and has functioning parts. Paul, speaking to the church at Corinth, says: “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?” (1 Cor. 12:14-15).

What is it that is essential to the life of a church? The Bible tells us that a church can think itself to be alive, and yet be dead! Revelation 3:1: “And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead.” Some churches, like Sardis, do not even know that they are dead!

What is the life of a church? Is it buildings and programs? The Word of God tells us that a living church is a church with the right message and the right mission.

The life of a church is found in its:

I. CONFESSION

- A. What is it that a living church confesses? A true church confesses the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God.
- B. The living church preaches the Gospel of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4: “How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”)
- C. A living church believes and declares:
 1. The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus: “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son...” (Isa. 7:14).
 2. The sinless life of the Savior (1 Cor. 5:21).
 3. The bodily resurrection- Rom. 1:4: “Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead.”
 4. Salvation by grace- Eph. 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye save through faith...”
 5. A regenerate church membership- Act 2:41: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.”
 6. Baptism in deep water.

II. COMMISSION

- A. The Commission given to the church is found in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost..." This was given before the day of Pentecost to an already existing church.
- B. If a church is not missionary at home and abroad, it will become stuck and stagnant. We must not be merely functioning as an institution; we must be thriving as an organism.
- C. Missions must be the heartbeat of the church. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

III. CONGREGATION

- A. A church is a body (Congregation) of baptized believers who are covenanted together to carry out the Great Commission.
- B. A living church is a church that takes the gifts and callings of God seriously.
 - 1. The church is to allow each congregational member, in good standing, to practice their gifts and use their talents in a decent and thoughtful way (Romans 12:6-10).
 - 2. If you do not use your talents, they will diminish and be lost.
- C. The Lord equips and edifies the church through its ministers and teachers (Ephesians 4:11-12). The church is the chief place to grow spiritually and be built up in the faith.
- D. The worship of the church congregation, assembled together, is important to spiritual fellowship (Heb. 10:23-25).

IV. COMMITMENT

- A. A living church is a church that is committed to its God given mission.
- B. A living church keeps its love for the Lord aflame: not cold or lukewarm (Rev. 3:15-16). It stays committed to its first love (Rev. 2:4-5).
- C. The church of today is not what it should be because the things of this world have captured the hearts of God's people. We are admonished to: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world..."
- D. There must be a commitment to the protection and the

proclamation of divine truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

V. COMPASSION

- A. “Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). That’s compassion.
- B. We are to be compassionate toward a lost world.
 - 1. Our cities are being ravaged by the sin of this present age, and we need to have compassion (Matt. 23:37).
 - 2. The fields are white unto harvest, and we must go out and bring in the sheaves (Psalm 126:5-6: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy...”)
 - 3. There are those who are headed into the fire, and we need to have compassion on them. “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire...” (Jude 1:22-23a).

Conclusion: Do we want to be a living organism or a dead organization?

- Living organisms breath- prayer is the breath of the church. Our church will only be as strong and alive as the prayers of you the members.
- Living organisms must be fed- are you feeding on the Word of God?
- Living organisms eliminate waste- if we do not eliminate that which is not good it will poison the body. “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
- Living organisms reproduce. We can not have a us four and no more attitude. To stay alive, we must grow.
- What kind of church do we want to be? Dead or alive?

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