



God Working Through You

EXPERIENCING

GOD

Henry and Richard Blackaby

GOD'S WILL

AND THE CHURCH

Session 10

Clabon Bogan – c.bogan2@gmail.com -- 609.230.5809



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges is for churches to walk with God so that the world comes to know Him through their witness.

When our churches promotes the presence of God more than personalities, a watching world will be drawn to Him.

We must know the real essence of what Jesus meant when He said *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”* (KJV John 12:32)

○ A better understanding is gained by reading more modern translations where the rendering is “When I am lifted up” (ESV, NIV, NLT, Berean, Aramaic)

➤ The saying is further clarified in v 33 *“to show the kind of death he was going to die”*



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

- The **primary reference** is to the cross, but there is included a reference to the resurrection and ascension.

We must never forget that the cross is the centerpiece of the gospel and the magnetizing force of Christianity.

Jesus Christ's death on the cross, in all its magnitude of meaning is meant to be the appealing factor for salvation.

- When the main focus becomes the attractions, then we have lost our way in walking with God.

The church is a creation of Christ (Matt. 16:18) which He builds using spirit-directed pastors and leaders (Eph. 4:11-13), whose assignment is to train others to maturity so that they can do the word of ministry that builds up the body (edifies)



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

Every member has been placed in a body according to God's plan to accomplish His purpose.

- And every member is given **at least one gift** to benefit the work God has given to His church.

Now it must be understood that the church is not an organization, but rather an organism.

- **An organization** is an entity created by mankind and operates under rules, regulations and creeds which evolve over time.
- **An organism** is a healthy entity that lives, breathes, grows and survives possessing life giving powers
 - **Eph. 1:22-23** And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

And although it is an organism, the church is still **organized** (*arranged in a systematic way*)

- A **vision statement** creates a mental image of the ideal state that the organization wishes to achieve. It is both inspirational and aspirational challenge
 - ❖ Answers the question: what do we want to BE
- A **mission statement** is a **concise explanation** of the reason for existence and describes how the vision will be accomplished.
 - ❖ Answers the question: what do we want to DO
- A **values statement** lists the core principles that guide and direct the organization and its culture. The values create a moral compass for the organization and its employees.
 - ❖ Answers the question: what standards will guide our vision and mission



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The purpose statement of the Church can be found in Acts 2:42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

According to this verse, the purposes/activities of the church should be

- 1) **teaching biblical doctrine** so they can be grounded in our faith (Eph. 4:14 so we are not tossed)
- 2) **providing a place of fellowship** for believers so they can be devoted to one another and honor one another (Rom. 12:10), and instruct one another
- 3) **observing the Lord's supper**, remembering Christ's death and shed blood on our behalf (I Cor. 11:23-26)
- 4) **Praying** promoting stability (Phil 4:4:6-7)



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

Another commission given to the church is proclaiming the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8)

The church is called to be faithful in sharing the gospel through word and deed.

Christ's church is to be a "lighthouse" in the community, pointing people toward our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is to both **promote the gospel and prepare its members to proclaim the gospel** (I Pet. 3:15)

Another purpose of the church is given in James 1:27 -- The church is to be about the business of ministering to those in need.

○ This includes both **spiritual and physical needs**



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

The summary of the aforementioned purposes is illustrated in **I Cor. 12:12-27**:

- ✓ The church is **God's hands, mouth, and feet** in this world—the body of Christ.
- ✓ We are to be **doing the things Jesus Christ would do** if He were here physically on the earth.
- ✓ The church is to **be "Christian,"** "Christ-like," and Christ-following.

In carrying out these purposes, we must **agree with God of the urgency** to know His thoughts on every adventure we engage.

- Amos 3:3 "Can two walk together without agreeing where to go? (Berean Study Bible)
 - I.e., if they are walking together, they must have **made an appointment**

OBEDIENCE IS COSTLY




GOD

**God Invites man to
Relationship**

**God Speaks
His purpose to man**

When we walk together
with God, you ought not
see us, but rather God is
PREEMINENT in the walk

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE VIDEO

- 
- ❑ There's **more to church** than just singing, praying and sermons. The Church is a living organism.
 - It's not just about what happens on Sunday
 - ❑ Two simple truths about the Church
 1. **I Cor. 12:18** God is the one who puts the church together – He adds members as it pleases Him
 - ❖ The church is not formed around people's whims
 - ❖ However, things placed on the altar may find use
 - ❖ What valued thing are we willing to give to God for His use to grow the kingdom
 2. **I Cor. 12:26** God makes all the members of His church to be inter-connected.
 - ❖ Every absent member is part of a body God designed



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

There is a profound thought when it comes to God's church and that is:

○ BEING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DOING

- Being the Church of Jesus Christ necessitates our not permitting the "busyness" of the Church to get in the way of the "business" of Church
- It is here where we allow Church problems and politics to become another source of stress in an already stress-filled life.
- The faith that once nurtured people into *being the church* has become lost in the shuffle of *doing church activities*.
- A proper prospective must revert to that of the early Church where we see **"church" as people**, not a place to perform **duties which generate applause**

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

Most of the benefit afforded to the Kingdom of Christ is not by what we do at the building called church, rather what is evidenced by the lives we live as the Church.

Many Christians struggle with doing jobs they don't see as ministry.

I would like to suggest that it is futile to try and separate the sacred and secular.

○ Our personal lives can never be separated from our Christian walk.

➤ **Can two walk together except in agreement**

❖ How **can one of us be in fellowship with God** and the other is not?

❖ How can we say we love God and thereby keep His Divine orders and do not show the same fellowship to our brothers,





DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

One final thought: The church does not come to know God's will in the same way as an individual does.

- Individually we are familiarized with God's will thru a personal intimate relationship as God communicates through Scripture, prayer, and circumstances
- The Church comes to understand God's will when the WHOLE BODY hears what Christ, the Head, is telling that body to do.
 - With Pentecost the Spirit came to dwell in all believers and there is no division in God (Eph. 4:4-6 -- *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL AS A BODY

- God created the Church as a “body” so every member needed each other member of the body.
- And in the body, every believer has direct access to God and He speaks to every member to reveal His will
- There is a mutual interdependence as we are called to **serve and make decisions.**
- This kind of joint decision making is evident in:
 - a) Acts 1:12-26 The Choosing of Judas replacement
 - b) Acts 6:1-7 The selection of assistants to the Apostles
 - c) Acts 11:1-18 Peter's witness to Gentile conversion
 - d) Acts 13:1-3 Sending Barnabas and Saul as missionaries
 - e) Acts 15:1-35 The Jerusalem council setting disputes
- Even with God speaking to us all, He has still established an order of carrying out His Divine will through an office of spiritual headship under the directives of Christ

PERSONAL STUDY

1. How can we know if our desire to perform a certain activity is God-centered or human centered?
2. How would you evaluate your Churches faithfulness to Christ's prayer for UNITY (John 17:20-22); LOVE (I John 3:11); HOLINESS (I Pet. 1:14-16); PURITY (Phil 2:14-16) and PEACE (Eph. 4:3)?



PERSONAL STUDY

3. What is God saying to you about the way your church currently makes decision?

4. When is the last time you asked God to show you what He is planning to do; and when He spoke it, it differed from your thoughts on how it should be done?



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