

THE CHURCH IS IN ORDER

There is a God-intended order in all things, with some of God's creatures being called to exercise authority over others, and taking the responsibility which that authority entails.

God has set mankind over the animal and plant kingdoms, parents over children, husbands over their wives, men over women in general, and leaders over each local Church. The head of the whole Church is Christ. Even in heaven there is order - among the angels there are "principalities and powers", "angels and archangels", and Christ is subordinate to the Father. The Church resists the rebellious cry of the world for "liberation" from the God-given order of things. She has no love for chaos.

From these points alone, it becomes obvious that the Church which Jesus is building, according to the pattern shown in the New Testament, is very different from the general run of organizations calling themselves Christian Churches, although these may contain many fine individual Christians. We challenge all true Christians to abandon their misplaced loyalties to dead or erroneous systems, in which Christ has no interest, and to join themselves to a local Church which is being built according to His Word.

To those who don't yet know Christ as their Lord and Saviour we say this - Don't look for Him in the wrong place, among people who don't live according to the New Testament. You don't go to a lemon tree to get oranges. Look for His Church if you want to find Jesus.

Gloriavale Christian Community,
189 Heaphy Road,
Lake Haupiri, Westland,
New Zealand

Phone +64 3 738 0224
www.gloriavale.co.nz
church@gloriavale.co.nz

10 Marks of the Church

Ways in which the true Church of Jesus Christ can be easily recognized

Jesus said: *"I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."* Matthew 16:18

In the religious confusion of this world, how can we recognize this victorious Church which He is building? Our best clue is this - He will be building it according to the pattern which He has laid down in the New Testament. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." In this tract we set out some of the features of this plan. In any place where they can be seen taking shape, we can recognize the hand of Jesus building His Church, the pure and spotless Bride for whom He gave Himself.

THE CHURCH IS SPIRITUAL

The Church is not a man-made organization or club. Each member has become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He knows God directly because God's Spirit lives within him. The Church's life is full of supernatural happenings, as God gives evidence of the living power of Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

THE CHURCH IS OBEDIENT

When people are spiritually reborn into the Church, their whole lives change. Now they love to do God's will. They love the Bible, which is God's written Word to mankind. They do not try to explain away parts of it which conflict with modern theories, for God's Word cannot lie, and His wisdom is above man's. They are eager to practice whatever the Scriptures teach, ignoring traditions and convenience. (For example; they baptize believers only, by full immersion in water). They seek to base the whole life of the Church upon the teaching and examples given in the New Testament.

THE CHURCH IS VICTORIOUS OVER EVIL

The Christian has not only had his sins forgiven when he trusted in Christ, but he is also given the power to stop sinning altogether. So the Church is full of saints, not sinners. No excuses for sin in the Church are accepted. A man is forgiven and accepted only as he forsakes all sin, overcoming it through faith in Christ. Jesus gives His Church authority over evil spirits and the sicknesses they cause. He expects His people to use this authority to continue the work of deliverance He began on earth.

THE CHURCH IS "CALLED OUT"

The Church recognizes that, "*The whole world lies in wickedness*" and that God has called His people to separate themselves from its evil ways. So Christians withdraw from the culture of the society around them to live their own distinctive life together as a godly community. They withdraw from the world's debauched pleasures and entertainments, from its ambitions and love for material things, and from its pre-occupations and anxieties. They ignore the world's criticism or praise, allowing their minds to be transformed to think God's thoughts and to know His will. Also, the true Church is separate from Babylon - the great worldwide conglomeration of religious systems centred around Roman Catholicism. The pure Bride of Christ has no desire to be friendly with "*that great harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints*".

THE CHURCH IS "CALLED TOGETHER"

In the New Testament, when a man became a Christian, there was only one Church in each place and he was bound to join it. Jesus didn't send His men to set up several Churches in each area, all pushing different pet doctrines, so that Christians could take their pick. And nor does He do so today. He builds no more than one local Church in each place, standing for the whole counsel of God, and calls all Christians in that area to join themselves to it. The men He sends to lead each local Church and to set it in order are not trained and appointed by any seminary or organization, but are trained within local Churches and sent directly by God Himself. They speak with authority, and God expects men to follow them. The ultimate proof of their calling lies in the type of Church they build and the lives of the Christians who follow them.

THE CHURCH IS ZEALOUS

Everyone in the Church is completely given over to serving Jesus and building His kingdom. All their time, energy and resources are devoted to this end. They don't seek a life of ease and normality in this world, but follow Jesus down a path of self-denial and hardship in order to accomplish their mission. Christians are constantly concerned to win others to Christ. They snatch every opportunity to speak for their Lord and Saviour, and to demonstrate His love by practical deeds of kindness. A divine compassion drives them, for they know that the people around them without Christ are separated from God by sin and headed for an eternal Hell.

THE CHURCH IS UNITED

Each local Church is one big family. The members are true spiritual brothers and sisters -much closer than in any natural family-and having a loyal . to one another that comes before any earthly considerations. They discipline themselves to exclude all gossip, envy, contention, pride, suspicion and malice from their midst. Each one considers the others more honorable than himself and they all earnestly strive not only to speak the same things but even to -think the same thoughts as one another. Individualism has no attraction for them, for all are being remade in the image of Christ. In the New Testament, the unity between local Churches is spiritual and informal, not organizational. Nevertheless, each local Church recognizes integrity and judgment of true local Churches in other places.

THE CHURCH HAS TRUE FELLOWSHIP

In the New Testament, "fellowship" means a complete sharing of all things, both natural and spiritual. When people love one another, they want to share their whole lives together, so that they can really commune together. In the Church, isolation and loneliness are ended, for all barriers between people have been torn down. They freely share the spiritual riches God gives them, encouraging one another in the way of Christ. Their meetings are, never "a one-man band", for all have an opportunity to share the spiritual gifts they have received, that everybody might benefit. They share their time together, meeting frequently not only for spiritual activities such as worship, prayer and teaching, but also to help one another with the natural everyday jobs that need doing. Of course, they share all their material resources completely. No true Christian is content to have plenty while his brother goes without.

THE CHURCH EXERCISES JUDGMENT

Many people think that "Judge Not!" is a basic principle of Christianity. They have taken Jesus' saying out of context. (See Matthew 7). What He was teaching was that when we pass judgment on others we must be prepared to judge ourselves by the same standards. The New Testament teaches "The spiritual man judges all things" and foretells that when Christ returns the Christians shall judge the whole world. Christians are not to be wishy-washy people who tolerate everything and everybody. They should develop a keen sense of right and wrong. At present, in this Age of Grace, they are not to use force to make people conform to the truth, but both Jesus and Paul command us to exercise judgment within the Church. Those who persistently refuse to conform to the morals and teachings of the Scriptures are to be excluded from the Church for two reasons: 1. As a disciplinary measure-to shock them into repentance. 2. To keep the Church united and pure before the eyes of God and the world. The true Church, guided by the Holy Spirit in the local Church involved in each case, is not afraid to exercise such judgment, for she knows that it is a legitimate and necessary part of her love for Christ. Each local Church respects and backs up the judgment of other true Churches.