

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2018: *Oneness in Christ*

Lesson 12 Church Organization *and* Unity

Read for this week's study

Ephesians 5:23-27; Matthew 20:25-28; Titus 1:9; Matthew 16:19; Galatians 6:1, 2; Matthew 28:18-20.

Memory Text

“ ‘Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave’ ” (Matthew 20:26, 27, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ, the Head of the Church
- III. Servant Leadership
- IV. Preserving Church Unity
- V. Church Discipline
- VI. Organizing for Mission
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we study why church organization is crucial for mission and how it can foster church unity.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Are there any cultural influences that determine how organizations are shaped and achieve their purpose? What are some of the historical models of organizing society or church that have been developed and used throughout the centuries? What are the dangers in applying these models to church organization and achieving unity?
3. “We do not need a church or a church hierarchy in order to receive the benefits of what Christ has done for us. What we get from Christ we get directly from Him, as our Substitute on the cross and as our mediating High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.
4. “Nevertheless, the church is God’s creation, and God placed it here for us, not as a means of salvation but as a vehicle to help us express and make manifest that salvation to the world. The church is an organization that Jesus created for the

spreading of the gospel into the world. Organization is important insofar as it solidifies and enables the mission of the church. Without a church organization, Jesus' saving message could not as effectively be communicated to others."
(Sabbath afternoon)

5. What are the implications of the New Testament use of the metaphor of a body to represent the church? In what sense is it helpful, and in what sense can it be abused?
6. "The church is built upon Christ as its foundation; it is to obey Christ as its head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man. Many claim that a position of trust in the church gives them authority to dictate what other men shall believe and what they shall do. This claim God does not sanction..." (DA 414; Sunday's lesson)
7. What are some implications of the servant model of leadership that Jesus presents in passages like Matthew 20:25-28?
8. "Although Jesus did not wish to abolish all authority structures, what He wished to emphasize is that church leaders must first of all be servants and slaves of God's people. Their positions are not to exercise authority over people or to dominate them or to give themselves prestige and reputation." (Monday's lesson)
9. What are the consequences of this for preserving church unity (Tuesday's lesson) and church discipline (Wednesday's lesson)? How do we relate models found in the letters to Timothy & Titus with the models found in Ephesians 4, Romans 12-14 and 1 Corinthians 12-14?
10. The lesson concludes with implications for mission: "As we have seen throughout this quarter (and which bears repeating), as a church we have been organized and unified for mission, for outreach. We are not just a social club for like-minded people to get together and affirm each other in what we believe (though that can be important, as well). We have been brought together to share with the world the truth that we, ourselves, have come to love." (Thursday's lesson)
11. How can we model who God is and how he runs his universe (His use of authority)? Are there ways to effectively communicate this within the times and cultures where we live today? Can this be varied depending on the structure of the society around us?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

The way God has worked through his church, through his people, is the way he has demonstrated the truth about himself and won the war. And that God has worked through the church is explained in a dramatic way in the next text on the sheet, 1 Corinthians 4:9: "we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men." (RSV)

Do you know the Greek word for spectacle is *theatron*, from which we get “theater”? Some saints might be reluctant to attend the theater. We need to realize we *live in a theater* all the time—God’s stage. And on this stage he’s demonstrated the truth about himself by the way he has dealt with his church. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, “The Conflict in God's Family” recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>

Lou: In Ephesians 4, it suggests that the work of the church is to help people grow up. How does a church try to do that? How could our University Church here at Loma Linda really help people to grow?

Graham: I really think it is to recognize that it would be growing up for one to go from the more legal, authoritarian view that’s more appropriate for a little child, to this larger understanding of freedom and truth, and that God does not ask us to believe anything for which he does not provide evidence. It is evidence that appeals to the reason. He urges us to inquire, to investigate. These are the things that a grown-up does.

And I think we have to lead people; it’s the greatest service we can perform, to take trusting children and make independent but loving, trusting adults out of them, who can withstand what’s coming. I think one of the first ways is to invite our members to inquire, investigate; every sermon that you hear, go home and investigate. And then they’ll grow up. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #18 with Lou Venden, “God Waits for His Children to Grow Up” recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>

This universe will be run on the authority of truth alone and the truth spoken in love. And if we’re not susceptible to that, if we don’t respect the truth spoken softly in love we will not be safe to save because there’ll be no more Sinai, no more thundering. God will not hold the universe together with demonstration of power because that’s artificial, that’s a unity that’s produced with baling wire. You snip it and we all fall apart. Our church is not really united unless we voluntarily band together in the highest sense of freedom because we all love and worship the same God who speaks to us with the authority of truth spoken in love. That’s real unity which cannot be shaken and God will have that in his kingdom. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Understanding the Mission of the Church, #4, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/4MMUTMOTC>

But so often we are trying to settle people on all the other matters. If you settle people on the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, tithe, and health, without settling them on the truth about God they might keep the Sabbath as Jesus' enemies did. They might pay tithe as his enemies did. They might read the Bible as his enemies did. We could be developing in this "campaign to win a million Adventists", we could, forbid the thought, develop a million enemies who faithfully keep the Sabbath, practice health reform, pay tithe, and read their Bibles. Now that is a horrible thought. But if we are not clear on the picture of God we might do well not to be in such a hurry. Have you read Ellen White's comment? "The Lord is not now working to bring many into the truth, because there are so many unconverted in the church."

It would seem to defeat the purpose of God if he were to empower us to go out and misrepresent him. He won't do it. But as soon as we are settled into the truth, so the Holy Spirit could give us power of influence and persuasion to tell the truth about God it would make sense for him to do so.

I do not believe the latter rain or the Holy Spirit will fall until God's people are really settled into the truth. The same Spirit that will settle them into the truth will then give them persuasiveness and influence to spread this everlasting good news about God to the whole world and then the end will come. Which raises the question, "What is Christ waiting for now?"

It's nothing artificial. He is waiting for a group to be like Job, and to be able to pass through the time of trouble. Caused by whom?

COMMENT: Satan.

And the theologians? Think of all the people that caused Job trouble and nobody could shake him. And of course behind it all is the adversary. And of what is he trying to persuade these people?—of his age-old misrepresentation of God. In the end all theology goes back to the picture of God. And the good news is that he is like this, and that he is not like that. And that's why I believe our whole mission as a church is to picture God as he really is. But if we just go and say he is like this, this and this, without evidence, why would anybody believe us? We have to go with the evidence which is where, but in the sixty-six? Remember the man who was reading in the chariot and he couldn't understand Isaiah? We have to be like Philip who got in with him and explained. We need to be able to help people understand this. And I think one of the most helpful things is to help people keep reading on and not getting bogged down in details. . {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation*, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood. {MH 131.1}

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation. {HP 16.4}

The mind devoted unreservedly to God, under the guidance of the divine Spirit develops generally and harmoniously. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed through the power of God to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion and piety establish so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. After association with the Son of God the humble follower of Christ is found to be a person of sound principle, clear perception, and reliable judgment. He has a connection with God, the Source of light and understanding. {TMK 124.4}

Those who believe in Christ and walk humbly with Him, . . . who watch to see what they can do to help and bless and strengthen the souls of others, cooperate with the angels who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Jesus gives them grace, and wisdom, and righteousness, making them a blessing to all with whom they are brought in contact. The more humble they are in their own estimation, the more blessings they receive from God, because receiving does not exalt them. They make a right use of their blessings, for they receive to impart. {TDG 356.5}

So long as he remains consecrated, the man whom God has endowed with discernment and ability will not manifest an eagerness for high position, neither will he seek to rule or control. Of necessity men must bear responsibilities; but instead of striving for the supremacy, he who is a true leader will pray for an understanding heart, to discern between good and evil. {PK 31.2}

In this work we are to co-operate. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, . . . restore such an one." Galatians 6:1. The word here translated "restore" means to put in joint, as a dislocated bone. How suggestive the figure! He who falls into error or sin is thrown out of relation to everything about him. He may realize his error, and be filled with remorse; but he cannot recover himself. He is in confusion and perplexity, worsted and helpless. He is to be reclaimed, healed, re-established. "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one." Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal. Only he in whom that love flows, even as the sap in the tree or the blood in the body, can restore the wounded soul. {Ed 113.2}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. {MB 142.1}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. {MB 109.2}

Christ made full provision for the prosecution of the work entrusted to the disciples, and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe, but know that My presence will be there. Labor in faith and confidence, for the time will never come when I will forsake you. {8T 16.3}

To us also the promise of Christ's abiding presence is given. The lapse of time has wrought no change in His parting promise. He is with us today as truly as He was with the disciplines, and He will be with us "even unto the end." {8T 17.1}

The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands to be channels of light, our means of doing good will never be exhausted, for the resources of the power of Jesus Christ are to be at our command. We may draw upon His fullness and receive of that grace which has no limit. The Captain of our salvation at every step would teach us that almighty power is at the demand of living faith. He says, "Without me ye can do nothing;" but again declares that "greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father." {HP 319.4}

God's law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love. {MB 97.3}