

What Is a Great Church?

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Perfecting the Local Church of Jesus

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If a local church is as important as the Bible says, let's perfect it. Why would we want to give God and His Son less than the best? The Bible is not short or obscure about what makes them great. Regardless of how men measure churches, we measure by Bible. We can learn what God commands or expects and go beyond it.

This study should follow the previous one:

What Is a Church?

<https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/what-is-a-church-1/>

**This study will be enhanced by
the 20-sermon series:**

Higher Ground

<https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/index/year-2015/higher-ground/>

What a Great Church Is Not!

- It may not be growing in ... numbers!
- It may not be growing in ... buildings!
- It may not be growing in ... programs!
- It will not be growing in ... popularity!
- It will not be growing in ... fashion!

What Is a Great Church?

- For two Sundays, we have studied what a church is.
- We thank God for all the blessings of a local church.
- If a church is all we know it is, we should be the best.
- Why would we ever give Jesus Christ second best?
- What are you doing to make our church the best?

Why Have a Great Church?

- It is certainly not for our glory in any way whatsoever.
- It is for the glory of God and His Son Jesus Christ.
- It is for the profit of all members to grow in grace.
- It is for profit of others by sounding out the word.
- To give God a temple *exceeding magnificent* like David.

What Is a Great Church?

- It is a church that is modeled after apostolic doctrine.
- It is a church that measures itself by the Bible only.
- It is a church that does everything right with passion.
- Let us review what the best N.T. churches did well.
- Let each member consider what he or she is doing.

**Much has been taught on each mark of
great local churches, but to cover
many marks quickly, details
are left out here.**

Christ-Centric

- A great church is centered around Jesus Christ!
- In all things He should be preeminent (Col 1:18; I Cor 16:22).
- All content is toward Jesus crucified (I Cor 2:2; Gal 6:14).
- This is the great mystery of godliness (I Tim 1:15; 3:16).
- What are you doing? Is your life highly Christ-centric?

First Love – Hot

- Jesus is severe to churches losing first love (Rev 2:4-5).
- Jesus is severe to lukewarm churches (Rev 3:15-19).
- Minding earthly things is belly worship (Phil 3:18-19).
- Great churches provoke *one another* to love Christ.
- What are you doing? Are you renewing your first love?

Regenerated Membership

- We reject infant baptism as devilish heresy (1 Pet 3:21).
- We avoid quasi-infant baptism of dipping children.
- We want to see a work of grace, not correct answers.
- The unregenerate should not be comfortable here.
- What are you doing? Is your life visibly regenerate?

Spirit-Filled

- It is a command to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18).
- The greatest church was filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:38-47).
- You should pray for this great blessing (Eph 1:17; 3:14-19).
- We should live and walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:13-26; Eph 5:8-10).
- What are you doing? Do not grieve, quench, or vex Him.

Doctrinal Dogmatism

- Great churches fight for doctrinal integrity (Jude 1:3).
- False teachers are marked and avoided (Rom 16:17-18).
- Heretics are strictly rejected (Gal 1:6-9; II Tim 3:5; Titus 3:10-11).
- False doctrine is hated, truth exalted (Ps 119:128; I Tim 3:15).
- What are you doing? Do you know and defend truth?

Preaching Emphasis

- The Bible emphasizes preaching over anything else.
- All things are done for edification, not entertainment.
- Paul preached to midnight, no praise bands present.
- Growth in faith is by hearing preaching (Rom 10:17; I Pet 2:2).
- What are you doing? Prepare passionately to listen.

Church Independence

- The highest authority in the N.T. is the local church.
- Conventions, denominations, associations are wrong.
- A group of churches is not the church, but churches.
- This is crucial for a church/pastor to follow the Spirit.
- What are you doing? Thank God for church freedom.

Due-Order Details

- Great churches care about details, because God does.
- Ask Cain, Nadab, Moses, Uzzah, Uzziah, Ananias, etc.
- The argument from silence is invalid for God's worship.
- We reject steeples, drums, dry-pastor baptisteries, etc.
- What are you doing? Do you appreciate and defend?

A Capella Singing

- God invented music: He clearly ordered a capella singing.
- O.T. worship included instruments with animal sacrifices.
- Grace and melody in the heart should teach (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).
- Louder instruments typically replace the Spirit and truth.
- What are you doing? Love a capella singing with passion.

Perilous Times

- Alert churches see the prophecy fulfilling (II Tim 3:1 – 4:4).
- They know this is the greatest danger the church faces.
- They studiously obey its warnings against all enemies.
- They hold to the old paths as directed (Jer 6:16; Jude 1:3).
- What are you doing? Observe and despise fads/trends.

Praying

- The most powerful thing any church can do is pray.
- Effectual fervent prayers by the righteous avail much.
- The early church was a praying church (Acts 2:42; 12:12).
- Private prayer and prayer meetings are both needed.
- What are you doing? Do you pray for church daily?

Brotherly Love

- Jesus said to be known by brotherly love (John 13:34-35).
- This is love within the church, not social programs.
- This is sacrificial, selfless efforts to perfect the body.
- This is other-oriented keeping of *one another* duties.
- What are you doing? Are you mainly giving, not taking.

Forgiving

- To be a great church, we must forgive *one another*.
- We should forgive as we have been forgiven (Eph 4:31-32).
- God and Christ forgave far more than you ever can!
- We need God's forgiveness, so we must gladly give it.
- What are you doing? Love to forgive, flush, forget!

Peaceful

- Jesus Christ loves a peaceful church (I Thess 5:13; Eph 4:3).
- Jesus Christ loves peacemakers (Matt 5:9; James 3:17-18).
- Churches with division are not great (I Cor 3:1-3; 1:10-13).
- Peace takes sacrificial compromise (I Cor 6:7-8; Prov 19:11).
- What are you doing? Always soothe, never strive!

Unity

- A church should have one mind and mouth (I Cor 1:10).
- This unity of worship is to glorify God (Rom 15:6; Ps 133:1-3).
- All must endeavor to keep our common union (Eph 4:3).
- We pray and labor against strange children (Ps 144:11-14).
- What are you doing? Avoid any cliques, debates, etc.

Self-Correcting

- Church members are to correct *one another* (1 Thes 5:14).
- Great churches have many soul winners (James 5:19-20).
- The spiritual members must do their duty (Gal 6:1-2).
- Offences can be resolved two ways (Matt 5:21-26; 18:15-18).
- What are you doing? You are your brother's keeper.

Disciplining

- Great churches discipline their membership (I Cor 5:1-13).
- They exclude and shun obstinate sinners (II Thess 3:6,14).
- Discipline is sad, but it is also necessary to be great.
- The holiness of God and Jesus Christ's Table is at stake.
- What are you doing? Fully agree and defend the Bible.

Covers Sins

- Love covers sins to protect reputations (Prov 10:12; 17:9).
- Conversion and repentance cover sins (Jas 5:19-20; Gal 6:1-2).
- The opposite is backbiting and talebearing (Prov 11:13 20:19).
- Fervent charity covers the many that will occur (I Pet 4:8).
- What are you doing? Cover others as God covers you.

Holiness

- God is holy, and His churches should be (I Pet 1:13-17).
- Pleasing God requires sanctification (I Thes 4:1-8; II Cor 7:1).
- Holiness is unpopular, but so what – perilous times.
- We exalt beauty of holiness, not holiness of beauty.
- What are you doing? Are you living a truly holy life?

Reverent Worship

- It is more than being old-fashioned; it is being holy.
- God hates casual worship, even in N.T. (Heb 12:28-29).
- Gravity and sobriety are proper (Titus 2:2,6; I Peter 2:17).
- The Bible suggests dressing up (Gen 35:2; Exodus 19:10,14).
- What are you doing? Grasp and love our worship.

Zeal

- Zeal is good when affected for a good cause (Gal 4:18).
- God was zealous to save you by Jesus His Son (Is 9:6-7).
- Jesus' zeal ate Him up regarding God's house (John 2:17).
- Paul worked harder than all other apostles (I Cor 15:10).
- What are you doing? Do you laboriously serve Christ?

Attendance

- Church attendance is not Christian liberty (He 10:23-25).
- Church duties need the whole church (I Cor 14:23; 11:18).
- God is to be worshipped this way (Ps 122:1-9; Acts 2:41-47).
- Attendance is necessary for your duties (Heb 3:12-13).
- What are you doing? In what quartile do you fall?

Every Joint

- The breadth of a church is as important as its depth.
- To get a “team bonus” from Christ, all must partake.
- Every joint and part is for maximum increase (Ep 4:16).
- In body dynamics, all members are part (I Cor 12:13-27).
- What are you doing? Push and pray for all members.

Thanksgiving

- In public and in private Christians should give thanks.
- We must always give thanks to God (II Thes 2:13; Heb 13:15).
- Complaining or whining is unacceptable before God.
- We should be more thankful for abundance (Deut 28:47).
- What are you doing? Are you verbally thankful always?

Evangelism

- The church at Thessalonica sounded out (I Thess 1:8-10).
- We want to be fellow-helpers to the truth (III John 1:8).
- Pastors must do the work of an evangelist (II Tim 4:5).
- We should pray and pay to save God's elect (Rom 10:1).
- What are you doing? Matching Andrew and Philip?

Commission Fulfilled

- Apostles fulfilled the commission fully by 70 AD.
- There are at least ten N.T. declarations confirming.
- It is a deceitful travesty for churches to focus on it.
- Thus they miss the clear emphasis of Paul's epistles.
- What are you doing? Focus on your Pauline roles.

Civil Obedience

- Civil rulers are God's ministers for good (Rom 13:1-7).
- We are to obey them for the Lord's sake (I Pet 2:13-17).
- We pray for them and honor them (I Tim 2:1-3; Pr 24:21-22).
- Patriotism in any nation is not a branch of Christianity.
- What are you doing? Honor and obey rulers gladly.

Christian Liberty

- We do not require what the N.T. does not require.
- We do not condemn what the N.T. does not condemn.
- We allow liberty of conscience & personal preference.
- Romans 14 exalts righteousness, peace, and joy.
- What are you doing? Do you allow liberty to others?

Passionate

- One way to distinguish ourselves is by our passion.
- David and Paul are two great examples serving God.
- Our love of God and Christ should consume our lives.
- Copy David's love of God's house (Psalm 26:8; 27:4; 84:1-2,10).
- What are you doing? Is your passion known by all?

Joyful

- Joy is not an option or unreasonable for a Christian.
- The joy of the LORD is our strength in God (Neh 8:10).
- But our doctrine is for great joy in God and Christ.
- Our services should be visibly and audibly joyful.
- What are you doing? How joyful are you in Christ?

Hospitable & Entertaining

- Christians are to be given to hospitality (Rom 12:13).
- Christians are to provide entertainment (Heb 13:2).
- Even widows are measured by these rules (I Tim 5:10).
- True friends and hosts will be remembered (Heb 6:10).
- What are you doing? Hoping someone will invite you?

Internal Welfare

- We take care of our own by Bible rules of support.
- From weekly feasts of charity to private kindnesses.
- From bridge building to moving to clear acts of God.
- Your thought should be giving, not getting (James 1:27).
- What are you doing? Agree, consider, devise liberally.

Work Ethic

- Christians are energetic, hard working, productive.
- They know diligence is a Christian virtue (Rom 12:11).
- Lazy souls should be excluded and starved (II Thess 3:10).
- Work mightily as to the Lord Christ (Eccl 9:10; Col 3:22-25).
- What are you doing? Outwork most that you know.

Scrupulously Honest

- Both members and the church must be very faithful.
- Employees are warned against purloining (Titus 2:9-10).
- Deacons / finances honest and open (Acts 6:3; II Cor 8:21).
- Ananias / Sapphira died for fudging giving (Acts 5:1-11).
- What are you doing? Exceptional integrity is a must.

Liberal

- Liberality is a synonym for generosity – a great trait.
- No one is more liberal than God has been to you.
- The liberal soul shall be made fat – scattering works.
- Men will be blessed or judged by liberality (Isaiah 32:8).
- What are you doing? Are you liberal nearly to a fault?

Giving / Tithing

- Tithing, frequently stated in O.T., is assumed in N.T.
- The O.T. has the details for N.T. general commands.
- Tithes are owed to God; offerings are personal gifts.
- A church needs funds like civil rulers for doing good.
- What are you doing? Cheerful, systematic works best.

Pastoral Support

- They that preach the gospel are to live by it (I Cor 9:14).
- Careful giving encourages the man of God (II Chr 31:4).
- The harder and better he works, the more (I Tim 5:17).
- Without a focused ox ... little increase (Pr 14:4; I Cor 9:8-11).
- What are you doing? Do you help or hurt the giving?

Ancient Landmarks (#1)

- There are many more things Jesus Christ looks for.
- Our women should wear modest clothing (I Tim 2:9-10).
- Women should have long hair, men short (I Cor 11:14-16).
- Closed communion is to avoid any leaven (I Cor 5:6-8).
- We deny apostolic gifts e.g. tongues after 70 A.D.

Ancient Landmarks (#2)

- We use wine and unleavened bread in communion.
- We declare Roman Catholicism is the antichrist religion.
- We reject secret societies and pagan cults like Masons.
- Women do not speak or teach in church assemblies.
- We reject the pagan holy days of Roman Catholicism.

Ancient Landmarks (#3)

- We only allow marriage in the Lord to the same faith.
- Children are trained the Bible way to honor parents.
- Authority in five spheres is exalted and expounded.
- Cremation is a pagan rite adopted from dark nations.
- Marriages must be holy and passionate to please God.

Ancient Landmarks (#4)

- We hold to Bible marriage of one man – one woman.
- We are patriarchal or complementarian, not egalitarian.
- Bible prophecy is understood by the historicist school.
- A burning hell contrary to soul sleep or annihilationism.
- We trust ministerial succession, not church landmarkism.

Ancient Landmarks (#5)

- Christian ethics, like mercy and intent, are freeing wisdom.
- False love, self- and unconditional, are both deceitful hereies.
- God identified His words by faith, fruit, facts, fools (the KJV).
- Full-time pastor is essential for growth (Pr 14:4; I Tim 4:13-16; II Tim 2:4).
- Churches must pray for God to reveal more they do not see.

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- For two Sundays, we have studied what a church is.
- We thank God for all the blessings of a local church.
- If a church is all we know it is, we should be the best.
- Why would we ever give Jesus Christ second best?
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What Is a Great Church?

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|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Christ-Centric | Self-Correcting | Hospitable & Entertain | No Pagan Holidays |
| First Love – Hot | Disciplining | Internal Welfare | Marriage Only in Lord |
| Regenerate Members | Covers Sins | Work Ethic | Children Trained |
| Spirit-Filled | Holiness | Scrupulously Honest | Five Authority Spheres |
| Doctrinal Dogmatism | Reverent Worship | Liberal | No Cremation |
| Preaching Emphasis | Zeal | Tithing / Giving | Passionate Marriages |
| Church Independence | Attendance | Pastoral Support | Traditional Marriages |
| Due-Order Details | Every Joint | Female Modesty | Patriarchal |
| A Capella Singing | Thanksgiving | Hair Length | Historicists |
| Perilous Times | Evangelism | Closed Communion | Burning Hell |
| Praying | Commission Fulfilled | Gifts – Cessationists | Ministerial Succession |
| Brotherly Love | Civil Obedience | Communion Elements | Christian Ethics |
| Forgiving | Christian Liberty | RCC is Antichrist | No Love Fallacies |
| Peaceful | Passionate | No Secret Societies | Bible by Four F's |
| Unity | Joyful | Women Silent | Full-Time Pastors |

What Will You Do for Your Church?

- Will you pray for it ... with all prayer, supplication, and watching?
- Will you prepare for its assemblies ... to honor God like a governor?
- Will you participate in assemblies ... to help congregational worship?
- Will you protect its doctrine, practice, peace, unity, and communion?
- Will you provide for it every way you are able with effort, time, money?
- Will you promote it passionately as others do things far inferior to it?

**To work the way it should by God's Spirit,
a church must love Christ passionately.
There can be no shortcut to this key
goal and purpose of each local
church and each member.**

For Further Study of Local N.T. Churches

What Is a Church? ... PPT Sermons (2024) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/what-is-a-church-1/>

Higher Ground ... Sermon Series (2015) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2015/higher-ground/>

Ancient Landmarks ... Sermons & Outline (2006) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2006/ancient-landmarks/>

Two Mountains ... Sermons & Outline (2024) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/two-mountains-1/>

Real Insider Information ... Sermons & Outline (2022) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2022/real-insider-information/>

Pillar and Ground of Truth ... Sermon & Outline (2006) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2006/pillar-and-ground-of-the-truth/>

Day of Pentecost ... Sermons & Outline (2017) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2017/the-day-of-pentecost/>

Lesson of the Locust ... Sermon Outline (2006) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2006/lesson-of-the-locust/>

A Preaching Service ... Sermon Outline (2012) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2012/a-preaching-service/>

One Another ... Sermon Outline (2011) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2011/one-another/>

Every Joint ... Sermon & Outline (2005) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2005/every-joint/>

Perilous Times ... Sermons & Outline (2000) ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2000/perilous-times/>

More CHURCH Sermons ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/church/>

More CHURCH Documents ... <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/church/>

For Further Study

- **What Is a Church?** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/church/what-is-a-church-av/sermon.php>.
- **Ancient Landmarks** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/church/remove-not-the-ancient-landmark/sermon.php>.
- **Higher Ground** ... <https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/index/year-2015/higher-ground/>
- **Exceeding Magnifical** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/church/exceeding-magnifical/sermon.php>
- **Perilous Times** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/exposition/perilous-times/sermon.php>.
- **God Hates Compromise** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/compromise.pdf>.
- **A Preaching Service** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/exposition/preaching-service/sermon.php>.
- **True Worshippers** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/church/true-worshippers/sermon.php>.
- **Where Is Your Tent?** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/where-is-your-tent.pdf>.
- **Every Joint** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/where-is-your-tent.pdf>.
- **One Another** ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/church/one-another/sermon.php>.

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