

Characteristics of a Spiritual Church

Seminar Outline

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RELATED TEXTS

2 Chronicles 7:14
Isaiah 58:6-9

Psalms 20:6
Matthew 6:10

Psalms 65:5
John 14:13,14; 16:33

Psalms 86:7
1 John 3:20-22; 5:14-15

HANDOUT SHEET

[Indicate which five of these are most important to you in identifying a "spiritual church"]

- Operates in the realm of the Spirit for the advancement of the Kingdom
- A Selfless People
- A Strong Relationship with God (unselfish Love)
- Aggressively pursue Holiness (passionate)
- A growing evolving house
- Vulnerable before God
- Provoked to good works, righteous living
- Where prayer is valued and practiced
- A healthy fear of God
- Sound in the Word
- Spontaneity in true Worship
- Does what Jesus did
- Knows how to handle offense in love
- Teachable
- Submissive to God, Leadership and Authority
- Obedient
- Fruit and productivity, Influential
- Manages Gods resources well
- Quick to repent
- Commitment: Sold out to God, Covenant mentality towards God and one another
- Full of Faith
- Consistent
- Unified
- Transforming

Characteristics of a Spiritual Church

Introduction

To talk about a spiritual church is to talk about spiritual people. We must understand the difference in these two topics. In this class, our focus will be on the shared spiritual life as it is experienced in the context of a local church.

What are the visible characteristics of spiritual life in a church? What can we see? We can see actions, we can see attitudes demonstrated, and we can listen to (see?) speech. We can see the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5) in evidence in the way people live their life and interact with others.

We have the task of applying this not to individual Christians but to the church. As we noted, they are very much the same, or almost the same. How the church acts, the characteristics of the church are not those of the minister, or the leaders. The visible characteristics of spiritual life in a church are made known by the combined lives of the members.

So, how can we conceptualize the visible characteristics in the church? Is this only the shared life, worship and church activities? Are we to talk about the real or the ideal? Should I try to find a church and point to that church and say, "there it is"? There is the example. There is the model. Or do I look to Scripture and say that the model is in the Bible?

Here is our plan for this class. We will begin in Scripture, in the book of Acts, in the narrative of the establishment of the early church. This will provide a possible sermon for those of you who preach. Second, we will look at a specific church situation where it did not always appear that the Holy Spirit was present, yet it is the letter to this church that uses the words "spirit, Holy Spirit, and spiritual" most. In this reference, I am thinking about the Corinthian church. Third, we will look at a short letter, to the Ephesians, and look at the spiritual concepts and references in that book. Finally, we will consider four basic concepts that are visible evidences of the spiritual life of a church, principles or concepts that summarize the Biblical examples. This outline presents another sermon possibility.

PART ONE

Characteristics of a Spiritual Church [Acts 2:42-47]

In this passage we have a summary of the characteristics of the early church. This early church was a spiritual church. Our definition today of a spiritual church is very different from that which the Bible, God's Word, sets before us. That the early church was a truly spiritual church there can be no doubt. In the first 13 chapters of Acts there are more than 40 references to the Holy Spirit. The early church was a spirit-filled church. In Acts 6, those selected as deacons were to be full of the Holy Spirit. How did they act?

Let's take a look at the characteristics of a spiritual church.

- Obedient
- Committed
- Continual
- Community
- Compassionate, generous
- Credible
- Creative

PART TWO

A Church Where the Spiritual Life Was Not Always Evident [1 Corinthians]

What is not the evidence of spiritual life in the church?

- Perfect church
- Church without problems
- Church without conflicts
- Church without divisions
- Church without misunderstandings
- Church without attitude problems, jealousy, pride

What is the evidence of spiritual life in the church?

- A different value system, 1:18ff, Christ-centered
- A healthy understanding of Christian ministry, 3-4
- A healthy understanding of Christianity maturity and what is the goal of the Christian life, 4
- Respect for and acceptance of God's word, 2:13ff, understand the Christian message

- Rejection of worldliness, 3:1ff, reject immorality, disputes
- Acknowledges God's presence, lives out of that reality, 3:16
- Lives holy lives, 6:19
- Sows spiritual seed, evangelistic, 9:11
- Shares a unique supportive fellowship, 12, gifts = participation in God's grace
- Shares a biblical understanding of the role of the spirit in baptism, and the importance of baptism as an indication of the spiritual life, 12:13
- Accepts Bible teaching, 14:37
- Worship has certain spiritual characteristics, is decently and in order, 14:40
- Has a spiritual view of future hope, 15

PART THREE

Evidences of spiritual life in the church—thoughts, attitudes, speech, action [Ephesians]

Serious about God's purpose for the church, Eph 1:14ff

Living out God's promise of inheritance, Eph. 1:14ff

Sense of unity, unified, Eph 2:19, peace, absence of conflict [Jude 19]

Living out God's presence through the HS, Eph. 2:19-22 [John 14]

Attitude of togetherness and acceptance, Eph. 3:1-6

Vision of the world, Eph. 3:7-11; evangelism, how we see the world, how we act toward the world, do we give our testimony [See sin, righteousness, and judgment correctly, John 15-16]

Sense of God's power, Eph. 3:14-21

Living renewed lives, Eph. 4:1-3 [Tit 3:5; Rom 8]

Spiritual worship, Eph. 5:18-20 [John 4]

Prayerful, Confidence in Prayer, Acts 2, Eph 6:18

PART FOUR

Four evidences of the spiritual life in the church

MESSAGE

They had received a message, life-changing, responded to message, obeyed, received HS

MEETINGS

Sharing, unity, harmony, included ALL. When the church agrees to assembly, God expects the presence of all.

MISSION

Of all the things I personally see in the American church of the 21st century the one thing which stands out is this; "The loss of being on mission." Churches have mission statements, go on mission trips, and give to mission offerings; but in point of fact have little concept of a mission given them by their faith in Jesus. These believers lived lives that honored Christ, lived out His principles, and could speak words about Him because people knew how deeply they believed. Their lives had been revolutionized by their faith in Jesus.

MINISTRY

This church touched people where they were hurting. This is what the spiritual church does.

The unspiritual church is the church that is powerless, declining attendance, and has no sense of mission or ministry.