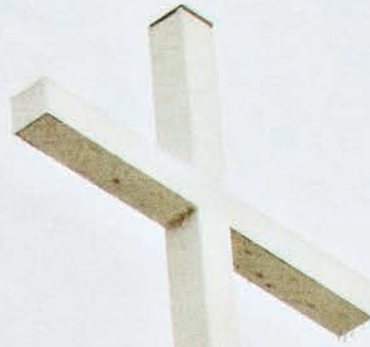


Theoacademy

BEING PRESBYTERIAN PREPARATION FOR ORDERED MINISTRY

Session 4: What is the Church?



Theocademy

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Getting started

Before watching the video, consider the following questions.

- If you weren't born in this denomination, what made you decide to become Presbyterian?
If you were, what has kept you here?
- In your opinion, what should our priorities be as the Church?
- How should those priorities influence what we do as congregations?

During the video

As you watch the video, answer the following questions.

- Why did the Reformers come up with the “notes” of the Church?
- For the Reformers, what did each of the “notes” look like?
 - The word of God truly preached and heard:
 - The sacraments rightly administered:
 - Church discipline uprightly ministered:

- Why are they called the “Great *Ends* of the Church?”
- How can these “Great Ends” be connected with one another?

The notes of the Church

If you think about it, the same principles for developing the potential of individual leaders can apply for developing the gathering of believers into the body of Christ. In order to fulfill God’s calling in our lives (both individually and corporately), there are certain things that we need to *know*, *be*, and *do* – and the Notes of the Church help us do that. They come to us from the Scots Confession:

The notes of the true Kirk, therefore, we believe, confess, and avow to be: first, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed himself to us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts; and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God’s Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished. Then wherever these notes are seen and continue for any time, be the number complete or not, there, beyond any doubt, is the true Kirk of Christ, who, according to his promise, is in its midst.

Chapter 18

Know: the word of God truly preached & heard

C.S. Lewis argued, “...you must translate every bit of your Theology into the vernacular. This is very troublesome and it means you can say very little in half an hour, but it is essential. It is also of the greatest service to your own thought. I have come to the conviction that if you cannot translate your thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts were confused. Power to translate is the test of having really understood one’s own meaning.”¹ Dr. Gary Hansen agrees – for the word of God to be truly preached and heard, we as Christian leaders must be able to interpret biblical truths for the life of our own faith community in a clear and understandable way.

- What about *the word of God* do we need to understand in order to “preach” it? Who/what can help us learn what we need to know?

¹ Lewis, C. S. 1970. *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 98-99.

- What about *our current context* do we need to understand in order for the word to be “heard?” Where can we get this information?
- At this point, you may be thinking, “Well, this is all well and good – but that’s the pastor’s job.” Why is it important for *all* Church leaders (and, for that matter, Church members) to have this ability?

Be: the sacraments rightly administered

As Dr. Hansen explained in the video, the sacraments are “the life, the breath, the bread and butter – or bread and wine, if you will – of the church’s living.” In other words, every time we celebrate them, baptism and communion (our two sacraments) tell us who we are, both individually and corporately, in Christ.

- In what ways do baptism and communion remind us of our identity in Christ?
- Why isn’t it enough that we merely hear verbal declarations of this? Why do we attach physical actions to these reminders?
- Why is it important that we practice these reminders regularly?

Do: church discipline uprightly ministered

As Dr. Hansen mentions in the video, the word *discipline* tends to draw mental images of big wooden paddles. But like he also mentions, that's not what true discipline is really about. The word *discipline* comes from the same root as *disciple* – it's the behavior and lifestyle that we adopt so that we can be more like the One we're following.

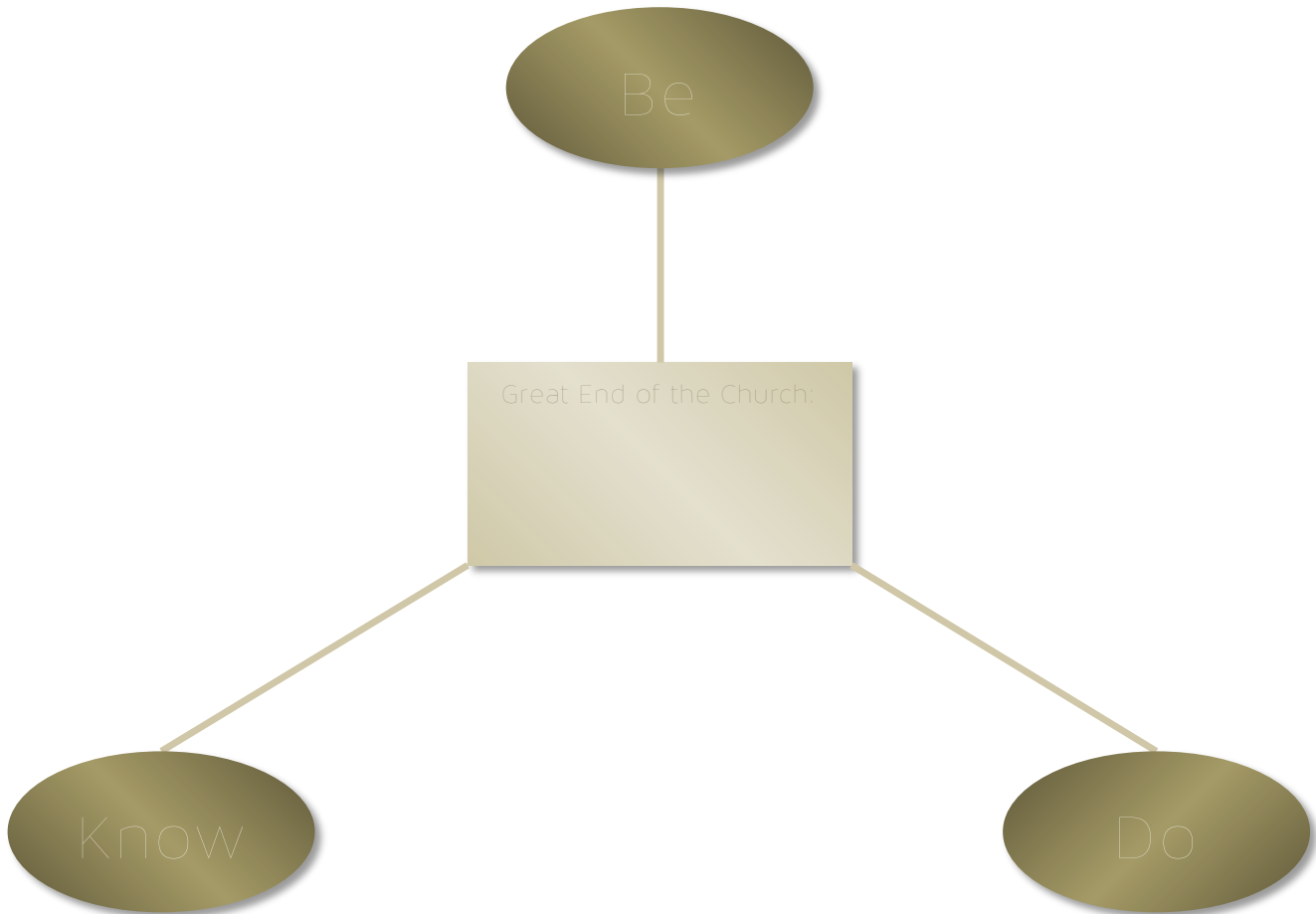
- How are our lifestyle and behavior built upon the foundation of our knowledge of and identity in Christ?
- How does saying “no” to certain behaviors and practices allow us to say “yes” to others?
- Why is it important that we remain vigilant in holding one another to this standard of lifestyle and behavior?

The ends of the Church

If you didn't happen to catch them all during the course of the video, the Six Great Ends of the Church are:

The Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind
The Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God
The Maintenance of Divine Worship
The Preservation of the Truth
The Promotion of Social Righteousness
The Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World

Now it's your turn: on the next page, you'll see a "mind map" activity. With a partner, choose one of the Ends and write it in the middle box. Then, as you think of what we need to *be*, *know*, and *do* as the Church in order to fulfill it, connect it to the appropriate dimension. (*Note: as a large group, try to cover as many different ends as you can.*) When you're finished, share your ideas as a group.



Personal reflection

After the session, complete the following statements.

- As a Church leader, I can help my congregation come to a deeper *knowledge* of God's word by:

- As a Church leader, I can help my congregation come to a deeper understanding of who they *are* in Christ by:

- As a Church leader, I can help my congregation *do* disciplined work by: