

# **Being A Christian** Class 7

## **The Family Trade** *The Nature of the Church*

**Review:** *The pattern of the Christian life can be seen as one of repentant faith. Until Christ returns there will be forces, both internally and externally, that seek to draw us away from God's love (the world, the flesh, and the devil). Thus, we need to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and hear His call for us to return home when we go astray. As we watch and wait for Christ's return, God has given us means of grace (the word, sacraments, fellowship, prayer, and service) to cultivate our faith by abiding in Him, so that we may resist evil and live fruitful lives for the good of others and God's glory.*

*Anglican spirituality is said to be incarnational as it refuses to separate the secular from the sacred, the head from the heart, the Protestant from the Catholic, the word from the sacrament, and the Church gathered from the Church sent. The Bible drives all truly Christian spirituality, and our heritage has historically used the Prayer Book as a means to help us grow in living into the Story and keeping in step with the Holy Spirit.*

**Define "Church" in your own words. What is the Church's mission?**

**Whiteboard Church:** *The whole Church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world ~ Lausanne Covenant from ICWE 1974*

What did you think of the video? Was there anything missing that you would have liked to see included in describing the Church?

**Proclaiming, Serving, & Striving:** *Good News, Love, & Service*

*Bishop* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

*People* I will, with God's help.

How would you explain what the Good News of God in Christ using the fewest words possible? What do you think is meant by an "example" of the Good News - what would this look like?

...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect... *1 Peter 3:15*

How would you respond if someone asked you “for a reason for the hope that is in you” and what difference it makes in your life?

*Bishop* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

*People* I will, with God's help.

What do you think is meant by “Christ in all persons” when not everyone are Christians? What does including the word “seek” imply about serving and loving others?

*Bishop* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

*People* I will, with God's help.

What might this type of striving look like in your life today? Would Adolf Hitler be included in “every” human being – why or why not?

**Vocation and Spiritual Gifts:** *Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

What does vocation mean and how is it related to this passage in Matthew? According to this passage in 1 Corinthians, who receives spiritual gifts and for what purpose?

***Where Do You Feel Called to Serve?***

*Affinity* – what pulls on my heart when I look around the church, the community, and the world?

*Ability* – what strengths do I have and what weaknesses?

*Opportunity* – what do others see in me and what opportunities are available?

## **Week 7 Review - The Family Trade: The Nature & Mission of the Church**

- The Bible describes the Church as sheep in Christ's flock, citizens of God's kingdom, brothers & sisters in God's family, stones in God's living temple, branches of Jesus' vine, and members of God's body (John 10:14-16; Ep. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; John 15:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:27).
- The Church then is the people whom have placed their hope and trust in the finished work of Jesus, and now serve him as Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit. Buildings can help facilitate this service, but the Church is not real estate.
- As members of the Church belong to one another, because we all belong to Jesus. Thus our bonds of fellowship are intended to transcend a mere weekly gathering. They have the potential for a deeper affinity and affection than we have with even our own families of origin.
- The "one holy catholic and apostolic Church" we profess in the creed speaks of the invisible Church. It transcends denominations and time, and consists of those who are in a right relationship with the Father, in the Son, through the Spirit. The visible Church is the faithful gathering of Christians today across all denominational lines. The word "catholic" means universal.
- The Church Gathered represents the people of God coming together to worship, to offer themselves again in service to Jesus, and to receive grace and the empowering of the Spirit. They offer a "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" so they may live their lives rightly in loving service and gratitude.
- The Church Sent represents that the Church consists of "the called out ones." Our gatherings for worship are intended to equip us to live lives of worship and service outside of the walls of the church building (if indeed they meet in a building). *Matt. 28:16-20; John 13:34-35; Matt. 5:13-16*
- There are various short hands for the gospel...The Good News of God in Christ; We're so selfish (sinful) that Jesus had to die for us and yet we're so loved that he willing went to the cross; God's Kingdom is here in Jesus; Jesus in our place (*Jesus stood in our place on the cross so that we can stand in his place before the Father*); Jesus is Lord (*if Jesus is truly our Savior then it goes without saying that we'll follow him as Lord - this was the earliest shorthand for the gospel*); Jesus (*his life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension*).
- We proclaim the gospel in example when we reflect Jesus in our lives like the moon reflects the sun's light. We're neither the gospel nor the light. It is Christ's light reflecting, or better radiating out of us through His Spirit, whom we receive through faith in Jesus. Examples: when we forgive others rather than condemn, extend grace and mercy in place of judgment, bless others rather than curse, put the needs of others before ourselves, etc.
- It is important that we think through how we would share the gospel with others and how it's made, and continues to make, a difference in our lives. One way to do so is to write a spiritual autobiography. Another is to prepare in advance how you might share the gospel and your experience in a brief snippet. We should always be praying for natural opportunities to share the gospel with others.
- We seek to serve Christ in all persons and to love our neighbor as our self. God's overarching plan is to restore all things to their original goodness before sin entered the world. Humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, was always intended to be Christlike. It is only through Jesus and the Holy Spirit that humanity can live into their overarching purpose. We must be intentional in loving others, especially those we find unlovable. Jesus said we are to love our enemies too, but we do so only in and through his love (*Matt.5:43-48; 1 John 4:17-19*).
- Because the gospel represents the beginning of the restoration of all things through Jesus' resurrection, we see God's ongoing concern for his creation even in its fallen state. As a result we strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. There are countless ways to engage this work, such as avoiding the divisiveness that our culture perpetuates while seeking instead to actively care for the marginalized in our communities and the world. We also seek to be responsible in stewarding our resources and caring for the physical world itself, not exalting it to a godlike status, but rather treating it as the gift it is so that future generations may also enjoy it.
- Even the literal villains and perpetrators of evil are included in those we are called to respect. This does not mean that we support their tyrannical and wicked ways, but rather we respect that they were created with eternal worth and dignity and Christ died for them. Thus we commend them to prayer.
- Vocation is one way God works in the world and he does so through us. Vocation in the Christian sense is more than what you do for a living. It encompasses all stations, roles, or offices we fill i.e. father, son, husband, pastor, friend etc. How we live in these roles is a way we not only honor god, but bless others, and point to Christ. Vocation in this sense, with the various roles, is the mission field where God has placed us. We are called to do everything as if doing it for Jesus and in this way we end up being salt (*seasoning and preservative*) and light (*Col. 3:23; Matt. 5:13-16*) in our homes, community, and world.
- All Christians have been given spiritual gifts for the common good of the Church. All people have natural talents and skills; spiritual gifts may reinforce these, or they may be something supernatural, but their purpose is always to build up the Church so it can more fully engage the mission.

## Theological Terms in Simple Language

**Church:** the followers of Jesus who gather for worship and are sent into the world to love and serve in his name.

**Mission:** summed up in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) - the Church goes into the world to share God's love for sinners in Jesus, inviting people to respond through baptism and discipleship.

**Outreach:** summed up in the Great Commandment (Mk. 12:29-31; John 13:34-35) - all the ways the Church and her members reach out with God's love in their neighborhoods, communities, and the world.

**Ministry:** simply means service. All Christians are ministers which means the greatest branch of ministry takes place amongst those not in official or formal roles. We are called to serve in the local congregation, the home, and the larger community / world.

**Evangelism:** is the explicit sharing of the good news of Jesus with others

**Vocation:** consists of the various roles that make up our life, not just our career i.e. daughter, sister, student, team member etc. Our vocation is our immediate mission field where we called to share God's love and reflect Christ's light

**Spiritual Gifts:** special empowerment from the Holy Spirit that are used to build up the Church not the individual. The various gifts in the Bible are found in Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12-8-10, 28; Ep. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:11)

## Material Covered

### *Christian Basics* ~ Chapter 10

- Review notes looking up Scripture passages
- Prepare Spiritual Autobiography
- Pray for the Holy Spirit's influence, guidance, and power