

Baptism
Body of Christ
Discipleship
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What We
Believe

Baptisms

Introduction

Scripture teaches that we are to “press on to maturity” with the goal to be “conformed to the image of Christ” after we commit our lives to Christ. Hebrews 5:11-6:3 is a key passage of Scripture in understanding that process of growth. It states that there are “elementary principles” that should be part of our foundation to move on to maturity. These six elementary principles are listed in Hebrews 6:1-2. This Perspective deals with understanding the third principle, that of instruction about “washings” (the Greek word here is baptisms).

The Issues

Throughout the history of the church, few words caused as much confusion, diversity, misunderstanding, problems, and even loss of life, as the word baptism. In early church history the issue was water baptism. What did it accomplish? How should it be done? Who should or could be baptized, etc.? In recent church history the issue is Spirit baptism. What does it really mean? How does it happen? Who needs it? What is the evidence or result of it, etc.?

Water baptism and Spirit baptism are only two of several types of baptisms mentioned in Scripture. There are many more questions about these two baptisms, so all the questions regarding baptism will not be answered in this limited

space! In this Perspective, several questions, the meaning and significance of five different baptisms referred to in Scripture will be clarified.

Basic Meaning

One reason so much confusion exists about baptism is that there is no English equivalent for the Greek word *baptismo*, so the translators transliterate the Greek word into the English to make the word baptism. The root word means “to overwhelm with a liquid” or “to stain”. The dictionary definition is “to wash or dip”. The consistent significance is “to identify with” or “be identified with”. Understanding this aspect of the definition answers many questions. Being baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11), into the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13), with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Acts 11:15-16), with water (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:41) and with fire (Matthew 3:11, or Mark 10:38-39), means to be or will be identified with Christ’s death and resurrection, identified with the Body of Christ (the Church), identified with the Holy Spirit and identified with fire (or suffering). To understand the concept of baptism one must understand its basic scriptural meaning, to be identified with something.

Jesus’ Death and Resurrection

The sixth chapter of Romans explains a key truth for all believers in Christ: all believers are baptized into or identified with Christ’s death and

resurrection ³/₄ when He died, the believer died; when He rose, the believer rose. This chapter states that the “old self” died to sin and newness of life is now possible in the power of His resurrection; it also states this is true for all believers. This baptism is therefore synonymous with salvation. Even though all believers are baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection, verses 11, 12 and 13 command us to “consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God,” and to not “let sin reign in our mortal bodies”. The good news of this baptism is that identifying with Christ’s death and resurrection enables the believer to obey these commands.

The Body of Christ

I Corinthians 12:12-17 explains that all believers are baptized into or identified with one body, that is, Christ’s Body or the Church (see Ephesians 1:22-23). This second baptism is also synonymous with salvation. This passage goes on to explain that because the Body is made up of many parts there is diversity and because all believers are a part of Christ’s Body there is unity. Both the diversity and the unity must be recognized (see Our Perspective on the Body of Christ). Being baptized into the Body of Christ means identification, not simply with one small group, but with the Body of Christ which spans all barriers ³/₄ time, geography, race, society and even fine points of doctrine.

Water

Because of the example of Christ and the disciples, as well as the commands of Christ and the disciples (Matthew 28:19-20, etc.), it is right for people who have experienced these first two baptisms (into Christ’s death and resurrection and into His Body) to be baptized with water. The first two baptisms are a real, inward, private and spiritual event. Water baptism is an outward, public, physical statement that a person has experienced the first two baptisms. It is a testimony before God, the enemy, the world, and the Church that a person has committed their life to Christ.

Holy Spirit

Scripture also teaches that those who commit their lives to Christ get to be baptized with or identified with the Person and power of the Holy Spirit. This was promised by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11), restated by the resurrected Jesus (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8), and experienced by many people in the New Testament (Acts 2:1-3; 4:31; 9:17-19; 10:44-48, etc.). Scripture also says the same promise is available to all believers (Acts 2:37-39). In recent church history there has been much discussion regarding the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. When does this happen or should happen to someone? What is the evidence that it happened? The scriptural answer to the first question is, “As soon as possible!” No matter what theological position a person holds, the truth is that not all believers

are identified with the Holy Spirit in a practical way. God's desire is that all believers would let His Spirit completely fill them up and overflow to others and that it would happen as soon as they sense the need and someone shows them how they can identify with the Holy Spirit.

The scriptural answer to the second question is, "There are several evidences but there is always an evidence." When a person identifies with the Holy Spirit, it always impacts their life. The initial evidence is not as much a concern as the ongoing evidence of being identified with the Holy Spirit (though there is real validity in the gift of speaking in tongues). The ongoing evidences are: 1) a greater love for God and His people, 2) a power for the supernatural to be more naturally released through us and 3) a level of holiness that comes from a renewed mind (II Timothy 1:7).

Fire

Scripture also says that suffering (fire) is a necessary part of the lives of followers, who are, after all, followers of a Savior who suffered. Mark 10:38-39; Acts 14:22; I Peter 2:21; and II Timothy 3:12 all speak of the fact that identification with suffering is part of following Christ. Suffering can come from a variety of sources and reasons: 1) living in a fallen world, 2) living in a world system that resists God, 3) personal sin, or even 4) the enemy and his forces. The good news is

that God can and will use suffering for good to those who let Him. This is the truth of Romans 8:28. The scriptural way of moving through suffering is to...re-joyce! (See Matthew. 5:11-12; Romans 5:2-5; James 1:2-4, etc.). Rejoicing in the midst of suffering is possible: remember that in Malachi 3:1-3 the Messiah is described as a refiner's fire. That is to say, in the midst of suffering, Jesus can and will use that bad thing to purify, mature, and equip believers to be better off because they experience these sufferings.

Conclusion

As you consider and respond to the baptisms mentioned in Scripture, it's Peninsula Christian Fellowship's desire and prayer that you would be completely identified with these things: the death and resurrection of Jesus, which brings freedom from the bondage of sin; His Body, the Church, which is part of His life on earth; the Holy Spirit, which enables us to demonstrate His life to others; and fire (suffering), which is a tool in the Master's hand.

Some Practical Matters about Water Baptism

It really is a delight to be able to baptize people in water because it is part of the discipling process Jesus commanded believers to be involved in. Having already addressed the meaning of baptism in this Perspective, let's cover some of the practical matters for any who want to be baptized in water.

The method used at PCF is immer-sion. Why?

There is plenty of water in the Northwest(!) and

It seems like that was the normal procedure in Scripture.

When you are baptized you are going to get wet! That means you will want to bring 1) a complete change of clothes, 2) two (2) towels, 3) a plastic bag to put your wet clothes in and 4) a hair-dryer if desired. Appropriate clothes to wear are pants and a dark shirt or blouse.

Since baptism is part of making disciples, it would be appropriate for a person you have a special spiritual relationship with to assist in your baptism. Also, since there will be singing during the actual baptism, you may request a specific song to be sung as you are being baptized $\frac{3}{4}$ let us know and we will encourage the people to sing it.

An important aspect of water baptism is the opportunity for the individual to verbally communicate "Jesus is my Lord". Therefore, during the baptism time, we will "interview" you in such a way that you will have that opportunity. We understand that many people find any type of public speaking very frightening, so we will be sensitive not to make this a difficult time.

A Word about Baptizing Children

Since we don't feel that water baptism has any inherent spiritual value in the actual salvation process, and since we believe that water baptism is an outward, physical, public statement of an inward, spiritual, private commitment, we only baptize those children who have already made a commitment to Christ. We do have baby dedications for our infants and young children as a statement of the parents' desire and faith that God would bless their child.

There is no set age at which we begin baptizing children. Rather, we ask two other questions: Who initiated the baptism $\frac{3}{4}$ was it the child's desire/decision or was it someone else's desire/decision? Are they certain Jesus is their Lord and Savior and that they will live for Him for the rest of their lives?

A Word about Re-baptizing People

There are times when it may be right to baptize someone who was baptized as an infant or very young child. We do this not to declare the first baptism invalid but rather in a real sense to fulfill the desire of the parents when they had their child baptized. As I understand infant baptism, one of the desires of the parent is to have the child be in a very close relationship with God. A later baptism, initiated by the individual, is a statement that they now have made that same commitment $\frac{3}{4}$ their parents' desire is now their desire.

Discipleship

One of the last things Jesus spoke to the disciples was a firm command: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). It was at that point that the plan for the expansion of God’s kingdom was laid. Jesus spoke these words having just said, “all authority has been given to Me.” To this day God has no alternate plan. We may conclude that as believers we have been “authorized” by Jesus to make disciples. Notice that there are four action words in these two verses: 1) go, 2) make disciples, 3) baptizing, and 4) teaching. To understand the emphasis of what Jesus is saying, we must understand that only one of these words is the main verb: make disciples. The other three words support or describe how the main verb is to be accomplished. With this understanding, the passage could be read as follows: “having gone (understanding that you will go) make disciples. Do this by baptizing (initiating people into the faith) and by teaching (instructing people in the faith).”

From this passage come two basic goals we must seek to fulfill as followers of Christ if we are going to be obedient to this last and most important command of

our Lord. The first is that we ourselves would actually be disciples and then that we would be seeking to help others to become disciples as well.

It is also interesting and important to note that the word Christian is used only a few times in the New Testament, whereas the word disciple is used over two hundred and fifty times. We are not called simply to be Christians in the cultural sense of the word, but rather to be disciples. Since the disciples were the first to be called Christians (Acts 11:26), we must understand the biblical concept of being a disciple if we are going to understand the concept of being Christian.

Definition

The basic Greek meaning for the word disciple is “learner”. Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, “teaching them to observe (or do) all that I commanded you.” The key, then, is that a disciple is one who is learning from Jesus. There are many channels that Jesus can use to teach us, but it is important to always see Him and not simply the channels as the One from whom we are learning.

Jesus’ method of teaching the disciples was instruct them and to have them go and do what he taught! James understood this principle well, for he says, “but prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers” (James 1:22; see also Matthew 7:24-28). Notice that the disciples are to be learning “all that Jesus commanded”. This seems like too

big a task! How can anyone learn to obey all that Jesus commanded? It helps to understand that in another passage (Matthew 22:36-40) Jesus said all of the commandments can be summarized in the commands to 1) love God and 2) love people. What or who is a disciple? We feel a good working definition of a disciple is “one who is learning from Jesus how to love God and how to love people.”

Characteristics

From Matthew 10:24-33 we can see several characteristics of a disciple of Jesus. First, he knows the relationship between himself and his master (v. 24-25). He “is not above his master,” that is, he is not trying to have Jesus be his servant, rather he understands Jesus is the Lord and he is the servant. Another way of saying this is that he walks in humility before his Lord. He is also seeking to be like his master (imitation). Ephesians 5:1 also mentions that we are to be “imitators of God”. Then, the disciple’s commitment allows him not to fear people or circumstances because he fears God (v. 26-31). This fear of God is that reverential awe that motivates me to make the right choice. Finally, a disciple openly identifies himself with Christ (v. 32-33). He is not afraid to be noticed as one who is following Jesus Christ.

Conditions

Scripture also makes it very clear that certain conditions apply to being a disciple. We would rather think that everything about our relationship with

Christ is unconditional, but that is simply not what Jesus taught. Luke 14:25-35 gives us some of these conditions. Notice the specific conditions of verses 26, 27 and 33. Verse 26 indicates that all of our relationships must be subordinate to Christ. Though this verse uses the word hate, it is very clear from Scripture this should be seen as a comparison rather than as an indication that we are not to value other relationships. It simply means that we cannot follow Jesus while following others. Further, verses 27-32 show us that all of our future must be submitted to Christ. This is communicated in the use of the phrase “carry his own cross”. A person who carried his cross had no more future; no plans, goals, dreams, etc. They were all set aside. Finally, we see in verse 33 that all of our possessions are to be surrendered to Christ.

When we are hanging on to possessions, we cannot be hanging on to Christ. So then, Jesus taught that in order to be a disciple, one must be willing to give all he is and all he has to Christ.

Evidence

The Word goes on to show us that there are evidences of being a disciple. One is that we are fruitful (John 15:8). Just as a good apple tree will produce good apples, a disciple of Christ will produce more of Christ’s life and produce more disciples! Another evidence is that we abide in His Word (John 8:31). The word abide is defined as simply

“remaining with or in”. As we remain with or in God’s Word, then we are truly disciples of Christ. A third evidence is our love for other disciples (John 13:34-35). Jesus said, “love one another even as I have loved you” and, “by this all men will know that you are my disciples.” As a disciple, then, we will have His love and give His love to others. Finally we evidence our life as a disciple by keeping the command-ments of Jesus (I John 2:3-6). In fact, in this same passage we are told that “whoever keeps His (Christ’s) Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.” As a disciple of Jesus we have the privilege of demonstrating His perfect love!

Result

It is important to see that the result of being a disciple is that we will make other disciples. Having learned from Jesus (hearing His words and doing what He has commanded), the disciples were prepared and commanded to do the same with others. We are a direct result of that initial plan! As those who have learned from Jesus, we also are to go and make disciples, “teaching them all” that Jesus “has commanded” (Matthew 28:20). That is our purpose as a Body, and we encourage you to make it your purpose as an individual: first to be a disciple, and second to be making disciples. What greater way could we express our love for God and for one another than to be about the work of making disciples, teaching and doing as Jesus did.

God's Word

Peninsula Christian Fellowship has two purposes $\frac{3}{4}$ to worship God and to minister to people. Other Perspectives have explained the purposes of worship and ministry and how discipleship and love relate to them. There are five “God-given” means that He has made available to us to help us grow in worship and ministry. These are: 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) the Word, 3) prayer, 4) stewardship and 5) the Body of Christ. The following is Our Perspective on God’s Word, the Bible.

Its Importance

In considering truths about God’s Word, II Timothy 3:16-17 are key verses. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Billy Graham says, “There are clear reasons why we believe in the authority of the Bible. It is God’s own Word, His saving truth which He has spoken. It is inspired from beginning to end, and the only infallible guide of faith and practice. The more we study the Scriptures, the more we become aware that the Bible passes every test that must be applied to it in order to attest its inerrancy, divine inspiration, and authority.”

Note two key concepts from II Timothy 3:16-17 quoted above. First, all Scripture (both New and Old Testaments) is “God-breathed” or inspired by God, it is His words recorded. Second, note that because it is God-breathed it is “useful,” valuable, or profitable.

Scripture is God-breathed

Communication with someone first involves a thought, then as breath moves across our vocal cords and our mouth forms words, that thought is communicated. Recognizing that the Greek and Hebrew words for “breath” and “spirit” are the same and recognizing that Jesus is the Living Word (John 1:1,14), notice the way the Triune God communicates. The Father has a thought and through the breath of His Spirit and the formation of the Living Word (Jesus), He communicates to us. This is what happened in creation and this is what happened in the communication of the written Word. This is also the way that God continues to speak to us through His Word today. The Father wants to communicate to us, so, through the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives He brings a truth from His Word to our attention and the result is more of the formation of the life of Jesus in us.

The Bible is not simply a book written by men, but rather it claims to be God's eternal word written as He has directed (II Peter 1:20-21). Because the Word is God-breathed, it is true, trustworthy (Numbers 23:19; John 8:30-

32; 17:17; Titus 1:2), sure and reliable (Psalm 119:86; Matthew 5:17-18; John 10:35; I Peter 1:25).

Scripture is Useful

Notice several statements the Word makes about its usefulness. The Word is at work in those who believe (I Thessa-lonians 2:13). The Word saves us (II Timothy 3:15), nourishes us (I Peter 2:2; Matthew 4:4), strengthens us (Psalm 119:28,50), sanctifies us (John 17:17) and equips us for service (II Timothy 3:17). It builds us up and gives us an inheritance among the saints (Acts 20:32). The Word fills us with light (Psalm 119:130), gives us direction for our lives (Psalm 115:9-11,13), gives us endurance, comfort, and encouragement (Romans 15:4). It delivers us and preserves us from sin (Psalm 119:9,11), heals us (Psalm 107:20), cleanses us and makes us godly (Ephesians 5:26) and gives us faith (Romans 10:17).

The Word is living! Active! And just like a two-edged sword, it is capable of separating the things which are really of God from the things of man. It judges the intentions of the heart and brings them to light (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

Our Response

There are also several statements made about what we are to do in order to benefit from the value of the Word. Believing all that has been said to this point about the Word, would not benefit

us in any way. Before we receive any of the benefits of the Word, we must be do certain things with it: diligently study it (II Timothy 2:15); let it dwell richly in us (Colossians 3:16), guard it and consider it precious (Proverbs 7:1-3), and search the it for wisdom as if for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:1-6). We are also to teach it and talk about it (Deuteronomy 6:6-7) as well as love and delight in it (Psalm 119:47-48).

God directs us to spend time in the Word (Colossians 3:16; II Timothy 2:15), memorize the Word (Proverbs 7:1-3; John 15:7) and meditate on the Word (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3). In fact, God promises spiritual prosperity and success in what we do only if we will store up His Word within us and meditate on it day and night.

Perhaps the most important statement it makes tells us not to be hearers only, but also doers of the Word (James 1:22). We all experience storms and rough times in our lives. Jesus taught that when these storms come, if we hear His words but do not act on them we will experience destruction. Having accurate biblical information without obedience is dangerous. On the other hand, He also taught that if we act on His Word we experience safety and solidarity (Matthew 7:24-27). Obedience is also a means of expressing our love for Him (John 14:21) and of experiencing His blessing (John 13:17).

How Does the Word Help Us in Worship & Ministry

The Word is not only a book that is valuable for us on a personal basis, but it also helps us develop as worshipers and ministers. How?

In order to worship God we must understand both what worship is and Who God is. Scripture both describes and illustrates worship and reveals God more clearly than any other source. As we spend time in the Word we get to know God and therefore can respond through worship to the truth we know of God.

In order to minister to people we must understand both what the real needs of people are and how God designed those needs to be met. Again, God's Word is the best place to see those needs and solutions. Let's continue to give the Word priority in our schedules and lives so we can better love God and people.

The Holy Spirit

Peninsula Christian Fellowship has two purposes $\frac{3}{4}$ to worship God and to minister to people. Other Perspectives have explained how discipleship and love relate to them. There are five God-given means made available to help us grow in worship and ministry. These are the Holy Spirit, the Word, prayer, stewardship, and the body of Christ. The following is Our Perspective on the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit

A key thing to know is that the Holy Spirit is not simply a force as some believe, but rather He is a real Person or Being. This is shown in Scripture, for He is able to think (Acts 13:2), decide (I Corinthians 12:11), and feel (Ephesians 4:30). These are characteristics that make up a personality: mind, will and emotion. When Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit He never spoke of Him as a force but rather as a person. (Notice Jesus' use of pronouns in John 16:7-15 for instance.) He is not just an ordinary person or a human being. As we look at Acts 5:3&4, it is clear that He Himself is called God. He is part of the Godhead, or the Trinity.

Each Person of the Trinity has similarities in that each is God but each is also distinct and has specific roles to perform. The role of the Holy Spirit is to take the things the Father plans and the Son makes available and make them a

reality here on earth. This can be seen in creation in that the Father was the source of creation (Genesis 1:1), the Son was the channel of creation (the Word, Colossians 1:16; John 1:1- 3), and the Spirit brought it about (Genesis 1:2). This can also be seen in salvation or the new creation in Ephesians 1: the Father planned salvation (chapter 1, verses 3-6); the Son accomplished salvation (chapter 1, verses 7-13a); the Holy Spirit made it available to us (chapter 1, verses 13b-14).

As a person who is God and who accomplishes the will of the Father on earth, the Holy Spirit is illustrated by several items in Scripture. Some of these are: the wind (John 3:8), which describes His power and His sovereign moving; water (John 7:37-39), which describes His ability to flow in and through a person; a pledge or down payment (Ephesians 1:14), which describes the promise of the coming of more of God's life; a dove (Matthew 3:16), which describes His gentle, peaceful nature. This is the One who comes to lead us in worship and ministry.

What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

Beyond the things mentioned above, the work of the Holy Spirit is described in three key passages of Scripture. In John 16:1-17 (also 14:16,17) the coming of the Spirit is promised. In Acts 2 the coming of the Spirit is described. And in Romans 8:1-17 (also Galatians 5:16-26) the coming of the Spirit (and living in the Spirit) is

explained. Let's look at each of these three passages:

In John 16:7 Jesus makes an amazing statement. He says that it is advantageous for Him, the very Son of God, to leave His disciples! He explains that if He does leave them, another Helper or Comforter will then come and not only be with them but in them (John 14:16,17). Jesus also says that when the Holy Spirit comes He will convict the world of (the reality of) sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). The Spirit of Truth will also guide people to the truth, because He will speak to others what the Father and Son speak to Him (John 16:13). He will also glorify Jesus by disclosing or announcing to us the things concerning Jesus (John 16:14).

Then, turning to Acts 2, these things actually happen. The Spirit comes and helps the disciples (Peter in particular) proclaim the message about Christ and many are convicted and guided into the truth (Acts 2:14-37). The result is that Jesus is glorified and more people receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-40).

Romans 8, more than any other passage of Scripture, explains the relationship between the individual believer and the Holy Spirit. Verses 1-4 say that living according to the flesh is in contrast to living according to the Spirit. Paul uses the word flesh to describe fulfilling personal desires or living as boss rather than taking directions from

God. Verses 5-8 are the key verses. Here Paul further explains this contrast. The mind set on the flesh will result in death because it is hostile toward God, will not subject itself to God, and cannot please God. The Christian, though, since he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (8:9), sets his mind on the things of the Spirit, enjoys life and peace because he is subject to God, and does please God. What a contrast! The chapter also says there is no obligation to the flesh but only to be led by the Spirit as free children of God (8:12-17). Hallelujah!

How Does the Holy Spirit Help In Worship and Ministry?

As in creation and salvation, the Holy Spirit takes the desires of the Father which have been accomplished by the Son and makes them a reality in peoples lives. The Father wants worshipers (John 4:23) and ministers (Ephesians 4:11,12) and Jesus has, through His life, death and resurrection, made it possible to worship and minister. The Holy Spirit then convinces us of these needs, guides by showing us the truth, and glorifies Jesus by disclosing truth about Him and His ways (John 16). He also wants us to set our minds on Him, be in submission to the Father, and be led by Him (Romans 8). As He is allowed to work in our lives in these ways and as His working is responded to with an open heart, He will cause a greater understanding of God and His worth. Through the working of the Holy Spirit we will become better worshipers and we will have a greater understanding

of people and their need and therefore become a better minister.

Let's continue to press in to and respond to the workings of God's Spirit in our lives.

Love

Matthew 28:18-20 is referred to as the Great Commission. And rightfully so. It is “great” in that it is most important or all inclusive, and it is a “commission” in that it is an order or commandment to accomplish a task. Jesus said, “Go (or having gone) make disciples.” He did not say to make converts, but disciples, those who are committed to follow Christ’s way of life by learning (that is hearing and doing) from Him.

An aspect of this process of making disciples is “teaching them to do all” that Jesus commanded (Matthew 29:20): instruct and build into lives all that Jesus taught. That sounds like an awesome task! How can a person teach all that Jesus commanded? Are we to sit a new convert down and start with the first command that Jesus gave and not let them up until we reach the last chapter in Revelation? That is not what Jesus had in mind. What did He mean? The answer to accomplishing this is given in Matthew 22:36-40.

This passage is referred to as the Great Commandment. Jesus gave this statement in response to a “dishonest question” (that is one that they did not want an answer to; they just wanted to try to trap Him in the answer). He was asked which commandment was the greatest. After giving a direct answer that the greatest commandment is to love God

with all our hearts, souls and strength, and adding that the second greatest command was to love our neighbor as ourselves, Jesus said that all of His commandments are summarized in one word love. Note verse 40. Jesus said that to love God supremely and love our neighbor as ourselves is to fulfill the intention of all the other commandments. Paul also communicated this thought in Romans 13:9-10 and Galatians 15:14. One aspect of fulfilling the “Great Commission” is to be teaching people to be fulfilling the “Great Commandment”. Disciples are made by teaching them to love: to love God and to love people.

Importance

Not only does Christ say that love is the greatest commandment, but every New Testament writer speaks of love as the most important characteristic of a follower of Christ.

In discussing the topic of love, Paul in I Corinthians 13 makes it clear that any action, no matter how “good” or even “religious” it may be, is worthless unless it is done out of the motivation of love (vs. 1-3). He goes on to say that when other things fail, love never fails; when other things are partial, love is complete; when some things remain immature, love matures; and when some things do not remain, love lasts forever. Therefore, even though there are other characteristics that are very important like faith and hope, love is the greatest characteristic a person can possess.

It is very appropriate to say with Paul, “The goal of our instruction is love...” (I Timothy 1:5). If we as a church or as individuals are involved in any activity that is not motivated by love, empowered by love and designed to help others love, then that activity needs to be altered or done away with.

Definition

Since love is the key characteristic in our relationship with God and with people, God’s enemy wants to do anything he can to cause misunderstanding in this crucial area. It is important to think very clearly about understanding just what love is.

Our society today wants us to believe that the essence of love is either emotional or physical. But the biblical understanding of love is not primarily a feeling or a physical act, though it does affect our emotions and, at times, it is expressed in the physical realm. The essence of love is a choice. There are three aspects of that choice. First, it is a choice to give freely, with no strings attached. Second, it is giving for the highest good of another, that which you understand to be the best for the other person. And third, it is doing this so that you could have a closer relationship with that person.

Putting these three parts together, a biblical definition of love would be “freely giving of myself for the highest good of another, desiring (but not requiring) a closer relationship with them”.

Note that this definition fits God’s love for us, our love for people and our love for God. Paul’s description of love in I Corinthians 13:4-7 also fits this definition as does the meaning of love in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Limitations

It is good for us to recognize that God does have a bit of an advantage over us when it comes to loving! Frankly, we, as people, don't always know what the “highest good of another” is because of limited knowledge. Even when we do know what it is, we are not always able to give it because of limited resources. But even though we are limited, we need to recognize that those limitations relate to the quantity not the quality of our love. There may be times when limited knowledge or resources hinder us from loving someone to the degree that God loves them, but the great commandment can still be fulfilled by loving them with the same kind of love God has for them.

Out workings

If the commandment and the goal is to love God and to love people, and the definition of love is “freely giving of myself for the highest good of another,” then how can that be worked out practically?

Two key words describe the outworking or the expression of our love. The first word is worship. The act of

worship is an expression of our love for God. The second word is ministry. Ministry is an expression of our love toward people. These two words are developed in other Perspectives.

Conclusion

Love, then, is not a by-product of our relationship to Christ, but is central to our knowing Him and following Him (I John 4:8-11). I John 4 also states that, “if anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (vs. 20-21).

It is right to be working to fulfill the great commission by teaching people to love God and others, even with our limitations. Worship and ministry, then, are not simply religious words; they are the real expressions of our central purpose.

Ministry

In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus spoke the two great commandments, to love God and love our neighbor. The first commandment, loving God, is discussed in Our Perspective on Worship. Here, in Our Perspective on Ministry, our understanding of the second commandment, loving my neighbor as myself, is explained.

Definition

Since Jesus voluntarily added this answer to the question He was asked, and since He labeled it as the second greatest commandment, it is clear that loving our neighbors is a high priority on God's mind. It is therefore all the more important to have a clear understanding of just what that means. Love is understood as "freely giving of myself for the highest good of another, desiring but not requiring a closer relationship with them." The simplest definition of expressing or living out that love for my neighbor is ministry.

In Greek, the word minister is the same word for servant. When Christ said, "I came not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45), He meant He was here to minister, to give His life away. This point was well illustrated in John 13:1-17 when Christ stooped down to wash the feet of His disciples. Ministry is service. To say you minister when you do not serve is a

contradiction of terms. The way to fulfill the second great commandment of loving our neighbors is to be ministering to them, or in other words, to be their servant. To a servant, serving is not a hobby or a pastime, but a lifestyle; it's what his life is all about. It is not only an act, it is also an attitude. Ministry is not done for what can be gained, but because we love.

Responsibility

Another point regarding ministry is that all Christians are to be ministers. The body of Christ in general has failed to recognize that each individual member has been called to minister. The tendency is to think that ministry is what the pastor does, or at least what a church staff person does. Failure to see that each believer is a minister has meant a failure to meet peoples' needs. If the needs of people can only be met by "the professional," then many peoples' needs will never be met. This church is like a large corporation with each worker supplying a certain need. If one member of the corporation breaks down, there is deficiency (Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12:7). What each member has to offer is vital to the growth of the corporate body. If you feel that you have no gift to offer for His services, then you have not totally understood the meaning of Christ dwelling within you. Scripture is clear that the Holy Spirit has made it possible for each one of us to minister in some way (I Peter 4:10, Romans 12:4-5). The same power that raised Christ from the dead

dwells within you. And the same Holy Spirit who convicted you, caused you to be born again and be baptized into the Body of Christ has also gifted you to share the life of Jesus with others (I Corinthians 12:11).

Two Kinds of Ministry

Knowing that all Christians are called to be ministers, it is therefore vital to know that there are two kinds of ministry: general and specific.

1) General ministry is to be the lifestyle of the believer. It's the process of letting your light shine. Paul worded it this way in Ephesians 4:1, "walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." It is always being ready and willing to respond as servants. It's being in the grocery store and seeing a need and responding; it's offering a smile when a smile is asked for; it's the willingness to change your plans for the sake of another. The life of Christ was just that^¾His lifestyle was geared to minister. Our lifestyle must be geared to minister. One of the most effective ways to be able to reach the world for Christ is by living a Christ-like life of service. This is general ministry.

2) Specific ministry is using our God-given gifts. It's becoming a specialist in His Kingdom. God has given each member of His body a gift for the work of the service, the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-13). Specific ministry is finding and using a God-given gift for the purpose of ministry. If the gift

is administration, teaching, giving, or any other gift, learn to use it for the purpose of ministry to others. God has given you a gift not that you might become rich by it, but that others might profit through it. What you do or don't do will affect others. Let your life be an act of serving, of ministry, both general and specific.

Three "Directions" of Ministry

Knowing the second great commandment can be fulfilled by ministering to people, and knowing all Christians are to be involved in ministry in two ways (generally and specifically), to whom are we to be ministering? There are three groups of people: 1) our personal family, 2) the Body of Christ, and 3) the world.

1). Paul makes it clear in I Timothy 5:8 that the first priority must be ministry to our families (where applicable). Husbands, wives, children, etc., are to be fulfilling their God-given roles toward one another. If ministry cannot or is not being done in the family, it is not possible to reach outside the home in a beneficial and positive way. Also, since ministry is serving, the head of the household is to be the greatest servant. Are you ministering to your family effectively?

2). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful, and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of

some, but encourage one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10:23-25).” There are many needs in the body of Christ. Many need to be “stimulated to love and good deeds.” People are needed to serve babies, children, junior high and senior high students, different groups of adults. Elders, deacons, missionaries, custodians, disciples, prayers, teachers, visionaries, cooks, ushers, actors, musicians, etc., are needed in the body. The needs and opportunities are many. Look for opportunities to serve in the body. How can you serve? Determine to become a servant to those in the body.

3). Not only are we to minister to our family and the body of Christ, but to the world as well (the unsaved people). As a minister (servant) we are to do all that is in our power to see that other peoples’ real needs are met. We are to be willing to sacrifice time, money, or even personal pleasure to see that the people of the world are reached. When Christ said in Matthew 9:37-38, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest,” He shared some of His heart for the world. The laborers are few largely because people have not recognized their calling. Today we are faced with the same problem a shortage of laborers because Christians are leaving the reaching of the world to “the professional”. In truth, we have all been called to reach out. How can you begin to reach out to the world?

Where is the “plentiful harvest” of your world that you can reach?

Conclusion

The desire and the commitment of the leadership of Peninsula Christian Fellowship is that you would become an effective servant. We want to see you fulfilled in your role as a minister to your family, the body, and the world.

Ministry is serving. It need not be a burden, but it has the potential of being a tremendous blessing. Your family, the church, and the world await your decision. Will you become the minister that your have been called to be?

Prayer

Other Perspectives have explained the purposes of worship and ministry and how discipleship and love relate to them. There are five God-given means made available to us to help us grow in worship and ministry. These are the Holy Spirit, the Word, prayer, stewardship, and the body of Christ. The following is Our Perspective on Prayer.

The Importance of Prayer

Of the people we have contact with, few, if any, would argue against the importance of prayer. To do so somehow would classify us almost as anti-God or non-Christian. Unfortunately, few, if any, of us who would argue for the importance or effectiveness of prayer, understand how to pray most effectively and/or enter into effective prayer on a regular basis. Recognizing that much has been and could be written on the topic, we trust that this small brochure will aid in an increased awareness and practice of prayer. Matthew 6:5-14, the place where Jesus teaches His disciples the prayer known as “The Lord's Prayer,” is a key passage on prayer. Let's use this passage as a basis for looking at what Jesus says, first about how not to pray, and then how to pray.

How Not to Pray

It is interesting that Jesus began His teaching on prayer by telling people

how they were not to pray. There were many concepts they had learned or thought of that needed to be set aside in order to relearn from Jesus Himself. Chances are very good that the same is true today. Jesus mentions two ways not to pray. First, He taught them not to pray like the hypocrites (v. 5-6). Hypocrites are actors, those who do or say one thing while meaning or living another. They were religious people who claimed to have a relationship with God. As we pray we must have sincere motives. The hypocrites prayed because it was the expected thing to do. They prayed in order to be seen by men rather than to be heard by God. As we pray we must do it not to demonstrate spiritual stature, but to have communion with God and an impact on the world.

The second negative example Jesus used was the Gentiles (v. 7-8). Gentiles were those who did not know the real God and therefore had wrong concepts about how He accomplished things. They saw God as being either unresponsive or stingy. They saw prayer as either appeasing, convincing, or informing an angry, unwilling or ignorant God. But God is not stingy or unresponsive. He does not need appeasing, convincing, or informing. Yet it seems that much of our prayer is based on this misunderstanding of God. They thought God needed to hear something over and over before He would act. So they prayed something over and over in the hope that somehow God would hear and answer them.

When we pray, we are not to pray to demonstrate our righteousness before people, nor are we to pray to appease an angry God, convince a stingy God, or inform an inadequate God. If we are not to pray like this, how are we to pray? What is the purpose of prayer and how can we pray Jesus' way?

How to Pray

Of the many things that could be said about Matthew 6:9-13, only a few are mentioned here. First, notice this is the way Jesus said to pray. He could not make it any clearer. He said "This, then, is how you should pray:" This is really the model prayer. Not just the words in "meaningless repetition," but the concepts behind the words. Notice that each of the requests are things that God already knows about and wants to have happen. This prayer is not to convince, inform or appease. Rather, this prayer is one where people are invited to stand with, cooperate with or move with God to accomplish things that He wants done in their lives and their world. It is people on earth acting as agents of their Father in Heaven.

A standard definition of prayer is simply talking to or with God. There is truth in this definition, but the most effective prayer, prayer that accomplishes much, is more than just talking. It is understanding what God wants done on earth and moving as the human instrument with God in the spiritual realm to see those things happen in the

material realm. There are several concepts from this prayer to point out.

First there is an acknowledgment of relationship: "Our Father" reminds us of our similarities with God. We are created in His image and likeness. We are in the same family, sons and daughters of the Almighty King of the universe! "Which art in heaven" reminds us of our distinctions from God. Even though we have the privilege of calling Him "Abba" (Daddy), He is still high and lofty, dwelling in greatness and splendor, worthy of complete honor and respect. As we come to Him in prayer it is right to remember and acknowledge these similarities and distinctions.

The next phrase, "hallowed be Thy name," is both a statement of adoration and a request that His name will be honored. As we pray, it is right to spend time in acknowledging His worth, His value, His majesty, etc., as an act of and desire for His Name to be adored. As we do this we put ourselves in a place where His name can be honored through our lives!

Then, there is intercession expressed in the phrase "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is the King of the kingdom spoken of here and He does have desires (will) for the establishment and the expansion of His kingdom here on earth. His kingdom is described as one of "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Scripture is very

clear that God's will for us is to love $\frac{3}{4}$ love Him and love people. We have the privilege of standing with Him to see those desires become real on earth.

Next there is petition for our needs: "Give us this day our daily bread." It is right that we both remember He is our provider and depend upon Him for all of our needs, whether they are physical, emotional, relational, financial or whatever.

The next phrase, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," relates to our emotional or psychological needs. This short phrase acknowledges that we have sinned and been sinned against. The answer to both of these deep needs lies in the word forgive. A key to being forgiven is confession, that is, to "agree with" the one we've offended. A key to forgiving is releasing. Notice Jesus says we are to be forgiven as we forgive. Therefore, as we come to prayer we are to be sure we have confessed our sins and granted forgiveness to those who have sinned against us.

"Lead us not into temptation" speaks of protection in the spiritual realm. It is always right to come humbly before God acknowledging that we have a real enemy and that we are dependent upon God for that protection He has made available to us.

And finally, "for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." tells us that we can pray with anticipation. Because He owns the

kingdom, He has the power, and because He is worthy of the glory, we can pray with real confidence and assurance. Amen? Amen!

How Does Prayer Help Us In Worship and Ministry

It is easy to see that the whole purpose of prayer (to see God's work accomplished on earth) is both an act of worship and ministry. Prayer is worship. Prayer is ministry. There is more to each of these areas than just prayer, but if we do not start here, we may as well not try to go any further. Beyond this, it is through prayer that we draw closer to God's heart. You see, prayer produces intimacy; intimacy with Whom, for Whom, and to Whom we pray. May we continue to grow as a praying people and "move forward aggressively on our knees."

Stewardship

Peninsula Christian Fellowship has two purposes $\frac{3}{4}$ to worship God and to minister to people. Other Perspectives have explained how discipleship and love relate to worship and ministry. There are five God-given means made available to us to help us in worship and ministry; they are the Holy Spirit, the Word, prayer, stewardship and the body of Christ. The following is Our Perspective on Stewardship.

Oftentimes people who have only limited contact with a church, or with people who are in a church that is unbalanced have the perspective that “all they ever talk about is money.” When we realize that Jesus Christ spoke more about money and our use of physical possessions than He did about heaven or hell, or any other topic, we need to confess it is possible that we don't talk and teach enough about the use of money and material things. But money is only one part of a larger topic that we do well to understand. That larger topic is stewardship. It is important to understand just what stewardship is and how to be good stewards and receive the reward of our stewardship (Matthew 25:21).

For the Christian, good stewardship can be defined as using all the resources we have been entrusted with to the best interest of Jesus Christ

our Master, the One to Whom they really belong (I Corinthians 4:7). It is recognizing that since it has come from Him it is our job to use it for Him. For practical purposes, we can break these resources down into three areas: our time, our talents, and our treasures.

Our Time

In the area of time, we must look at our priorities in life. The first priority must be to “love the Lord God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength” (Mark 12:30). This includes, but is not limited to, time spent in worship, prayer and reading the Word. It means daily living a life of serving God and looking out for His interests, rather than just our own.

The next priority should be to love others (Mark 12:31). God is intensely concerned about people and their earthly well-being and their eternal destiny. He admonishes us in the Scriptures not to lay up treasures on earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20). The best practical way to do this is by investing our time in the lives of others, loving them with a consistent Christ-like love, and helping them grow in their relationship with Jesus. Our time should reflect the priorities of loving God and loving people.

Our Talent

God has given each of us unique talents and abilities. Used apart from Him they can produce nothing of lasting

value (John 15:5). Yielded to Him in a spirit of humility, they can produce much fruit for His kingdom and greatly increase our effectiveness in building up the Body of Christ. “God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if all were one member where would the body be?” (I Corinthians 12:18- 19). God, in His wisdom, has composed the body so that we are all different and all dependent upon one another. I have need of you and what you have to offer, and you have need of me and what I have to offer (see I Corinthians 12:14-26). It is very easy to err in one of two directions on this: 1) to think “our” talents are ours, or 2) to think we have no talents. If either of these becomes our view, we deny God’s Word which says we have talent and we hinder the flow of God’s life through us to others. These God-given talents need to be used to demonstrate love for God and for people. This may mean using my gift now, or it may mean waiting and growing more before using it. What is most important is our willingness before God to do what He wants us to do.

Our Treasures

Good financial stewardship is an integral part of the gospel and the Bible gives clear principles for direction in this area (see Luke 16:10-12 and Luke 3:7-18). Three main principles valid for all believers are appreciation, accountability, and availability.

1) Appreciation. The Scriptures say that He promises to provide for all our needs and that we should be thankful and content with what God has given. One of the ways this thankfulness is expressed is by living within our means (Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:4-5; Psalm 37:16-17).

Another scriptural principle that demonstrates appreciation to God is tithing (Proverbs 3:9-10). It is also an acknowledgment of His ultimate ownership of all of our resources and even our lives (I Corinthians 6:19-20). It can also be the first step of wisely using all that He has given us (I Corinthians 4:7). Some have said that tithing is part of the Old Testament law and therefore is not valid for today. Two things can be stated about this. First, tithing was established before the Law (Genesis 14:18-20) and is supported by Christ, who was the fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 23:23). Second, life in the New Testament is always higher, not lower, than life in the Old testament. Therefore we should see tithing as a starting place rather than a goal.

Tithing can be defined as a regular reminder that God is the source, supplier and rightful owner of all that we have and need, honoring Him with the first 10% of what is already all His, thus establishing accountability to Him for how we use the rest. But tithing relates to more than just our finances. It relates to our heart’s trust in God (Deuteronomy 14:22-23).

We tend to think that we “cannot afford” to tithe. We suggest you cannot afford not to! We have found that 90% goes further than 100%. There are two reasons for this, both mentioned in Malachi 3:8-12. God says that if we tithe He will bless the 90% and if we don’t tithe, the devourer will have access to at least as much as we would tithe. Finally, when we think about it, we can all afford the first 10%.

Beyond paying tithes we also have the privilege of giving offerings to specific needs beyond our tithe. At PCF (as well as other places) there are many places that are worthy of consideration for your financial support. It has been said that a man’s pocketbook is the last part of him that gets saved! With this in mind, we boldly encourage you to be fully saved by “testing God” (Malachi 3:10) in both the areas of tithing and giving.

2) Accountability. Wise spending is supported by the Scriptures (1 Timothy 6:17-19). We are ultimately responsible to God for how we use each and every one of our material resources (Matthew 25:14-30).

There are definite practices that should be avoided if one is to be a good steward. Some of these practices are: impulse buying (Proverbs 21:5), self-indulgence (Proverbs 21:17), deception (Proverbs 21:6), co-signing for strangers (Proverbs 22:26-27; 6:1-5), seeking to be rich (1 Timothy 6:9) and unneeded debt (Romans 13:8).

The Scriptures tell us to “know well the condition of our flocks” (Proverbs 27:3) and to use foresight in planning for the future (Proverbs 6:6-8). Having a working budget is one way to make an effort in doing this.

3) Availability. The mark of Christianity is our love for one another. The Scriptures encourage us to be generous and share with those in need, looking to God for the reward. The Scriptures promise that as we do this God is pleased with us and there can be no doubt as to our love and commitment to Him, either on the part of the world, or in our own hearts (1 Timothy 6:10-17; Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 John 3:16-18; Acts 20:34-35; Proverbs 19:17).

How Does Stewardship Help Us In Worship and Ministry?

There is obviously much joy in a healthy relationship with God and with other people. The joy that we experience is equal to the responsibilities we fulfill. As we are good stewards of our time, talents and treasures we can be fulfilling our responsibilities and therefore experience real joy. We know that we are good stewards if our schedule, the use of our abilities, and our material goods communicate to others that our priorities in life are to love God and to love people. If, on the other hand, we are unwilling to use our time, abilities and our money for Kingdom purposes, we are not being good stewards and cannot look forward to hearing Jesus say, “Well done, good and

faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness" (Matthew 25:21).

The Body of Christ

Other Perspectives have explained our purposes of worship and ministry and how discipleship and love relate to them. There are five God-given means made available to us to help us grow in worship and ministry. These are the Holy Spirit, the Word, prayer, stewardship and the Body of Christ. The following is Our Perspective on the Body of Christ.

The church is that “organized organism” on earth that in Scripture is called the Body of Christ. Ephesians 1:22-23 and I Corinthians 12:12-27 are two key passages that develop this truth. Whatever Christ wants to accomplish today, He does it through His Body. In the human body, God has designed each of the members in a right relationship to one another, each having a function, and in the body there is proper order so that the body accomplishes its tasks most effectively and efficiently. It is the same way in the Body of Christ. There are to be right relationships within the church which includes having each person discovering and fulfilling their God-given responsibility to the body as a whole and to each individual. It requires an understanding of the nature of the church as well as a willingness to take our place in it. The Body of Christ can be better understood by examining Christ as the head of the church, the diversity of the Body, and the unity of the Body.

Christ as the Head of the Church

In the human body the head is the command center. It directs all the functions of the body so they work effectively and with coordination. God has given the church a Head as well, Christ. It is Christ who is Head over all things to the church, which is His Body (Ephesians 1:22-23). As the head controls the body, so Christ controls the church. That which the head desires, the body carries out. Without the head, the body cannot function. It is essential. Conversely, the head cannot accomplish what it is to accomplish without the body. God gave Christ the place of head of the church (Ephesians 1:21-22). The church cannot function without Christ. It is the design of God that the church be the fullness of Him who fills all things! That is an amazing truth, and it is impossible without Christ as Head. Christ is to have first place in everything (Colossians 1:18). As a result, the entire body will grow because of relationship to the Head.

Diversity

The church being referred to as a body implies structure. Paul refers to this structure in I Corinthians when he says, “for the Body is not one member but many (I Corinthians 12:14).” This clearly illustrates that the body is diverse (many) so it takes much to make it work. How wonderful! That means each member of the Body of Christ is important! Earlier in I Corinthians 12, Paul explains that God has gifted each one to be fulfilling a specific function in His Body. As these

functions are fulfilled we become “the fullness of Him who fills all things (Ephesians 1:23).” How is this so? Having many members makes the Body more effective. One person is not saddled with all the responsibilities and the body is not limited to what one person can do. Everyone shares in the function of the Body. This makes the Body more coordinated. Since everyone has a function the Body works properly. A body made up of many members results in beauty. There are differences in what each person does, yet in working together, there is shape, color, design. Members functioning together develops contentment since there is a balance in the functions. As each member performs his function everything is being done. This proper function allows us to be better worshipers of God since we are doing what He would have us to do (Romans 12:1,2) and we become more effective ministers since we are fulfilling our function and the meeting of one another’s needs.

Unity

It would seem that with all the diversity in the Body it would be quite a task to keep things under control and working properly. It would be apart from a companion truth: unity. Paul addresses this well when he states, “But now there are many members, but one body (I Corinthians 12:20).” How simple, the body is one! In order for many members to function together they must be one. Therefore, there is a dependence or need

for the other members of the Body (I Corinthians 12:21-22): “I am important, you are important.” Understanding this will result in giving honor to one another and showing concern for each other’s needs (I Corinthians 12:23-24). Unity makes no room for division and causes each person to care for one another (I Corinthians 12:25). Unity also helps develop compassion for other members and there is completeness.

Equipping the Saints

To further facilitate the function of the Body of Christ, He gave leadership (Ephesians 4:11). It is the function of leadership to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11- 12). It is the function of the leaders at Peninsula Christian Fellowship to equip you in worship and ministry, which are developed through the means of the Word, prayer, the Holy Spirit, stewardship, and the Body of Christ. This is accomplished through the development of both the unity of the Body in common vision, commitment, concern, etc., and the diversity of the Body in seeking to know the individual needs and strengths of those in the Body. This is an ongoing process that is being accomplished through the regularly scheduled meetings, special meetings and individual contact, as well as the development of the Perspectives.

How does the Body of Christ Help Us In Worship and Ministry

It is through the Body of Christ that the most practical application of worship and ministry is seen. As the body functions in both unity and diversity we can relate to one another in greater dimension. As these relationships develop, we receive more of Christ's life through others in the body and therefore worship is deeper and broader. Also, we are able to give to others in the body that which we have received. As we come more and more under the headship of Christ, each of us will be fulfilling our function so that together our worship will more effectively exalt the Head and our ministry will more effectively edify the Body. Let's seek to do our best in being an effective part of the Body of Christ.

“Understanding” The Trinity

One of the doctrines (or teachings) of historic Christianity that has been most challenged and is most misunderstood is the doctrine of the trinity. Most cults challenge this teaching and use it as a reason to encourage others not to follow other clear teachings of the Scriptures. And many genuine Christians have real questions about how to understand this teaching. To help give some understanding on this topic, the following four thoughts are offered.

It is true that the word Trinity is not found in Scripture. It is a word that came from the two words “tri” and “unity”. The word simply means “the three that are one” or “the union of three in one”. But the key question is not whether or not the word is found in Scripture; rather it is whether or not the concept is found there. The following thoughts show that the concept of the one true God existing in three Persons is a biblical teaching.

1) The place to begin is to recognize that human finite minds cannot understand everything about the infinite God. People are created, not the Creator. We are smaller than He Isaiah Therefore; there are some things in this universe that are too big for to understand. Only those who refuse to accept the reality of human limitations will have a difficulty accepting this to be true. If we try to force our minds into understanding the nature

of an infinite God, something will have to go. We will either come up with three “gods” (which is heresy) or deny the real divine nature of both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (which is also heresy). Neither of these is acceptable from a Scriptural standpoint.

2) Scripture clearly teaches there is only one true God. The Hebrew word for His Name is YHWH. In English, it is most often translated Jehovah or Lord (capital “L” with smaller capital “lord”).

This teaching is seen in many places in Scripture. In Isaiah, there are four chapters where this theme is stated over and over. Those chapters are 43-46. Here are a few quotes from those chapters.

“Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.” (43:10)

“Is there any God besides me? No, there is no Rock; I know of none.” (44:8)

“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.” (45:5)

“And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.” (45:21)

These are just four examples of many statements made by God himself, through Isaiah.

This truth is also stated by Moses (Exodus 8:10 etc.), David (1 Chronicles 17:20) and Paul (Romans 3:30, 1 Timothy 1:17, 2:5 etc.).

In 1 Corinthians 8:5 Paul does say “For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”).” This verse has been used by some to teach that there is more than one real God. But that is clearly not what Paul is teaching. The verse before as well as the verse following make that very clear.

3) Scripture refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three distinct Beings. The Scriptures do this not only by referring to them by different names, but also by attributing different activities to them.

Here are a few examples. When Jesus was being baptized (see Matthew 3:16-17), the Son was in the water, the Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the Father was speaking from heaven. Each member of the Godhead was doing something different at the same time.

On many occasions Jesus, while on earth, prayed to his “Father,” who was in heaven (see Matthew 11:25, Luke 22:42, etc). In one of those prayers, (see John 17:5) Jesus says there was a time when He was with the Father before the world began. This is similar to the statement made in John 1:1 that the Word (i.e., Jesus from verse 14) was with God in the beginning.

In a similar manner, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as someone separate from himself. In fact, in referring to the Spirit (in John 16:7), Jesus says

that it is only when He (Jesus) leaves the earth physically that the Spirit will come to the earth.

From these as well as many other Scriptures, it is clear that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three Beings who are distinct from each other.

4) Each of these three Beings, though distinct from each other, are each called “God” in Scripture.

The Father is called God. This is hardly disputed, but needs to be stated. Paul’s standard greeting in his epistles includes the phrase “God, our Father” (1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Galatians 1:1, etc.). This is also clear by again referring to Jesus’ regular practice of praying to his “Father” (see Scriptures listed above, as well as in many other passages of Scripture).

The Holy Spirit is called God. The key passage where this is obvious is Acts 5. In verse 3 Peter says that Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit and in verse 4 he states (about the same event) that he had lied to God.

In addition to this, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is God from his divine activity. Works which only God can do are said to be done by the Spirit. His involvement in creation (Genesis 1:2), the conception of Jesus in Mary (Luke 1:35) and His direction in the inspiration of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21) are all indications that He is truly God.

But the key question regarding the Holy Spirit is not His divinity, but rather His “personality”: that is, is He a real Person, or is He simply a force? This question can be answered by noting the fact that the Scriptures say the Spirit possesses intellect (Acts 13:2), emotion (Ephesians 4:30) and will (1 Corinthians 12:11). These are traits that require the Holy Spirit be a real “Person” not simply “the force of God”.

Finally, Jesus is called God. Another way of saying this is “Jesus of the New Testament is Jehovah of the Old Testament”.

Before looking at specific passages to document this, look at the significance of this topic. If we do not believe that Jesus of Nazareth is truly God, we have departed from the historic Christian faith. If Jesus is simply “a god” He should not be worshiped (which He was in Matthew 2:2, Luke 24:52, Hebrews 1:6, and Rev. 4:10). If, in fact, Jesus is simply “a god,” not the true God, He is an idol and should not be worshiped, but destroyed! If He is not God, we should not call Him “The Lord”. And if He is not God, He is not the Savior (Isaiah 45:21). This topic is one of tremendous importance.

There are scores of Scriptures that could be used to support the statement “Jesus of the New Testament is Jehovah of the Old Testament,” only a few of which are mentioned here.

The prophetic verses which confirm this include Isaiah 7:14, where

the child who is born of a virgin is clearly Jesus and is to be called “Immanuel” which means “God with us;” and Isaiah 9:6, which says that the “son” will be called “the Mighty God”. New Testament verses that confirm this include John 1:1, which, even though it has been mistranslated by some groups to read “a god,” still clearly states the fact that Jesus is God; John 1:3, which states that this “Word” from verse 1 is the Creator of all things not just some things (if He created all things then He himself cannot be created); John 5:18, which says that every time Jesus referred to God as His Father He was claiming equality with Him; John 8:58-59, where Jesus refers to Himself as the “I AM,” and the Jews who knew the meaning of this sought to stone Him for blasphemy; Hebrews 1:8, where the Father refers to the Son as “God;” and Jude 4 and 5, where Jude refers to Jesus as “our only Sovereign and Lord” and also says it was Jesus who “delivered His people out of Egypt”. Although these are just a few samples, any one of them documents the basic fact that Jesus is God.

The most powerful verses along this line are comparisons of New Testament passages with Old Testament passages. Some of these include Romans 10:9-13 with Joel 2:32, where it is those who call upon the Name of the Lord (in Joel this is YHWH and in Romans this is Jesus) who will be saved; John 1:23 with Isaiah 40:3, where the Lord's way is being prepared (again note YHWH in the O.T. and Jesus in the New); Revelation 1:17

with Isaiah 44:6, where Jesus and YHWH are “both” referred to as the “first and the last;” and Acts 1:9-12 with Zechariah 14:3-4 where it explains that YHWH’s feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.

By way of review, the four statements that summarize the Perspective on the Trinity are:

- 1) We cannot understand the Trinity.
- 2) Scripture teaches there is only one true God.
- 3) There are three distinct Beings in the Godhead.
- 4) Each of these three distinct Beings is called “God” in Scripture.

Even though there is much more that could be stated on this topic, these four statements form the basis of clear teaching of the concept of the Trinity in the Scriptures and why Peninsula Christian Fellowship gladly embraces this doctrine.

Worship

When Jesus was being tested by an expert in the Law with this question, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” He replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36-40, New International Version).

Definition

In previous “perspectives” we have described love as “freely giving of myself for the highest good of another.” With that definition in mind, loving God is giving of myself for His highest good. Worship is the expression of love for God. The word worship comes from the old English worthship, to ascribe or attribute worth or worthiness to something or someone. Worship in the Old Testament comes from a Hebrew word meaning to prostrate oneself in homage, or to “do reverence”. The Greek word translated worship in the New Testament carries the same meaning. To worship God is to acknowledge His worthiness. Worship is the correct response of one’s spirit to the truth about God. It is an inward attitude expressed through an outward act (Romans 12:1-2). It is ascribing worth to and prostrating oneself before the Almighty God. God seeks worshipers who

will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

Active Love

God didn't just say “I love you,” He demonstrated His love in Christ (Romans 5:8). God’s love agape (Greek) is an active love. Love for God, worship, should also be an active love. A believer should not only be reverent, but “do reverence”.

Whenever there is a glimpse of heaven in the Bible, there is constant worship taking place, as in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4 and 5. As believers see more of who God is, the response will be to humble themselves before Him and to worship Him.

Scripture shows three ways in which this active worship is expressed. The first one is through a lifestyle of serving God. Living in continual obedience to both the specific commands of Scripture and also the individual directives of the Holy Spirit is worshiping (see Matthew 4:10; Romans 12:1-2). Another way of expressing this love is through specific physical acts such as bowing one’s knee (Psalm 95:6), lifting one’s head (Psalm 24:7), raising hands (Psalm 63:4), standing (Psalm 135:2), clapping (Psalm 47:1), etc. The third way we can express worship is vocally (Psalm 66:1-3), such as singing, shouting (Psalm 95:1), speaking (Psalm 34:1), and even silence (Psalm 65:1). Note Psalm 63:3-4 and Philippians 2:10-11, where both physical and vocal expressions of worship are used. Also note that nearly all of these

references are from the book of Psalms. This is appropriate because Psalms is really a handbook on worship.

Created to Worship

We were created by God to worship. Therefore there is an inherent need in people to worship. Of course God wanted that need to be met in worship of Him. If the true God is not worshiped, that need will manifest itself in some way. The prime question, which has remained the same ever since time has begun, is: who will receive our worship? Will it be Satan (directly or indirectly), ourselves or God?

In Revelation 4:9-11, whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to God, the twenty-four elders fall down before the throne. They lay their crowns before the throne of God and say: "You are worthy." Free will gives man rulership of his life. Worship is choosing to fall down before God, laying the crown of rulership of his life at His feet, and saying, "You are worthy." Romans 12:1 says, in view of God's mercy, we should offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is our spiritual worship. This is active love. As we live out a life of worship we are fulfilling the purpose of our creation. God is in the process of making true worshipers out of us who were some type of false worshipers.

Worship: A Means of Grace and Spiritual Warfare

Though it is not normally thought of in this manner, worship is a way of receiving more of God's grace. That is, it is a way of developing an increased desire and power to do His will. In James 4:8 God promises that if we "draw near" to Him, He will draw near to us. Psalm 22:3 (King James Version) says that God inhabits, lives in, the praises of His people. When God draws near to us or when we are in His presence, we will have both an increased desire and ability to do the things He wants us to do.

Worship is also a means of spiritual warfare. In Exodus 17 Joshua led the Israelites to repel the attack of the Amalekites. As Moses stood on the hill, whenever he raised his hands to God, the battle went in favor of the Israelites. Then, in II Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat sent singers in front of the Israelite army. As they began to praise God, the Lord gave them victory over the Moabites and Ammonites. In Acts 16, after being beaten and thrown into prison, Paul and Silas began to sing and pray. God shook the prison, opening all the doors and loosing all the prisoners' chains. This resulted in salvation for the jailer and his family. In Acts 1 and 2, on the day of Pentecost, it was while the disciples were gathered in prayer and praise that God poured out His Spirit upon them, resulting in the salvation that day of 3,000 people. As God is worshipped, God gives personal benefit and victory over our enemies.

Corporate and Individual Worship

It is essential to gather together in worship. There is something special and powerful that happens when believers gather and freely worship. When God finds a group of people together at one place with one heart, intent on worshipping Him, He is freer to manifest His love and His power. As a congregation moves in worship, as a choir, before an audience with the King of the universe, it not only is beneficial to the worshipers, but more importantly (think of it) it makes His heart glad!

But it is just as important (if not actually more important) that each believer has that intimate relationship of worship alone with the Lord. Therefore one basic goal is that each person learn to spend meaningful time in communion with our God. Growing in our desire and ability to spend time with Christ and His Word results in our spiritual nourishment and His pleasure, too. As we develop as individual worshipers, coming together to worship God becomes more effective as a corporate body.

Although there need to be specific times set aside for worship, worship is an inner attitude resulting in outward expression something that can take place anywhere, anytime, in any circumstance, sometimes demonstrative, sometimes quietly within. Rather than being something we do only in church on Sunday, or in prayer most mornings, worship needs to be a continuous lifestyle.

When the Kingdom of Heaven comes in fullness, things as we know them now will pass away. We will be free in the Lord's presence to be in a continuous state of worshipping Him. Learning to worship now is therefore an investment and participation in eternity.

Let us be those who, individually and corporately, want to be fulfilling God's holy desire to be the kind of people who worship Him in the way that He deserves, desires and demands.