

# Biblical Ministry

## 1. What is The Nature of The Church?

### The Varied Descriptions of the Church

In a context dealing with the purpose and ministry of the church in the world, Peter addresses his readers as: (1) living stones who were being built up for a spiritual house, (2) a holy and royal priesthood, (3) a people belonging only to God, and (4) aliens and strangers ([1 Pet. 2:5, 9, 11](#)). These are similes of identification which call attention to who and what the people of God are, but there is another purpose as well. Peter also wants us to reflect on what the people of God ought to be doing. We are to be engaged in building up this spiritual house, offering worship of God, proclaiming God to a world lost in darkness, and seeking holiness.

Throughout the New Testament, the writers employed numerous descriptive terms to call our attention to the nature and identity of the church. The church is likened to salt, light, sheep, a bride, a spiritual temple, a household, members of Christ's body, branches in the vine, athletes, soldiers, and heavenly lights. Its people are called children of God, adopted sons, priests, servants, bondslaves, stewards, and partners with Christ, just to name a few. One author estimates that there are over eighty images or figures of the church.

The nature of the church is far too broad to be exhausted in the meaning of the one word *ekklesia*. . . . This richness of description precludes a narrow concept of the church and warns against magnification of one aspect to the disregard of others.

### Why so many Descriptions

We might well ask the question, why such a variety of descriptions? Notice that most of these pictures imply action and ministry. They describe the character, conduct, and calling of the church. Undoubtedly, God has painted such pictures in Scripture in order to challenge, motivate, and charge us into action. It is absolutely imperative that we grasp this vision of who we are as God's people, where we are, and why we are here—God's representatives in an alien country. And the hope is that we become gripped by this truth or we will fail to see and respond to the purpose for our existence.

## Two Models of the Church Compared and Their Products

<b>CATEGORY OR ISSUE</b>	<b>TRADITIONAL MODEL</b>	<b>BIBLICAL MODEL</b>
Concept of Church	Organization	Organism
Believers	“Members” (as in a club)	Disciples of Jesus Christ (members of the Body)
Involvement	Spectators (observing action)	Participants in the action, ministers
Head	The people	Jesus Christ
Authority	Constitution plus “proof texts”	The Whole Word of God
Government	Democracy (of and by the people)	Theocracy (of God via Word and Holy Spirit, God in charge.)
Selection of Leadership	Election	Appointment (depending on God to raise up gifted people and cause us to recognize them as leaders)
Basic Ministry	Conducting services	Equipping, meeting needs
Place of Ministry	Church building (at stated times)	Anywhere (all the time)
Primary Concern	Programs, things, buildings, etc.	God’s glory, people
Objective	Build up the local church (club)	Build up the Body
Determining Factor	What the people WANT (peace at any price)	What the people NEED (according to the Word)
Great Commission	Get converts (addition)	Make disciples (multiplication)
Field	Our own area	The world
Purpose of Assembling	Entertainment, evangelism in the service	Stimulate to love and good deeds; encourage and equip the saints
Emphasis	Meetings, setting and breaking records	God, individuals, families, quality plus quantity
Minister	Administrator, speaker, visitor, employee (belongs exclusively to this church)	Leader, Teacher, counsellor, shepherd, equipper (belongs to body, works primarily with this assembly)
Attitude toward Minister	The “minister” (professional)	One of “many” ministers

Church Council	Administrators, decision makers, occupied with facilities, etc.	Multiplicity of leadership; unified; working together to equip the saints for ministry.
Resources	Human ingenuity, available funds, etc.	Word, prayer, Holy Spirit., spiritual gifts, and ministries
Method of being Church	What we're used to, feel comfortable with	Whatever the situation demands as long as it is true to God's Word and honours the Lord
Procedures	Beg, plead, cajole, etc. for workers	Trust God to raise gifted individuals (if HE isn't interested; WE won't be)
Leadership given to	Anyone willing	Faithful, available, teachable people
Finances	Needs dealt with only with available funds	Determine needs, then TRUST GOD to work through His people
Staff	Hired employees who carry out the policies set by the people through the Church Council.	Associates for full-time involvement; a TEAM to assist in functioning of the Body
Attitudes	Conditional acceptance	Unconditional acceptance
Ultimate Concern	Our church; what others think	Exalting Christ; what God says
Result	<a href="#">Rev. 3:1b</a> Like the church at Sardis: you are alive, but you are dead	<a href="#">Eph. 4:11-16</a> Body built up to maturity functioning as God intends

## The Two Products

Quite obviously the biblical model leads to a healthy, ministering church whereas the traditional model leads to a sterile, ineffective church where the affliction of "spectatoritis," the rust of institutionalism, and the self-indulgence of consumerism has all but reduced the church to invalid status. Rather than the picture of a well-trained soldier or athlete, the church today looks more like a patient dependent on a host of life support systems.

Questions:-

1. If you think of the meaning of "Church" what is your initial thought?
2. Out of the list of the Church (page 1) which do you like best? Why?
3. How many from the traditional model of church fits Peterhead Methodist Church?
4. How are we like the Biblical model?
5. Are we in danger of being Spectators?

This naturally leads us to what the church ought to be doing in the light of who it is. **Next time.**

## 2. Purposes of the Church

The great purpose of the church is to be to the praise of God's glory and grace ([Eph. 1:6, 12](#)). The praise of God's glory occurs when people come to Christ and become conformed into His image. Saving sinful people and making them like God's Son manifests the glory of God's divine essence (His love, grace, mercy, power, goodness, sovereignty, and holiness). In this primary purpose, the church is to be used of God to bring people to Christ and see them transformed to His character ([Col. 1:28](#)). Included in this are three major objectives which the church must intensely pursue.

### Exalting the Lord

Everything that the church does must first and foremost exalt and honour the Lord ([1 Cor. 10:31](#); [Col. 3:17](#)).

### Equipping the Saints

“Equipping” is one of the primary ways to help people become like Jesus Christ. This is accomplished as the gifted people of the church pour their lives into others and they in turn reach out to others with the vision of every believer a minister and an ambassador ([Eph. 4:11-16](#)).

### Evangelising the Lost

If a church is not reaching out to the lost, it is not fulfilling one of the great reasons God has left her on this planet. When we do not evangelise, we fossilize ([Matt. 28:19-20](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [Col. 4:3](#)).

*Question: Are we failing in any of these areas?*

## Priorities of the Church—Its Ministry Objectives

The church is to function under two forms. First, the church is to be **gathered** for teaching, encouragement, worship and fellowship. However, true worship and fellowship is seen in Scripture as an outgrowth and a response to biblical revelation. Second, as a further outgrowth of the church gathered and the impact of that on its spiritual life, the church is **scattered** throughout the week for the purpose of evangelism and ministry. The church must evaluate what it is doing. Are its activities, programs, committees, etc., contributing to the major purposes and objectives according to its calling as the people of God, or has it lost its way in institutionalism.

*Question: Discuss the paragraph above.*

## The Church Gathered—Encouragement—Equipping Saints

### *Ministry of the Word—Teaching Through . . .*

- (1) **Preaching** ([Ezra 6:14](#); Neh. 8:8; [2 Tim. 4:1-3](#)). The Word of God must be faithfully preached from the pulpit.
- (2) **Teaching** ([Ezra 7:10](#); [Acts 20:20](#); [Col. 1:28](#)). The Word of God must also be taught in both large and small group settings. This involves questions and answers, and practical dialogue together around the Word with practical applications that hit people where they live.
- (3) **Training** ([2 Tim. 2:2-4](#)). Believers must be trained in such practical aspects as how to study their Bibles, how to pray, how to witness, how to walk in the power of the Spirit, etc., that they may, in turn, be able to train others. (*Fellowship group role*)
- (4) **Exhorting** ([Col. 1:28](#); 3:16). The church must be exhorted to positive decisions for Christ that promote commitment and Christ-like values and living.

*Question: How well are we doing these?*

### *Ministry of Worship—Exalting God by . . .*

- (1) **Giving Praise and Thanksgiving** ([Heb. 13:15](#); [Col. 1:12](#); 3:15-17). Believers need to be taught and challenged to live by praise and thanksgiving as they share together in the riches of Christ. To encourage this, the church needs some public opportunity to express its adoration to God individually as well as a congregation.
- (2) **Singing and Making Melody** ([Acts 16:25](#); [1 Cor. 14:26](#); [Eph. 5:19](#); [Col. 3:16](#)). As with all other aspects of worship, music must be the product of spirit-motivated expression to God and should be designed to encourage and unite hearts together in adoration of Him.
- (3) **Baptizing** ([Matt. 28:19](#); [1 Pet. 3:21](#)). Baptism is to be a public demonstration of a believer's faith, understanding of his or her position in Christ with its ramifications, and this includes commitment to walk with Christ in newness of life.
- (4) **Taking Communion** ([1 Cor. 11:23-24](#)). As a public act of worship, the communion service should be designed to promote soul searching, evaluation, and reflection on the Savior and what He means to our life. It is a **Redeclaration**, a testimony of one's faith in Christ in both His first and second advents, a **Remembrance**, an act of worship by which we remember and count on the person and work of Christ as the source and means of life, and an expression of the **Relationship** of harmony and oneness of mind in love, values, and commitment that should exist in the body of Christ.

*Question: How is our worship?*

## **3. Ministry of Fellowship—Sharing Together by . . .**

## **Question: How is our fellowship? Healthy, mediocre, ailing? Discuss.**

**(1) Encouraging** ([Heb. 10:24-25](#)). Believers must be challenged to encourage one another in the practical areas of the Christian life. A key part of this could be small groups which provide for individual sharing, encouragement, and accountability.

**(2) Counselling** ([Rom. 16:14](#); [1 Thess. 5:14](#)). As believers within the body are built up in the Word, trained for ministry, and exercise their gifts, they should naturally be able to meet many of the counselling needs within the church.

**(3) Disciplining** ([Matt. 18:15-20](#); [Gal. 6:1-4](#)). Because of the clear mandates of Scripture, church discipline is not an option. It is vital for the purity, power, progress, and purpose of the church. Without this restorative ministry, conditions continue which defile, weaken, hinder, and divert the church from its holy calling. However, discipline must be carried out with biblical attitudes, motives, and goals.

**(4) Sharing, Giving** ([Acts 2:42](#); [1 Cor. 16:1-2](#); [2 Cor. 8-9](#); [Gal. 6:7](#); [1 John 3:16-17](#)). The church must be taught the principles of giving, eternal priorities, and encouraged to sacrificially meet the needs of the ministry of the church and others through words, deeds, and gifts of love.

**(5) Labouring Together as a Team** ([1 Cor. 12:4-11](#), 14f; [Phil. 1:27](#); [1 Pet. 4:10-11](#)). Recognizing the body concept and learning to work together as a team with every believer knowing and using their gift(s) is critical for the proper and effective functioning of the body of Christ.

### ***Question: Discuss about the biblical concept of team work***

**(6) Helping** ([Rom. 15:1-3](#); 16:2; [Phil. 2:4](#); 4:3; [1 Thess. 5:14](#); [Tit. 2:14](#); 3:1, 8, 14). As members of the body of Christ, we need one another and we must learn to care for one another. Another dimension of a healthy church is taking interest in those who need help, being zealous and ready for every good deed in order to meet pressing needs.

### ***Ministry of Prayer—Calling on the Lord by . . .***

**(1) Confession** ([1 Cor. 11:28](#); [1 John 1:9](#); [Ps. 66:18](#); [Prov. 28:13](#)). Believers should be encouraged to keep short accounts with God in order to keep a conscience void of offence and stay in fellowship for the purpose of God's glory, effective prayer, meaningful worship, biblical understanding and growth, and effective ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**(2) Adoration** ([Eph. 3:20-21](#)). Believers need to be challenged to make every aspect of their life an act of worship to God by which they count and act on the glories of God's person and grace. Unless this is true, the Sunday worship service becomes mere lip service, an exercise of self-worship by which people seek to satisfy selfish ends while they manage to keep their hearts from God ([Isa. 29:13](#)).

**(3) Intercession and Petition** ([Eph. 6:18-19](#); [Col. 4:2-3, 12](#); [Phil. 4:6-7](#); [2 Tim. 2:1f](#)). Effectual prayer for others, for oneself and family, for the nation and its leaders, and for the ministry of the church is crucial to all that the church is and does.

***Question: Discuss the three areas above – how well are we doing? Do you feel we adore God on a Sunday?***

#### **4. The Church Scattered—Evangelisation—Penetrating Society**

***Doing Good—Our Walk—Modelling the Word ([Titus 3:1, 8, 14](#))***

**(1) Making Friends** ([Matt. 22:39](#); [Luke 10:33](#); [John 4:4f](#); [Gal. 6:10a](#); [Tit. 3:14](#)). Believers must be taught and encouraged to build bridges and develop relationships with the lost. Penetrating society for contact is vital to evangelism. People must learn to help their neighbours, show mercy, and, according to their ability, give to those in need to demonstrate the love of Christ and build bridges for the gospel.

**(2) Preserving** ([Matt. 5:13-16](#); [2 Thess. 2:6-7](#)). The calling of the church is not to control the political process at local, state, or national levels, but to seek genuine political and moral reform by spiritual renewal through prayer and reaching our society for Christ because it is impossible to effect genuine political reform through legislation without spiritual reformation.

***Sharing the Gospel—Our Talk—Giving Out the Word*** ([Col. 4:5-6](#); [1 Thess. 1:7-8](#))

**(1) The Means—Personal Witnessing** ([Rom. 10:17](#); [Luke 10:2](#)). The church must be involved in an active ministry of sharing the gospel to the lost. This should involve an outreach to all ages and groups in order to fulfill the great commission.

**(2) The Methods—Sharing, Refuting, Reasoning, Persuading, Demonstrating, Proving** ([Acts 9:22](#); 17:17; 18:4, 28; 19:8-9; [1 Pet. 3:15](#)). While only the Spirit of God can illuminate a person's heart to the truth of the gospel, God still uses the witness of the believer.

**The Motivation—Preparation Through Training**

Because of this, the church must be taught, trained, and challenged not only to share its faith, but to be able to give a verbal defence for what it believes ([Eph. 4:11f](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [Matt. 28:19-20](#)).

***(Leaders of the House groups think of some questions for this section)***

## 5. Principles of Leadership in the Church

Because of confusion regarding the roles of minister and congregation, a confusion created largely by certain cultural expectations that have developed over the years, it has become even more imperative that we all have a clear biblical understanding of who the leaders and people are if churches are going to have effective ministries. Why? Because it affects what they do and expect from one another. (Compare ([Eph. 4:12](#); [1 Thess. 5:12-13](#); [Heb. 13:7, 17](#)).

### *The Leaders*

The leaders of the church are referred to as “elders” (*presbuteroi*, [Acts 20:17](#); [1 Tim. 5:17](#)), “overseers” (*episkopoi*, [Acts 20:28](#); [Phil. 1:1](#)), “leaders” (*proistameno*i, [Rom. 12:8](#); [1 Thess. 5:12](#)), and “pastor/teachers” (*poimenas-didaskalous*, [Eph. 4:11](#); cf. also [Acts 20:28](#) and [1 Pet. 5:2](#) with [1 Tim. 3:2](#), “able to teach,” 5:17b, and [Tit. 1:9](#)). Though each of these terms may describe the different aspects of leadership, they seem to be used interchangeably to designate the same office. Above all, as [Ephesians 4:11f](#) makes clear, **they are equippers** whose agenda (priorities, allotment of time, and duties) are to be ordered by the Word of God, not by the agendas of people following their cultural expectations set by tradition.

### *The People*

The people of the church are ministers who are to be trained for the kind of growth in the Word that results in changed lives and ministry. Ministers/Pastors/elders are to be a gifted, trained, and skilled believers whom God has called to lead a group of fellow priests or ministers, not a minister who leads a group of lay spectators.

## **The Principle of Pastoral Priorities in Responsibilities**

### *The Necessity of Establishing Priorities ([Acts 6:2](#))*

When the apostles were confronted with how to meet the needs of the people, they first approached the problem by establishing priorities. They said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.” Biblical priorities must determine responsibilities.

### *The Necessity of Training and Delegation ([Acts 6:3-4](#); [Ex. 18:1f](#); [1 Tim. 4:6, 11-16](#); [2 Tim. 2:2, 15](#))*

Facing the limitations of one man, the necessity of priorities, and the giftedness of the body of Christ naturally leads to the importance of training and delegation. Neither Moses, following Jethro’s advice, nor the apostles ignored the legitimate needs of the people, but neither did they allow themselves to be distracted from the primary needs of the people and the priorities of the Word. It becomes important, therefore, for pastors to train the body of saints in the basics of the Word and delegate various aspects of ministry to other members of the body according to their gifts and the Lord’s leading in each believer’s life.

### *Personal Priorities for Pastors or Elders—The pursuit of God ([Matt. 6:33](#))*

### *Pastoral Priorities for Pastors/Elders*

## PRIMARY

(1) Prayer, in-depth Bible study, and spiritual preparation for teaching and communicating the Word. Teaching then becomes an overflow of a life bathed in the Word ([Ezra 7:6-10](#); [John 15:7](#); [Eph. 5:18](#); [Col. 3:1-3, 16](#); [1 Tim. 4:14-16](#); [2 Tim. 2:15](#)).

(2) Preaching and teaching the Word ([1 Tim. 4:6, 11-13](#); [2 Tim. 4:1-2](#); [1 Cor. 9:16](#)). Some Goals:

- Teach the people to love the Word of God ([Isa. 66:2](#); [Ps. 1:1-3](#)).
- Lead people to submit to the authority of the Word and to see obedience as a major goal of their lives ([Josh. 1:8](#)).
- Demonstrate that the proclamation of the Word is critical to worship ([John 4:24](#)).
- Motivate people to look for and live in view of the coming of the Lord ([Tit. 2:1, 11-15](#)).
- Motivate people to good deeds or ministry ([Tit. 2:14](#); 3:1, 8, 14)

(3) Discipling leaders and future leaders ([Matt. 28:19-20](#); [2 Tim. 2:2](#))

## SECONDARY

(1) Calling, visiting, counselling ([Rom. 15:1-4](#); [1 Thess. 5:11-12](#); [Jam. 1:27](#); 5:14).

(2) Administrative functions.

*Question : Is our understanding of “The Minister” biblical?*

### **The Principle of Equality**

New Testament leadership appears to have been plural and equal with no system of hierarchy. Certain people will naturally function as leaders among the leaders because of their training, giftedness, wisdom, knowledge, and experience, but all are equal and accountable to each other. (Compare [Acts 15](#) and the leadership demonstrated by James among the leaders of the church at Jerusalem. Also compare [Acts 14:23](#); 20:17; [Phil. 1:1](#); [1 Tim. 5:17](#).)

### **The Principle of Servant-Like Ministry**

The church must be led by those who have the heart and life of a servant whose motives are pure ([John 13:1f](#); [Luke 22:26](#); [1 Thess. 2:3-8](#)).

**Questions and thoughts?**

## **6. The Priesthood of Believers and the Principle of Every Believer Gifted by God for Service**

There must be a commitment to teach the priesthood of believers and promote its implications for ministry along with its natural companion, the truth concerning spiritual gifts. Why? So more and more believers function as a body in unity with diversity. This is vital to an effective ministry. “Spectatoritis” is an ailment in the church that must be remedied if the church is to count for God ([Rom. 12:3f](#); [1 Cor. 12:4f](#); [Eph. 4:7f](#); [1 Pet. 2:5-11](#); 4:1-12).

***(Every Member a Minister)***

The church is not a one-man team with the minister and the so-called laymen. Sadly, and to the hurt of the body of Christ, there still exists today a spirit of clericalism—the expectation that the professional clergy does the ministry. Though the belief that pastor-teachers are to equip the saints for the work of ministry is widespread and well known, it is rarely practiced and sorely hindered by pastoral expectations that simply do not line up with Scripture. Churches give lip service to the truth of [Ephesians 4:11-16](#), but have a hard time managing to apply it because of these long-held expectations. There is still an iron-clad expectation that the minister is to function in three areas:

**(1) He prepares, teaches, and preaches the Word**

This is a biblical expectation.

**(2) He is also often expected not just to be the church manager, but the main administrator**

He is to keep the administrative machinery oiled and running. In other words, churches often and unrealistically want a theologian, Bible expositor, and a corporate executive all rolled up into one. Some men may have all these gifts, most do not, but even when they do, is it biblically right to expect one man to do it all? Hardly!

**(3) He must care for the flock**

This includes everything: hospital visitation, home visitation, counselling, conducting funerals, officiating at weddings, attendance at all committee meetings, Sunday school parties, socials, and so on. If he is not involved in all these things and at all these functions, he is sometimes labelled “uncaring,” or is criticized with remarks like, “He does not have a pastor’s heart.” This is not necessarily true because it is a matter of priorities (cf. Mk. 1:35-39) and even giftedness ([Rom. 12:3-8](#)). His commitment to teaching the Word and training people can be a greater display of love and compassion because this ultimately meets the greater needs ([Acts 6:2-5](#)).

Some of these expectations are legitimate, but some of them must also be shared by other members of the body, starting with the pastoral team, then the stewards and extending to the whole body ([Eph. 4:16](#)). The above list of expectations leaves little time for the main function of those who labour in the Word and teaching. The study and exposition of the Word and the equipping of the flock for the work of serving or ministry is the biblical mandate and priority for pastor/elders who follow the scriptural mandate.

The false expectations of our day have caused pastors to become general (generic) in their ministries because they too often let people set the agenda for them—not the Lord. They

serve the people, but not Christ. Christ and the priorities of Scripture must set the agenda for a pastor's ministry just as our Lord allowed the Father's will to set His agenda regardless of the pressure of people (cf. Mk. 1:35-39). When the pastor serves people, he serves their vested interest and expectations. When he serves the Lord, he serves their best interest. Only when we serve Christ can the best interests of people be served. When this is not the case, you have burnout and frustration from trying to satisfy the whims, expectations, and desires of the flock which vary almost from person to person.

Like the great commission, we have worshipped [Ephesians 4:12-16](#), but we haven't obeyed it. This obviously needs to change. Pastors and churches need to develop a new mind set. They must see and make room for pastors to function in a more specialized role—the role of equippers. The ministry of “equipping the saints unto the work of ministry” must set the agenda. The biblical priority is functioning as teacher/equippers who get the work of ministry done through building others. It means the multiplication of ministry through every member ([Eph. 4:12-16](#); [2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

Every believer is a priest of God to whom God has given personal stewardships, the stewardships of time, talents (including our spiritual gifts), truth, our bodies as God's temple, and treasures. This means personal responsibilities to be faithful to these trusts from God. This also means a team ministry with pastor-teachers (or the pastoral team) building up the saints unto the work of the ministry (their places of service and ministry) unto the building up of the body of Christ—the spiritual (*qualitative*), physical (*quantitative*), and organic growth of the church (the development of ministries)—through the exercise of these stewardships ([Eph. 4:12](#)). This means the leadership **PLUS** the rest of the flock serving and striving together for the faith of the gospel ([Phil. 1:27](#))

**(House group Leaders suggest some questions)**