

LOVING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST: What is a Healthy Church Member?

I. Introduction

A. The Desire for Community: But Which One?

“In a generation when many people are talking about the importance of Christians living ‘in community,’ few have unpacked, in biblically faithful and personally penetrating ways, just what that means.”

–D.A. Carson, blurb for *What is a Healthy Church Member?*, by Thabiti M. Anyabwile

B. “Healthy” vs. Happy, Busy, Content, or Entertained

“[Jesus] said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’” (Mark 2:17)

“So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.” (Matt 7:17-18)

“...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:15-16)

II. The Diagnosis of the Church Today: Chronic Eczematous External Otitis (Huh!?)

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

***4:1** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Tim 3:12-4:8)

1. What is the diagnosis of the (future) church that Paul gives to Timothy?

2. On what basis does Paul say he makes this final, urgent charge to Timothy?

3. Why should Timothy have confidence to fulfill this charge? What if he isn't "on his game" one day?

Q. How is the word made effectual to salvation? A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation. (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 89)

Q. But may images not be tolerated in the churches as "books for the laity"? A. No, for we should not be wiser than God. He wants His people to be taught not by means of dumb images but by the living preaching of His Word. (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 98)

4. Which parts of Scripture are most effective for building up Christians? Is this reflected in your understanding of the Bible?

5. What are the challenges Tim will face as he "fulfills his ministry"? How does this "accumulation" (see v. 3) happen today? How about in your own life?