Five Purposes of the Church

"Where there is no vision, the people perish"—Proverbs-19:18a

The wise man, Solomon, reminds us of the importance of a vision. Whether we speak of a business, a family, or a church, there should be a common goal that all are working toward to succeed. That goal would be the vision set before us. It is possible for us to be a part of something and still lose our vision, missing the overall picture... what we are there for in the first place.

Last Sunday, I delivered a message concerning five important purposes of the New Testament Church. These should be important to us all if we want to enjoy the greatest blessings in God’s house, and witness prosperity in our churches. As I mentioned, it is God that blesses our churches, and our greatest attempts to do all we can do will result in nothing without His blessings. Yet, we do have a purpose and it should be our desire to understand it, and attempt to fulfill it. I will not go in to detail in this short article. I will just give you the basic points and a few thoughts:

**Purpose #1:** The church is a place of worship. We are very good at this. We all love good meetings, good sermons, and spirit-filled preaching. God is worshipped and glorified when we are fed from the truths of God’s word. Jesus said that the hungry and the thirsty would be fed in His house. There are other areas that involve worship. The first use of the term in the Bible is where Abraham offered his only son upon Mt. Moriah as God had commanded him: “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” (Genesis 22:5). This tells us a lot about worship. It tells us that personal sacrifice is worship in an of itself. This also includes giving. We are to give ourselves, be present, be active, be involved. As Paul encouraged the church at Rome: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1). It includes our assets, the material things that God has blessed us with. The widow with the two mites was actively involved in worship when she threw all of her substance in to the treasury. The words to the song, “What shall I render to my God for all His kindness shown” reflect a worshipful heart!

**Purpose #2:** The Church is a place of ministry. This involves labor. It is serving others. We see this displayed in our Lord’s parable of the Good Samaritan who ministered to one who had fallen into mischief. There are many ways to minister to others who are sick, hungry, thirsty, depressed, and harmed. Every person should be involved in some kind of personal ministry for every person will at some time enjoy the ministry of others. The church depicted in the Bible was a ministering church, people who serve one another.

**Purpose #3:** The Church is a place of fellowship. I believe that this important aspect of the church is many times overlooked or deemed to be insignificant by many church members. Yet, without the fellowship of the
saints we really never get to know one another. If we do not know one, how can we share one another’s lives; bear one another’s burdens; know what to pray for; know when there is a need or a sickness? In one sense we fellowship every time we meet but we can not get to know one another during the preaching services as we should. We fellowship when we enjoy our meals together. The infant church broke bread from house to house and did eat their meat with singleness of heart. There is no better time to get to know one another than over a meal. If our church membership only involves hearing a message our experience is shallow compared to the fullness we find in the lives of the early followers of Christ. Church is much more than hearing a message. Hearing a message is where we begin. Our joy is enlarged by the mutual fellowship and faith of our brethren. This kind of fellowship can not be achieved in the five or ten minutes before or after services. Fellowship is involvement with brothers and sisters of like precious faith!

**Purpose #4:** The church is a place of *discipleship*. This means that the church is a place where we *learn*. It is where we learn more about God’s word; about our Lord Jesus Christ; and about ourselves. The church is the place that we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. This can not be achieved in any other place. The more we go, the more we learn. In Matthew 5 we read: “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” Though there were multitudes present, it was the disciples who came to Jesus… and learn. That is what the word “disciple” means. It means a *learner*. This word is found all over the New Testament, used to depict the followers of Jesus. A genuine experience of grace in the heart produces a disciple, one who wants to know more about Christ, their Savior! If someone saved you from a burning car, or a sinking ship would you not want to know about that person? How much more of our Lord who saved us from the wrath to come!

**Purpose #5:** The church is a place of evangelism. The New Testament Church should be a *witnessing* church, people who want to spread the message of Christ. It should be the desire of every baptized believer to share the most important thing in their lives with others: Christ and His grace. A survey taken recently reflected that 85% of all new church members came as a result of a personal invitation from a satisfied church member. “Come and see” are the three simple words of evangelism. We do not have to go into great detail of all that we believe to faithfully evangelize. Just invite others. If you feel embarrassed to invite others or if you do not know anyone to invite, another important aspect of evangelism is prayer. Prayer is the seed of evangelism. You can be a faithful evangelist in a nursing home, in a prison, or in the confines of your own home by just praying for a revival in Zion; for the conversion of others; for the prosperity of the church.

These are very basic and simple, yet I believe, reflect some of the primary purposes of the New Testament Church. In doing them we shall obtain a blessing and Christ will be honored! -NMP