

THE FIVE SHIPS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

"Leadership" is required for the other ships to sail as they should. According to John Maxwell, "Leadership is an influence, and everything rises or falls on leadership." God gave leaders to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). The work of the ministry involves building up the Body of Christ. Believers are to edify or build up one another. Each believer is given at least one gift for the edifying or building up of the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).

One of the ways leaders lead is by providing visions or pictures of what God wants to accomplish (cf. Prov. 29:18). A second way leaders lead and also equip the saints for ministry is by providing patterns or examples for the saints to follow (1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). A third way leaders lead is by praying for the saints (Acts 6:4; Col. 4:12). A fourth way leaders lead is by proclamation of the Word of God (Acts 6:4; 1 Tim. 4:11, 13; 2 Tim. 4:2).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Paul mentions three responsibilities of believers to their spiritual leaders: (1) recognize them, (2) esteem them, and (3) be at peace with them. The writer of Hebrews points out five responsibilities of the congregation to the spiritual leaders of the church: (1) Remember your spiritual leaders – remember their exposition of the Word of God and remember their examples and follow them (Heb. 13:7). (2) Obey your spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17a). (3) Submit to your spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17b). (4) Pray for your spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:18). (5) Greet your spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:24).

"Worship" is a ship that will sail on forever. Worship is an end in itself. From the Book of Revelation, we learn that one of the continuing activities in Heaven is worship (Rev. 4:9-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-17; 15:1-4; 19:1-6).

Some of the definitions of biblical worship based upon actions and reactions of worshippers in the Bible: First, biblical worship is valuing God more than anyone or anything in the world. After Job had lost his three daughters and seven sons and all of his material possessions, he was still able to worship God because he valued God more than he valued all of his possessions (Job 1:20-22; cf. Matt. 22:37-38; Phil. 1:20-21; 3:7-10). Second, biblical worship is giving glory to God (Ps. 29:2; 1 Chron. 16:23-29). Third, biblical worship is giving to God adoration, honor, reverence because He is worthy (Rev. 4:10-11; 5:12).

Fourth, biblical worship is offering up spiritual sacrifices to God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Spiritual sacrifices that are acts of worship are:

our bodies presented to God (Rom. 12:1-2)

our praise to God (Heb. 13:15)

good works and

sharing our material blessings with others (Heb. 13:16; cf. Matt. 5:16)

converts won to Christ (Rom. 15:16)

our financial contributions to meet the needs of missionaries (Phil. 4:15-18).

The true worshipper seeks God and is satisfied with God (Ps. 27:4; 63:1-8; Matt. 2:1-2, 11). God is seeking worshippers (John 4:23).

The different kinds of worship are family worship, individual worship, private worship, worship in all of life, public, or gathered, or assembled, or congregational worship. All believers should participate in congregational worship each week (Heb. 10:24-25). All believers should also be involved in individual or private worship every day. Worship is to be a lifestyle (John 4:23).

"Discipleship" translates the Greek noun *mathētēs*, which means "a learner," "a student," "a follower," "an imitator," "an adherent of a teacher and of his or her teachings." *Mathēteuō* is the verb form of the noun *mathētēs*, and it is translated "make disciples" in Matthew 28:19, NKJV.

"Disciple" was the name most often used in the Book of Acts to refer to the early believers (Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 19, 26; 11:26; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 19:1, 30; 20:7; 21:16). According to Acts 11:26, "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The word "Christian" (Greek, *Christianos*) occurs only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).

The early Christians were disciples who made disciples (Acts 14:19-22; cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). All believers in Christ are commanded to make disciples for Christ. Making disciples for Christ is the plan of Christ for reaching the nations for Christ (Matt. 28:19).

One of the ways disciples are made is by teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20). Jesus taught by explanations with illustrations (Matt. 5:1-16; 13:1-52). Jesus also taught by setting examples (John 13:15; cf. 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3).

"Fellowship" translates the Greek noun *koinōnia*. One of the meanings of *koinōnia* is "sharing." The believers in the Early Church shared four things:

They shared their blessings (Acts 2:45-46; 4:34-37)

They shared their beliefs (Acts 4:33; cf. Philemon 6)

They shared their burdens (Acts 4:23; cf. Gal. 6:2)

They shared their battles (Acts 4:23; cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8-9)

Four of the continuing activities of the Early Church were: (1) Bible study, (2) fellowship, (3) Communion and (4) prayer (Acts 2:42). Fellowship with other believers is one of the requirements for spiritual growth. Believers are commanded to come together for corporate worship and fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25).

"Stewardship" is one who manages that which belongs to another. Since God owns everything, everyone is a steward; however, everyone is not a good steward (Deut. 8:18; Ps. 24:1; 1 Chron. 29:11-14; Haggai 2:8).

God wants believers to be good stewards of their temples or bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20; cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19), their time (Eph. 5:16), their treasures (Prov. 3:9; 22:7; Mal. 3:8-12), and their talent and spiritual gift (1 Cor. 7:7; 12:7, 11; Eph. 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).

Good stewardship is necessary for a church to be healthy and to do all that God has called her to do.

One day we will all have to give an account of our stewardship of treasures, talents, temple and time (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:10).