

Study One

Preface To The Living Church

As we embark on a study about the church, we must remember that the church is not an organization or an institution. Rather the church is a living organism, constantly growing and changing. The church is a band of people attempting to glorify God in a world where God is not of primary concern.

Membership in the church, the body of Christ, is, or should be, a believer's core identity.

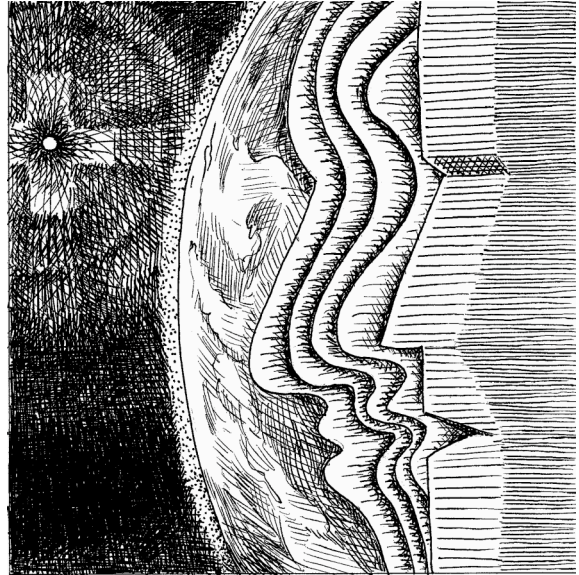
You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. (Ephesians 2:19)

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God... (1 Peter 2:9)

Over the centuries the church, the community of God's people, has taken on various forms and practices. In *The Living Church* John Stott addresses the core elements of a healthy church in the postmodern era.

Share with your homegroup. What are your past church affiliations? How have they molded you as a believer? If you are not a Christian, or if SBCC is your first church, what was your previous experience or view of the church?

Read pages 11–15. John Stott states that *The church is increasingly out of tune with contemporary culture.* (p. 11) What does he mean? How does contemporary culture affect the church? How can the church best respond to a dynamic culture?



On page 13 modernism and postmodernism are contrasted. List the differences.

Modernism

Postmodernism

What components of postmodern culture impact the church?

What are some of the marks of a living church in postmodern times? (p. 13-14)

What is a *Radical Conservative* church? What are the two elements Stott presents as important to this delineation? (p.15)

1.

2.

How have you (especially those who have been around for a while) seen SBCC adjust to various aspects of our culture in the 21st century?

The people of Israel were called to a way of life counter-cultural to the people around them.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord you God, to walk in his ways, and to keep

his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. (Deuteronomy 30:15–18)

Israel lived amidst extremely religious cultures. There were distinct gods to be worshipped. The gods and idols of our times are much more subtle. How did Moses tell the Israelites to live? What was counter-cultural for them?

What actions must Christians take to live counter-culturally today?

What are some areas where SBCC should remain vigilant?

When do you face your most difficult challenges from contemporary culture? How do you safeguard yourself from those challenges? What can you do to be better prepared to live counter-culturally?

As a member of God's community how can you think, act or speak differently in order to enhance the counter-cultural impact of SBCC in our community?

Commit yourself to living first and foremost as a citizen of God's kingdom, by God's values and standards, regardless of what is going on around you! As a homegroup pray for one another in these areas.

Sermon Notes. . .

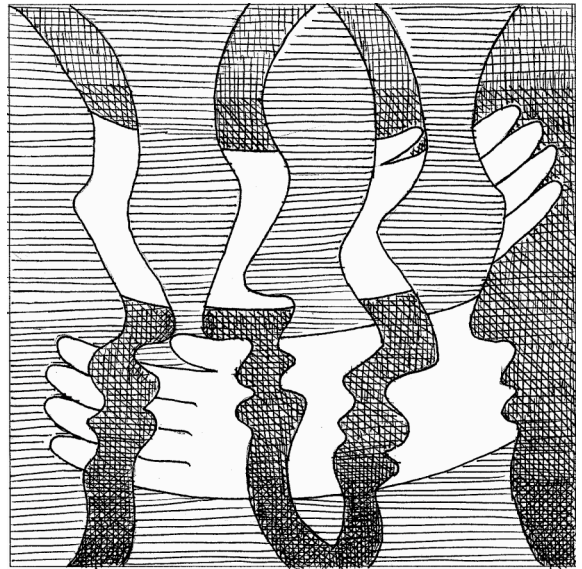
Study Two

Essentials: God's Vision For His Church

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

What components of a functioning church are presented in Acts 2:42-47?

Churches typically have a style reflecting how they operate. They have various emphases that are predominant in their church culture. Reflect on your past and present church experiences. What were or are the core elements or practices of those churches?



This chapter begins with three assumptions John Stott embraces as he describes the living church. (pp. 19-21) Write a summary sentence for each.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

As Stott begins his examination of the living church he draws four characteristics from the early church in Acts: learning, fellowship, worship and evangelism.

A Learning Church

Explain what it meant in Acts 2:42 that *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching*. (p. 23)

How do we go about devoting ourselves to the apostles' teaching? (pp. 24-25) List several ways to receive this teaching.

Read the indented quote on page 25. What does it mean that *The church is not "over" the Holy Scriptures, but "under" them?*

A Caring Church

In Acts 2:42 the early followers of Christ *devoted themselves to... the fellowship*. What did this look like?

Stott states that fellowship has two aspects. *What we share in together and what we share out together*. (p. 26) In the early church of Jerusalem believers had everything in common and sold possessions to share with one another. That was not standard practice in their world!

List some practical examples of Christians being devoted to one another in the 21st century. How can believers care for each other counter-culturally? What does it mean to be a *generous* church? (pp.27-28) Give specific examples.

A Worshiping Church

Different denominations and non-denominational churches throughout history have expressed various styles of worship. Stott briefly discusses formal and informal worship. (pp. 28-29) What is the difference and what is our practice at SBCC?

Joyful worship and reverent worship were both characteristic of the early church. Are you joyful and reverent in your experience of worship? Explain.

An Evangelizing Church

Read Acts 2:47. Luke expresses three key ingredients of evangelism. What are they? (pp. 31-32).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How do these points line up with your idea of evangelism? What can you do to participate more in the Lord's work of evangelism?

In his conclusion Stott points out that the four marks of the living church are all relational in nature. The early believers related to: the apostles, one another, God and the world. As a member of the living church which of these areas do you excel in?

Which areas would you like to grow in? What practical steps can you take to improve your relationship(s) in one or more of these areas?

Reflect on the four characteristics of the church in Acts: learning, fellowship, worship and evangelism. Discuss how SBCC does in each of these areas. Take time and pray for our church that we would rightly embody the marks of a living church

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Three

Worship: Glorifying in God's Holy Name

For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. (Psalm 95:1-7)

What is worship? Write a brief definition. Share it with your homegroup.



In the beginning of this chapter John Stott states that *It is often said that the church's preeminent responsibility is evangelism. But this is not so....* He believes, rather, that worship is the church's number one duty. Why? (p. 34)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Worship is the acknowledgement of God's transcendence. When we worship we set God apart from the common, even from the outstanding. Four characteristics of true worship are presented. Worship is biblical, congregational, spiritual and moral.

Biblical Worship

What is meant by the phrase *biblical worship*? (pp. 35-37)

Give some examples of biblical worship. What are some truths about God, or some Scripture that can be responded to in biblical worship?

Congregational Worship

Congregational worship is the church meeting together corporately to recognize and worship God. Do you worship best when you are alone, with your homegroup (or a small group of people), or at a Sunday service? Why?

The leaders of the Reformation believed that the people of the church, together, are to offer worship and that this is pleasing to God in contrast to the priest celebrating mass with the congregation as spectators. (p.38)

How is worship at SBCC participatory?

Some people arrive on Sundays prepared to worship and contribute to the service. Others barely make it in the door on time. What do you do, or what can you do, to prepare for corporate worship with your church?

Spiritual Worship

True worship in the living church is from the heart. When addressing the Pharisees, Jesus quotes Isaiah's challenge to Israel.

He (Jesus) replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'" (Mark 7:6-7)

John Stott states that:

Too much of our worship is ritual without reality, form without power, fun without fear, religion without God. (p. 41)

How is worship with you? What steps can you take to ensure that worship is from your heart, not out of empty words or ritual?

It is easiest to gauge spiritual worship in oneself. Honesty is required but you know your heart better than anyone. Evaluating the worship of a congregation is more difficult. What are the marks of worship from the heart at a Sunday worship service?

How does the state of the individual's heart impact a corporate worship service?

What difference does the genuineness of our worship make to non-Christians seeking spiritual reality? (p. 43) Is worship important to evangelism? Explain.

Stott makes three suggestions as to what forms good worship in the living church. At SBCC these practices are very familiar.

- *Faithful reading and preaching of God's word*
- *Reverent and expectant administration of the Lord's Supper*
- *Sincere offering of praise and prayer*

How do you benefit from SBCC's faithful commitment to these three elements of worship? How can you engage even more in these aspects of worship?

Moral Worship

What does Stott mean when he refers to moral worship? (p. 45) Use the following passage to inform your answer.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

Take a few minutes and engage in biblical worship. Pray in response to the following four passages of Scripture as a group, committing your hearts purely to worshipping God!

For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. (Psalm 95:1-7)

By this gospel you are saved... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised and the third day according to Scriptures and that he appeared to Peter and then to the twelve. (1 Corinthians 15:2-5)

Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths are beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24-25)

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Four

Evangelism: Mission Through the Local Church

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)



Jesus says believers will receive power and will be his witnesses locally and abroad. We will, not maybe. Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit prompting you to share your faith with someone? Describe this to your homegroup.

In chapter two of *The Living Church* the Christian's primary duty is to God—to worship and glorify God. Our secondary duty is to our neighbor. Evangelism is one of the main ways we serve the people around us. Stott presents a definition of evangelism.

To make known by word and deed the love of the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that people will repent, believe and receive Christ as their Savior and obediently serve him as the Lord in the fellowship of his church. (p. 47)

Forms of Evangelism

There are three types of evangelism: personal evangelism, mass evangelism and local church evangelism. What are two ways local church evangelism is *the most normal, natural and productive method of spreading the gospel today?* (pp. 49-50)

- 1.
- 2.

Share with your homegroup. How have you been evangelized: personal evangelism, mass evangelism or local church evangelism? What has been the effect?

Stott presents four main prerequisites for evangelism.

The Church Must Understand Itself: Its Theology

Stott comments on the church's understanding of itself.

Many churches are sick because they have a false self-image. They have grasped neither who they are (their identity) nor what they are called to be (their vocation). We all know the importance for mental health of having an accurate self-image. What is true of persons is equally true of churches. (pp. 50-51)

When the resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciples he declared his intent for their lives.

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

Based on this passage, who and what does Jesus want his disciples to be?

The living church has a *double identity*. In worship the identity is *holy*, in service the identity is *worldly*. Stott calls this *holy worldliness*. List characteristics that would identify the church as both holy and worldly. (pp. 52-54)

Holy

Worldly

In what practical ways does holy worldliness exhibit itself at SBCC? How are you personally involved in this church identity?

The Church Must Organize Itself: Its Structures

Every church is organized in some fashion. Churches have Sunday services and leadership meetings. Many churches have youth and children's programs. Churches may have college groups, young adult ministries and seniors' ministries. Some churches have midweek meetings: homegroups, committee meetings, bible studies, fellowship groups, outreach events or recovery groups. These structures reflect how a church organizes itself to be holy and/or worldly.

Stott points out that some churches have full schedules where people attend a church related event or meeting every night of the week (p. 56). What are the pros and cons of having such a full church calendar?

With SBCC in mind, respond to the following quote:

I sometimes wonder (although I exaggerate in order to make my point) if it would not be very healthy for church members to meet only on Sundays (for worship, fellowship and teaching) and not at all midweek. Then we would gather on Sundays and scatter for the rest of the week. We would come to Christ for worship and go for Christ in mission. And in that rhythm of Sunday-weekday, gathering-scattering, coming-going and worship-mission the church would express its holy worldliness, and its structure would conform to its double identity. (p. 57)

Read the suggestions for a survey on pages 59-61. The church building, church services, church membership and church programs are examined. How would SBCC do with this survey? What are our strengths and weaknesses?

The Church Must Express Itself: Its Message

The message of the living church is Jesus. In a nutshell he was born, lived, died, rose, appeared and ascended. He now has sent his Spirit to enable us to follow him. Believing and responding to these facts is what makes one a Christian. With evangelism in mind, respond to the following passage. What is it to not be ashamed of the gospel? How are you in this area?

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Romans 1:16)

Two approaches to evangelism are presented and referred to as opposite extremes. Describe each. (p. 64)

1.

2.

What aspects of *total fixity* and *total fluidity* could be helpful in evangelism? (p. 65)

The Church Must Be Itself: Its Life

The church is supposed to be God's new society, the living embodiment of the gospel, a sign of the kingdom of God, a demonstration of what human community looks like when it comes under his gracious rule. (p. 66)

Why is it so important that the living church present the gospel in community as well as simply speaking the truth? (pp. 66-69) Also consider Jesus' words:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

List some examples of corporate life at SBCC where a non-believer would see or experience Christians loving one another.

Look back over the four main prerequisites for evangelism we have covered (the church's theology, structure, message and life). Are you involved in evangelism at SBCC? What area can you grow in and what practical steps can you take to do this?

Sermon Notes. . .

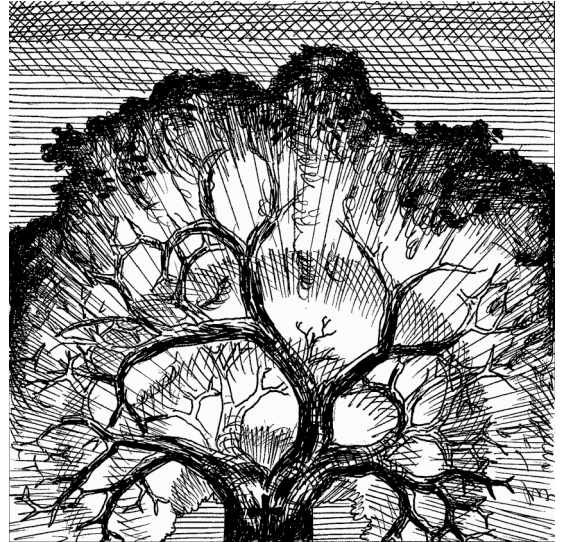
Study Five

Ministry: The Twelve and the Seven

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

According to this passage, why does God place people in various roles in the church?

Share with your homegroup. Who pastors you and what does that look like?



Churches are complex. There are many aspects to ministry and even more roles to be filled by people. This chapter addresses the priesthood of the believer, that every believer is gifted and has a place in the ministry of the local church.

What roles do you fill in the church? Think beyond the lists of spiritual gifts you find in Scripture. What have you done to make church life happen? How do you function in relation to others in the church?

An Every-Member Ministry

A living church has widespread involvement. Certainly some spiritual gifts and abilities stand out because they are more public in nature. But the number of people needed for a church to truly function well is substantial. Read and summarize what Paul has to say about church life.

- *Romans 12:4-8*

- *1 Corinthians 12:12-26*

There is no indication in these passages or in Ephesians 4:11-13 of any hierarchical valuing of persons with particular spiritual gifts, although some do carry more leadership responsibility. There is, however, indication that all roles are necessary, and that every member is needed.

Stott writes that *everybody cannot do everything* with three supporting statements. (p. 73) List these:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

This is typically referred to as the *priesthood of the believer* and is central to the philosophy of ministry at SBCC.

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Stott appropriately refers to this as *the every-member ministry* of the body of Christ.

The Pastoral Ministry

The word *clergy* usually has particular implications. Often clergy refers to the hired pastoral staff that is responsible to ensure that the church operates smoothly. In an every-member ministry model there is no such thing as clergy in the traditional sense. There are, however, pastors. At SBCC we have a board of nine pastor-elders. These

are men and women who oversee and pastor the church. Paul charges the Ephesian elders:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God. (Acts 20:28)

In this section two characteristics of local church oversight assumed by Paul are pointed out. (p. 77) Describe each.

- *Pastoral oversight*

- *Plural oversight*

In Stott's opinion both men and women are qualified for pastoral leadership in the living church. (p. 78) Explain his main reasons.

The Example of the Apostles (The Shepherd)

Paul sets an example of thoroughness in his ministry. What three areas of ministry are included? (pp. 79-80)

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

The Invasion of the False Teachers (The Wolves)

Who are the wolves? What must pastors do to protect the sheep, the people of the church, from the wolves? (p. 81)

The Value of the People (The Sheep)

The sheep are the members of the church, the body of Christ, the people of God. Ultimate pastoral oversight belongs to God, who carries that out through the three persons of the Trinity. (p. 83) This takes into account three considerations. Explain.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How then do men and women fit into God's task of shepherding his people?

How can we encourage and equip the pastoral leadership at SBCC to most effectively perform their work?

At the beginning of this study there was a question regarding your role in the church. Considering an every-member ministry, how has your understanding of your role or purpose changed? How do you aspire to participate in the multi-faceted ministry which, simply put, is the life of the living church?

Take time to pray for one another, for specific areas of ministry and for roles in church life. Pray for openness to new areas of ministry. Pray for the pastors and the elders of the church as they lead and shepherd. Above all, pray that God would be glorified and that SBCC would continue to function as a living church!

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Six

Fellowship: The Implications of *Koinonia*

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12)



In this passage Paul uses the body as an analogy for the church. How is the church like the human body? What does this say about our relationship to one another as believers?

It is impossible to study the New Testament and conclude that the Christian life can be lived in isolation from the church. Throughout the Bible the people of God experienced life in community.

Fellowship is an essential part of following Christ.

Share with your homegroup. How has fellowship impacted your life?

What factors within a church structure contribute to fellowship? Does attending church on Sunday provide a basis for fellowship?

What is the benefit of meeting in small groups? (pp. 87-88)

The Greek word in the New Testament for fellowship is *koinonia*. It denotes having things in common, or sharing. (p. 90) Stott holds that Christians have three things in common, what we:

Share in together (our common inheritance)
Share out together (our common service)
Share with together (our mutual responsibility)

Our Common Inheritance

John Stott points out the following:

We come from different countries, cultures and churches. We have different temperaments, gifts and interests. And yet we have this in common: the same God as our Heavenly Father; the same Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord; and the same Holy Spirit as our indwelling Comforter. (p. 91)

What is the source of our bond in Christ?

Have you ever experienced fellowship with a perfect stranger once you have discovered he or she is a believer? Describe.

How could celebrating the Lord's Supper and worshipping God together through song and prayer develop a sense of fellowship? Do you experience this?

Our Common Service (p. 92)

Name some examples of our common service that you have seen or experienced at SBCC.

How does serving together create community?

Our Mutual Responsibility (pp. 93-94)

Consider the usages of *one another* in the New Testament. Read them together as a homegroup.

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. (Romans 15:14)

Serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other. (Ephesians 4:32)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1Thessalonians 5:11)

If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. (Galatians 6:1)

Carry each other's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)

Reflect on your experiences at SBCC and at other churches you have attended. Have you been ministered to well, as part of the church, or have you fallen through the cracks? Explain.

How can you better minister to those around you in the context of the living church, or in homegroup? How will you go about doing that?

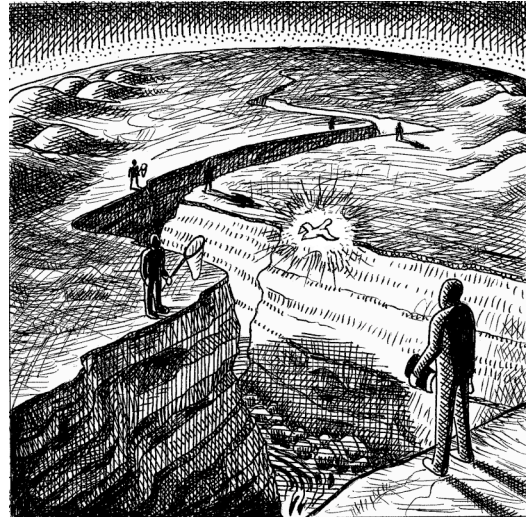
Fellowship, community, is one of the key elements of Santa Barbara Community Church. It's right there in the name! Pray that God will continue to provide rich fellowship amongst his people at SBCC. Pray as a homegroup for each of you to grow and expand in your experience of and participation as a member of our church body.

Study Seven Preaching: Five Paradoxes

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14-15)

What is Paul saying in this passage about preaching?

Share with your homegroup. How do you experience preaching? What factors contribute to this?



In more pronounced sectors of the postmodern environment, preaching has challenges.

The contemporary world is decidedly unfriendly towards preaching. Words have been largely eclipsed by images, and the book by the screen. So preaching is regarded as an outmoded form of communication, what someone has called "an echo from an abandoned past." Who wants to listen to sermons nowadays? People are drugged by television, hostile to authority and suspicious of words. (p. 97)

But preaching is one of the main features of a living church! Preaching should be part of every Sunday worship service. Good preaching in and of itself is worship. It proclaims God's truth and glory. *Churches live, grow and flourish by God's word, but they languish and perish without it. (p. 97)*

As a pastor Timothy is encouraged by Paul regarding preaching. What can the living church glean from Paul's words?

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. (1 Timothy 4:13)

Stott presents ten important characteristics of preaching in five paradoxical pairs.

Biblical and Contemporary

What does it mean that Christian preaching is biblical? (p. 98)

Preaching in the living church must also be contemporary. What must a pastor do to make preaching into a *bridge building operation*? (pp. 99-100) What is the bridge being built between? Give specific examples.

Authoritative and Tentative

Doubt is front and center in our cultural milieu.

Now, in the twenty-first century, people are floundering in the swamps of relativism and uncertainty. Even the church seems as blushing insecure as an adolescent teenager. Many preachers conceive their task as sharing their doubts instead of their faith. For the parading of personal doubt belongs to the very essence of postmodernism. (p. 101)

What is authoritative preaching? What is the authority? (p. 101)

To be tentative seems opposite of being authoritative. Why is it also important to be tentative and what does that look like? (pp. 101-102) How is that different from doubt?

What must a pastor do to preach both authoritatively and tentatively? How does the pastor, as shepherd, feed the sheep? (p. 103)

Prophetic and Pastoral

...the whole church is called to this double ministry—"prophetic" in the sense that we bear witness (without fear or favor) to the doctrinal truth and ethical standards which God has plainly revealed; and "pastoral" in the sense that we deal gently with those who are slow to believe truth and who fail to attain biblical standards.
(p. 103)

How must preachers balance these two aspects of prophetic preaching and pastoral care? (p. 104)

Paul writes the following encouragement to Timothy. How does this tie in with being prophetic and pastoral?

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage----with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Timothy 4:2)

Stott says this goes beyond preachers, that the whole church is called to this *double ministry*. When interacting with fellow believers do you tend to be more prophetic or pastoral?

What personal qualities and characteristics are required to balance being both prophetic and pastoral? How can you grow in these areas?

Gifted and Studied

What does it mean to be *gifted and studied*? Why is it important for a preacher to be both gifted and studied? (pp. 105-107)

Think about how you function as a Christian both in and outside of the church. How are you gifted and/or studied? How are you growing in these areas?

Thoughtful and Passionate

Read this section (pp. 107-109) and respond to the following quote.

By thoughtful and passionate we mean that in all authentic preaching the mind and the emotions are both engaged; clear thinking and deep feeling are combined. (pp. 107-108)

Think about your habits of receiving preaching at church. What is your role in that? How can you prepare yourself throughout the week or before church on Sunday to receive the Scripture and encouragement presented to you?

Share ideas and habits as a homegroup to encourage one another to be more intentional in approaching Sunday worship ready to feed on God's word.

Study Eight Giving: Ten Principles

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)



In this passage Paul addresses many aspects of giving, from the actual setting aside of money to the delivery of the gift to its destination. What we can learn about giving as individuals and as a church?

Share with your homegroup. After examining your last several months of giving, what do your habits indicate about your giving philosophy? How important is giving? Do you give freely? Do you give out of duty? Do you give a planned amount? Do you give impulsively?

At SBCC over the years we have been blessed with the generous giving of our church. Because of this, last year (2007), as a church, we gave out \$557,824 to ministry outside our body through our missions budget, special offerings and one time gifts.

Springing from the Trinity

How is Christian giving compelled by the Trinity? Write a summary sentence for each point. (pp. 112-115)

An expression of God's grace

A gift of the Spirit

Inspired by the cross of Christ

Creating Equality According to Our Means

How much should one give? Is there a formula? Is it the same for everyone? What does Stott mean by *proportionate giving*? (pp. 115-116)

How does Christian giving contribute to equality? (pp. 116-118)

Respond to the following quote. How is, or how should, this view be reflected in the living church? Is this true at SBCC?

No man is ashamed of his poverty in light of another's affluence, and no man has to be ashamed of his affluence in the light of another's poverty. (p. 118)

Careful Supervision and Friendly Rivalry

Christians are called to be good stewards of our money both as individuals and as a church. SBCC has a well-developed process of supporting missionaries and organizations.

Often our missionaries are people who are in some way part of our church. Frequently organizations we sponsor are connected to someone in our church. In those instances there is personal knowledge and accountability.

Missionaries and organizations must go through an application process wherein they fill out some forms and meet with the specified point person from the Missions Group. They present a plan on how they will raise the remainder of their support. The Missions Group meets, and if they come to a decision to support the person or organization they then present the proposal to the Elders to be included on the budget or to receive a one-time gift. The new budget each year is presented to the church to be affirmed.

The supported individuals and organizations submit a contract each January. In the case of an individual, the contract must be signed by his or her supervisor. In the case of an organization, the contract must be signed by the director or by a board member. In June the Missions Group contact person requests an annual report.

This is a lot of work for Missions Group, but this process should give members of SBCC confidence that our dollars are well spent on the missions field!

John Stott states that *Christian giving can be stimulated by a little friendly rivalry*. (p. 121) What are appropriate circumstances to do this in? When and how might it be detrimental?

A Harvest With Symbolic Significance

In this section Stott quotes 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. Explain what it is to sow and to reap. What does a believer reap when he or she gives? (pp. 123-124)

What does the heart have to do with giving? (p. 123) How is your heart when it comes to giving? Consider the following.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The Result: Thanksgiving to God

Four verses are quoted that give reference to thankfulness related to giving. (p. 126) Why be thankful because of someone's giving? Are you ever thankful because someone gave money to the church, to a missionary or a Christian organization?

This chapter has been about financial giving. What else can a Christian offer to God? Give some specific examples of what you or others have done.

After going through this chapter with Stott and examining parts of 2 Corinthians 8-9, have you modified your philosophy of giving? Will this affect your giving habits? If so, how and when?

Take some time as a homegroup to praise God for the many material and financial blessings we enjoy in Santa Barbara. Be thankful for the opportunities you have to support ministries financially, both personally and through the giving of SBCC. Offer yourselves and your resources to God, all to his glory!

Study Nine

Impact: Salt and Light



You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

What is the place of the church in the world? In a society that is pluralistic and confused the living church is needed to promote the values and standards of Jesus.

One of the most important questions facing Christians in every age and every place is this: what values and standards are going to dominate our national culture? ...Christianity, Islam, secularism, materialism, ancient religions and modern cults are all competing for the soul of our country. Which is going to win? (p. 128)

This brings us back to living counter-culturally in the postmodern era. On what fronts must the living church fight for Christian values and standards? (pp. 128-129)

The Truths About Salt and Light

John Stott writes that Jesus' teachings on salt and light in the Sermon on the Mount are essential images to instruct believers regarding our role in the culture around us.

How are believers radically different from non-believers? (pp. 130-131) List some specific examples.

In what ways is your life visibly different from your non-Christian friends and acquaintances?

As salt and light *Christians must permeate non-Christian society.* (131-132) What does it mean to permeate society?

Think about the environment you function in. How are you salt and light to those around you? How do your words and deeds proclaim the gospel?

Jesus exhorted his disciples to not lose their saltiness or hide their light.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

In what ways might you be guilty of holding back the gospel from the people in your life?

According to the *Barna Update* in May of 2007 83% of Americans identified themselves as Christians, 49% of these individuals described themselves as absolutely committed to Christianity. If that is the case, why is our society so tainted with sin and darkness?

What specific actions can a Christian take to live counter-culturally? How do you personally live this way?

Weapons for Social Change

Stott outlines *weapons* the living church must employ to promote social change. (pp. 135-138) List these weapons and why they enable Christians to make a difference.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Do you utilize these weapons to your advantage? Give examples. Also share one or more of these areas you can improve in. How will you do this?

Christian Distinctives

Christians must retain their distinctives.

Salt must retain its saltiness. Otherwise it becomes useless; you cannot even throw it on a compost heap. In the same way, light must retain its brightness. Otherwise it will never dispel the darkness. (p. 139)

Stott presents three distinctives he infers from the Sermon on the Mount that distinguish Christians as salt and light. (pp. 139-141) He asserts that Christ calls us to live out these characteristics. Explain each one.

A greater righteousness

A wider love

A nobler ambition

The chapter ends with a challenge to the living church. Respond to the following quote.

So let us offer ourselves to God as agents of change. Let's not excuse ourselves by developing a minority complex. (p. 141)

Share with your homegroup. What are some specific ways you can be saltier and shine brighter?

As Christ's representatives in the world, we are called to stand firm in the Lord's work. We are to not lose our saltiness or hide our light.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Pray for one another and for SBCC to make a significant difference in Santa Barbara and beyond!

Study Ten

Conclusion: Looking for the Timothys in the 21st Century

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

What are the two things that Paul is asking Timothy to do in this passage?



Share with your homegroup. How do you see your involvement in church? Are you involved in some type of ministry? If not, can you see yourself moving in that direction?

What is required to be in some form of ministry or leadership (homegroup leader, youth group leader, children's church leader, Sunday school teacher, prayer team member, Bible study leader, etc) at SBCC?

In his conclusion Stott addresses each one of us:

... I often find myself looking into the future and longing that God will raise up a new generation of Timothys. In this conclusion I venture to address my appeal to you, praying that you may know God's grace in your life and ministry. (p. 143)

How is Timothy characterized? How are you similar to Timothy? (p. 144)

A Threefold Appeal

The apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to stand firm in three areas: ethical, doctrinal and experiential. (pp. 145-148)

Ethical

Paul instructs Timothy to live right before God.

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

Flee from the evil desire of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Stott writes that:

Timothy was called to be different from the prevailing culture around him. He was not to drift with the stream, or to bend before the pressures of public opinion, like a reed shaken by the wind. Instead he must stand firmly (as we must) like a rock in a mountain stream. (p. 145)

How do you pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, endurance and gentleness as Timothy was instructed to do?

Stott lists several additional things people run to. (p. 146) What else do you run to? Do those things conflict with what Paul tells Timothy to pursue? If so, how? Where can you change?

How do you flee from the evil desires of youth?

Stott lists other things people run from. (p. 146) What else do you run from? Is there something you should rather face and engage with? If so, what?

Doctrinal

Timothy is challenged to hold tight to revealed truth and to *fight the good fight of the faith*. (1 Timothy 6:11) Where is this truth found and how must we fight to hold on to it? (pp. 146-147)

Experiential

What does it mean to *take hold of eternal life*? (1 Timothy 6:12) (p. 147) Do you have a hold on eternal life? How can you develop a tighter grip?

Where are the Timothys?

Why did Paul challenge Timothy?

It was surely strange, however, that a Christian leader of Timothy's maturity should need to be exhorted to lay hold of what he already possessed. Had he not been a Christian for many years? Yes, he had. Had he not received eternal life as a free gift many years ago? Yes, he had. Then why did Paul tell him to lay hold of what was already in his possession?

The answer to these questions is that it is impossible to possess something without embracing it or enjoying it. (p. 148)

What did Timothy have that he was not enjoying? (p.149)

CONCLUSION: LOOKING FOR THE TIMOTHYS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Stott believes that we can take two valuable lessons from Paul's appeal to Timothy to live well ethically, doctrinally and experientially. (p. 149) Summarize each:

- 1.
- 2.

Why are relevance and balance important?

Respond to the final paragraph of the book.

So where are the Timothys of the twenty-first century? They seek to be loyal not only to one another or these three goals, but to the whole biblical revelation without picking and choosing what they happen to like. They pursue righteousness, they fight the good fight of the faith, and they lay hold of eternal life simultaneously. (p. 150)

Who are the Timothys in the living church? Who are the Timothys at SBCC? Do you perceive yourself as a Timothy or possibly a forthcoming Timothy in light of this last paragraph?

Pray that God would raise up Timothys at SBCC. Offer yourselves up to be one of those people!

Study Eleven

Historical Appendix 2: A Dream for SBCC



Think back over the past ten weeks. John Stott has presented various aspects of a living church:

Essentials: God's Vision for His Church
Worship: Glorifying in God's Holy Name
Evangelism: Mission Through the Local Church
Ministry: The Twelve and the Seven
Fellowship: The Implications of *Koinonia*
Preaching: Five Paradoxes
Giving: Ten Principles
Impact: Salt and Light

In the preface he addressed living counter-culturally in the postmodern world. In the conclusion he presented the need for Timothys in the living church.

Take time and review some of the studies. Pick a few chapters that particularly caught your attention.

Big picture... How is SBCC a living church? What areas do you see us excelling in?

What are you excited about in church life? What areas do you, could you, would you involve yourself in?

Read Historical Appendix 2 together as a group. (pp. 166-169) If you had the opportunity to dream big for SBCC, what would it be? As a homegroup, come up with a dream or two. Then go further. How would we begin, develop or implement your idea?

Pray together that SBCC would be a living church, presenting the reality of the gospel in Santa Barbara. Pray that as a church we would continually be renewed and reformed by the Holy Spirit to meet the challenges of today's culture. Pray with gratitude for God's faithfulness over 29 years of church life! Amen!

Sermon Notes. . .