

# Systematic Theology: Part 6: The Doctrine of the Church

---

This document contains the teacher notes for nine Sunday school lessons walking through the sixth part of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. There is a [complementary document](#) containing student handouts that can be shared with listeners to aid them with this material.

I claim no infallibility relative to the material presented here (the bulk is a condensation of Grudem's text). It is, as many have said before, beggars showing other beggars where to find bread. These teachings are provided free in the spirit of [Matthew 10:8b](#).

As errors are found, please let me know so I can correct. The theology expressed here should not be construed as representing the theology of Stuart Heights Baptist Church (especially when I am wrong or when I am being an idiot).

The formatting is as follows:

- **bold green text are quotes from outside sources (primarily Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology text)**
- **bold red text is the Scripture** (NKJV is used unless otherwise noted. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)
- **bold blue text are Bible references**
- **bold purple text are questions to consider asking while teaching this material**
- **highlighted, bold, and underlined text in the teacher notes are answers to blanks in the student handouts**
- plain black text are my comments

The audio recordings of many of these teachings themselves are available via our class [podcast](#). Many thanks to David Barber for his faithfulness in this area.

I hope these resources assist in enabling you to teach through a work like Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. Feel free to contact me at [jim314@yahoo.com](mailto:jim314@yahoo.com) with questions or feedback.

Grace and peace,

Jim Fleming  
Hixson, Tennessee  
August 2016

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 44: The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes

---

*What is necessary to make a church? How can we recognize a true church? The purposes of the church.*

#### Introduction & Review

Note: The primary textbook for the structure of this series is Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. The primary text for the substance of this series is the Bible.

**Grudem: What is systematic theology? Many different definitions have been given, but for the purposes of this book the following definition will be used: Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic.**

**This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic.** Example: Lego sets vs Lego pieces

#### The Words

1. Systematic – carefully organized (all relevant passages organized into topics)
2. Theology – the study of religious truths

#### The Schedule

Part 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God (February – April, 2014)

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Systematic Theology: What is systematic theology? Why should Christians study it? How should we study it? Why Should We as a Class Study Systematic Theology? To fulfill the Great Commission, to confront sin in our lives, and **Grudem: To be able to make better decisions later on new questions of doctrine that may arise**
- Chapter 2: The Word of God: What are the different forms of the Word of God?

- Chapter 3: The Canon of Scripture: What belongs in the Bible and what does not belong?
- Chapter 4: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (1) Authority: How do we know that the Bible is God's Word?
- Chapter 5: The Inerrancy of Scripture: Are there any errors in the Bible?
- Chapter 6: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity: Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly?
- Chapter 7: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (3) Necessity: For what purposes are the Bible necessary? How much can people know about God without the Bible?
- Chapter 8: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency: Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?

#### Part 2: The Doctrine of God (September – November, 2014)

- Chapter 9: The Existence of God: How do we know that God exists?
- Chapter 10: The Knowability of God: Can we really know God? How much of God can we know?
- Chapter 11: The Character of God: "Incommunicable" Attributes: How is God different from us?
- Chapter 12: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 1): How is God like us in his being and in mental and moral attributes?
- Chapter 13: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 2): How is God like us in attributes of will and in attributes that summarize his excellence?
- Chapter 14: God in Three Persons: The Trinity: How can God be three persons, yet one God?
- Chapter 15: Creation: Why, how, and when did God create the universe?
- Chapter 16: God's Providence: If God controls all things, how can our actions have real meaning? What are the decrees of God?
- Chapter 17: Miracles: What are miracles? Can they happen today?
- Chapter 18: Prayer: Why does God want us to pray? How can we pray effectively?
- Chapter 19: Angels: What are angels? Why did God create them?
- Chapter 20: Satan and Demons: How should Christians think of Satan and demons today? Spiritual warfare.

#### Part 3: The Doctrine of Man (March 2015)

- Chapter 21: The Creation of Man: Why did God create us? How did God make us like himself? How can we please him in everyday living?
- Chapter 22: Man as Male and Female: Why did God create two sexes? Can men and women be equal and yet have different roles?
- Chapter 23: The Essential Nature of Man: What does Scripture mean by "soul" and "spirit"? Are they the same thing?

- Chapter 24: Sin: What is sin? Where did it come from? Do we inherit a sinful nature from Adam? Do we inherit guilt from Adam?
- Chapter 25: The Covenants between God and Man: What principles determine the way God relates to us?

#### Part 4: The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit (October – November, 2015)

- Chapter 26: The Person of Christ: How is Jesus fully God and fully man, yet one person?
- Chapter 27: The Atonement: Was it necessary for Christ to die? Did Christ's entire earthly life earn any saving benefits for us? The cause and nature of the atonement. Did Christ descend into hell?
- Chapter 28: Resurrection and Ascension: What was Christ's resurrection body like? What is its significance for us? What happened to Christ when he ascended into heaven? What is meant by the states of Jesus Christ?
- Chapter 29: The Offices of Christ: How is Christ prophet, priest, and king?
- Chapter 30: The Work of the Holy Spirit: What are the distinctive activities of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Bible?

#### Part 5: The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption (January – April, 2016)

- Chapter 31: Common Grace: What are the undeserved blessings that God gives to all people, both believers and unbelievers?
- Chapter 32: Election and Reprobation: When and why did God choose us? Are some not chosen?
- Chapter 33: The Gospel Call and Effective Calling: What is the gospel message? How does it become effective?
- Chapter 34: Regeneration: What does it mean to be born again?
- Chapter 35: Conversion (Faith and Repentance): What is true repentance? What is saving faith? Can people accept Jesus as Savior and not as Lord?
- Chapter 36: Justification (Right Legal Standing before God): How and when do we gain right legal standing before God?
- Chapter 37: Adoption (Membership in God's Family): What are benefits of being a member of God's family?
- Chapter 38: Sanctification (Growth in Likeness to Christ): How do we grow in Christian maturity? What are the blessings of Christian growth?
- Chapter 39: Baptism in and Filling with the Holy Spirit: Should we seek a "baptism in the Holy Spirit" after conversion? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Chapter 40: The Perseverance of the Saints (Remaining a Christian): Can true Christians lose their salvation? How can we know if we are truly born again?

- Chapter 41: Death and the Intermediate State: What is the purpose of death in the Christian life? What happens to our bodies and souls when we die?
- Chapter 42: Glorification (Receiving a Resurrection Body): When will we receive resurrection bodies? What will they be like?
- Chapter 43: Union with Christ: What does it mean to be "in Christ" or "united with Christ"?

### **Part 6: The Doctrine of the Church (June – August, 2016)**

- Chapter 44: The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes: What is necessary to make a church? How can we recognize a true church? The purposes of the church.
- Chapter 45: The Purity and Unity of the Church: What makes a church more or less pleasing to God? What kinds of churches should we cooperate with or join?
- Chapter 46: The Power of the Church: What kind of authority does the church have? How should church discipline function?
- Chapter 47: Church Government: How should a church be governed? How should church officers be chosen? Should women serve as pastors of churches?
- Chapter 48: Means of Grace within the Church: What are the different activities within the life of the church that God uses to bring blessing to us? What do we miss if we neglect involvement in a local church?
- Chapter 49: Baptism: Who should be baptized? How should it be done? What does it mean?
- Chapter 50: The Lord's Supper: What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? How should it be observed?
- Chapter 51: Worship: How can our worship fulfill its great purpose in the New Testament age? What does it mean to worship "in spirit and in truth"?
- Chapter 52: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1): General Questions: What are spiritual gifts? How many are there? Have some gifts ceased? Seeking and using spiritual gifts.
- Chapter 53: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (2): Specific Gifts: How should we understand and use specific spiritual gifts?

### **Part 7: The Doctrine of the Future (November – December 2016)**

- Chapter 54: The Return of Christ: When and How? When and how will Christ return? Could he come back at any hour?
- Chapter 55: The Millennium: What is the Millennium? When does it occur? Will Christians go through the Great Tribulation?
- Chapter 56: The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment: Who will be judged? What is hell?
- Chapter 57: The New Heavens and New Earth: What is heaven? Is it a place? How will the earth be renewed? What will it be like to live in the new heavens and new earth?

## Explanation and Scriptural Basis

We will deviate from Grudem more in this major doctrine than in others. Some of what he teaches does not line up with what our church would believe and teach—and that is OK. Also, Grudem has a podcast where he teaches this material to his Sunday school class—go and listen to his heartbeat.

### A. Grudem: The nature of the church

Every time you see the word ‘church’ in the New Testament, it is the Greek word *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into a public assembly. This word was in use prior to the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2** and it was applied to the church because it fit.

#### 1. Grudem: Definition: the church is the community of all true believers for all time

Most of you are very familiar with the teaching that the church began in **Acts 2** with the giving of the Holy Spirit. Grudem would say the Old Testament model was empowered in a special way at Pentecost, but not that it was created. Use the Passover Seder → Lord’s Supper as a parallel model change/expansion of a prior concept. Grudem argues the church existed in the Old Testament—just in a different way.

Grudem is in the minority of evangelicals because he believes Old Testament believers are part of the church. Part of Grudem’s view is the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament in use during Jesus’ day—and quoted extensively by Jesus Himself in the Gospels) used variations of the term *ekklesia* to describe gatherings of God’s people as ‘assemblies’ or ‘synagogues’ over 100 times in the Old Testament, that the church existed in the Old Testament (even though the word church isn’t used in your English Old Testaments).

Some of the problems with Grudem’s view (which he readily admits and attempts to defend) include **Acts 19:32** and **Acts 7:38** (instances where *ekklesia* are certainly not referring to a New Testament church, but rather just the common word for assembly).

The reality is the ‘for all time’ doesn’t have a huge impact on much until we get into the Doctrine of the Future. Bible-believing brothers and sisters are on both sides of this definition. We will look at this more when we get to the Doctrine of the Future in November.

Let’s jump in to today’s lesson with a couple of questions . . . **Is the church important? Ephesians 5:25: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.** Yes—she is important because Jesus died for the church. (Great resource: [ftc.co](http://ftc.co) (For The Church)) . . . **Who builds the church? Jesus. Matthew 16:18**

2. **Grudem: The church is invisible, yet visible**

**Grudem: The invisible church is the church as God sees it. 2 Timothy 2:19b; Hebrews 12:23**

**Grudem: *The visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it. In this sense the visible church includes all who profess faith in Christ and give evidence of that faith in their lives. Grudem: Both Calvin and Luther would add the third qualification that those who are considered part of the visible church must partake of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Others might consider this as a subcategory of the requirement that people give evidence of faith in their life.***

**Which church is perfect in counting its members (the invisible church or the visible church)?** The invisible. **Grudem: Individual congregations will usually include some unbelievers, because we cannot see hearts as God sees them.**

There will be wolves: **Acts 20:29-30; Matthew 7:15-16. Should we panic?** No. **Grudem: Calvin warned against this danger [of being overly suspicious] by saying that we must make a "charitable judgment" whereby we recognize as members of the church all who "by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ with us."**

3. **Grudem: The church is local and universal**

**Grudem: The word "church" may be applied to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a very small group meeting in a private home all the way to the group of all true believers in the universal church. Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 9:31; Ephesians 5:25.**

4. **Grudem: Metaphors for the church [Grudem notes this list is not exhaustive]**

**Grudem: Family (1 Timothy 5:1-2; Ephesians 3:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Matthew 12:49-50; 1 John 3:14-18; Ephesians 5:32; 2 Corinthians 11:2)**

**Grudem: *branches on a vine* (John 15:5)**

**Grudem: *an olive tree* (Romans 11:17-24)**

**Grudem: *a field of crops* (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)**

**Grudem: *a building* (1 Corinthians 3:9)**

**Grudem: *a harvest* (Matthew 13:1-30; John 4:35)**

**Grudem: *a new temple* (1 Peter 2:5)**

**Grudem:** *a new group of priests* (1 Peter 2:5)

**Grudem:** *God's house* (Hebrews 3:3, 6)

**Grudem:** *the pillar and bulwark of the truth* (1 Timothy 3:15)

**Grudem:** *the body of Christ* (1 Corinthians 12 . . . the whole body . . . Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Colossians 2:19 . . . the rest of the body, as distinguished from the head)

**Grudem:** Each of the metaphors used for the church can help us to appreciate more of the richness of privilege that God has given us by incorporating us into the church.

5. **Grudem:** The church and Israel [skipped due to lack of time]
6. **Grudem:** The church and the kingdom of God [skipped due to lack of time]  
Summary: The church (people) ≠ the kingdom of God (not people).

## **B. Grudem: The “marks” of the church (distinguishing characteristics)**

1. **Grudem:** There are **true** churches and **false** churches

**Grudem:** What makes a church a church? What is necessary to have a church? Might a group of people who claim to be Christians become so unlike what a church should be that they should no longer be called a church?

**Grudem:** Scripture certainly speaks of false churches. 1 Corinthians 10:20; 12:2; Revelation 2:9; 3:9

**Grudem:** At the Reformation a crucial question came up: how can we recognize a true church? Is the Roman Catholic Church a true church or not? In order to answer that question people had to decide what were the “marks” of a true church, the distinguishing characteristics that lead us to recognize it as a true church.

**Grudem:** The Lutheran statement of faith, which is called the Augsburg Confession (1530), defined the church as “the congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered” (Article 7).

**Grudem:** Calvin said, “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.”



inside churches. It is possible to be a Christian in a false church. And it is possible to be a pagan in a true church.

### C. Grudem: The purposes of the church

Obviously, Stuart Heights would use the acrostic WIFE'S here, but those five items could easily be mapped to Grudem's categories.

1. **Grudem: Ministry to God: worship**  
**Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 1:12; 5:16-19**

This would map directly to our 'W'

2. **Grudem: Ministry to believers: nurture**  
**Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:12-13**

This would map directly to our 'I' and 'F' and the 'S' that is directed inward

3. **Grudem: Ministry to the world: evangelism and mercy**  
**Matthew 28:19; Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 John 3:17; Luke 6:35-36**

This would map directly to our 'E' and the 'S' that is directed outward

4. **Grudem: Keeping these purposes in balance**

Summary: none of these is commanded to take precedence in the church, so all must be expressed. Since there are no perfect churches, we must assume every church may overexpress some of these purposes and may under-express some of these purposes. There are specific implications with overexpressing and/or under-expressing these purposes. This means that regular self-examination is important.

**Grudem: All . . . purposes must be emphasized continually in a healthy church.**

**Grudem: However, *individuals* are different from churches in placing a relative priority on one or another of these purposes of the church. Because we are like a body with diverse spiritual gifts and abilities, it is right for us to place most of our emphasis on the fulfillment of that purpose of the church that is most closely related to the gifts and interests God has given to us. There is certainly no obligation for every believer to attempt to give exactly one third of his or her time in the church to worship, one-third to nurturing other believers, and one-third to evangelism or deeds of mercy.**

Summary: True balance should occur at the church level, not at the personal level. The danger comes when we all play the same note.

## Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **When you think of the church as the invisible fellowship of all true believers throughout all time, how does it affect the way you think of yourself as an individual Christian? In the community in which you live, is there much visible unity among genuine believers (that is, is there much visible evidence of the true nature of the invisible church)?**
2. **Would you consider the church that you are now in to be a true church? Have you ever been a member of a church that you would think to be a false church? . . . Viewed from the perspective of the final judgment, what good and what harm might come from our failure to state that we think unbelieving churches are false churches?**
3. **Did any of the metaphors for the church give you a new appreciation for the church that you currently attend?**
4. **To which purpose of the church do you think you can most effectively contribute? Which purpose has God placed in your heart a strong desire to fulfill?**

## Scripture Memory Passage: Ephesians 4:11-13

**11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**

## Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation" (Samuel J. Stone, 1866)

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is his new creation by water and the Word:  
From heav'n he came and sought her to be his holy bride;  
With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,  
And to one hope she presses, with ev'ry grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed,  
By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,  
Yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, "How long?"  
And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

**The church shall never perish! Her dear Lord to defend,  
To guide, sustain and cherish, is with her to the end;  
Though there be those that hate her, and false sons in her pale,  
Against or foe or traitor she ever shall prevail.**

**'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation of peace forevermore;  
Til with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.**

**Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,  
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:  
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,  
Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.**

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 45: The Purity and Unity of the Church

---

*What makes a church more or less pleasing to God? What kinds of churches should we cooperate with or join?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Ephesians 4:11-13**

**11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**

#### Introduction

In week one of our series on the church, we looked at definitions for the church (believers who gather to preach the gospel and practice the ordinances), metaphors for the church (family, building, trees, crops, body, etc.), true and false churches (none pure, some dirty, some poisonous because a false gospel is preached—and a concept I skipped last week but needs to be made clear this week: you can be a Christian at a false church and you can be a pagan at a true church), and the purposes of the church (Grudem has three categories of purposes, but they map nicely to WIFE'S—but the key is to have balance at the church level, not necessarily at the believer level).

Today, we explore more fully the concept of purity in the church and look at the unity of the church.

## Explanation and Scriptural Basis

### A. Grudem: More pure and less pure churches

We explored this concept last week with the four glasses of water. This concept can be seen in the different ways Paul wrote to New Testament churches. For example, there is a vast difference in his letters to Galatia and Corinth (where he dealt with much false doctrine) and his letter to Philippi (which was primarily praise).

More pure churches exist and less pure churches exist. Obviously, we are to strive to be pure—knowing, as we discussed last week, true purity in this age will not exist.

### B. Grudem: Definitions of purity and unity

**Grudem:** *The purity of the church is its degree of freedom **from** wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity **to** God's revealed will for the church.* (avoiding the bad & doing the good)

**Grudem:** *The unity of the church is its degree of freedom from **divisions** among true Christians.*

We should strive to be both pure and unified—simultaneously.

Global unity of all churches cannot occur because not all churches are true churches and unifying with a false church is no good.

Complete purity cannot occur because churches are comprised of fallen believers.

However, we are still commanded to be pure and unified.

### C. Grudem: Signs of a more pure church

**Grudem: Factors that make a church "more pure" include:** [not an ordered, definitive list—and certainly not a comprehensive listing of all Scriptures for each item on the list]

1. **Biblical doctrine (or right preaching of the Word)** (Colossians 1:28; Titus 1:9, 11)
2. **Proper use of the sacraments (or ordinances)** (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
3. **Right use of church discipline** (1 Corinthians 5:6-7, 12-13)
4. **Genuine worship** (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17)
5. **Effective prayer** (1 Timothy 2:1)
6. **Effective witness** (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:34-35; Acts 2:44-47)
7. **Effective fellowship** (Hebrews 13:16)
8. **Biblical church government** (1 Timothy 3:1-13)
9. **Spiritual power in ministry** (Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16; Galatians 3:3-5; James 5:16)

**10. Personal holiness of life among members (1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14)**

**11. Care for the poor (Acts 4:32-35; Romans 15:26; Galatians 2:10)**

**12. Love for Christ (1 Peter 1:8; Revelation 2:4)**

**Grudem: Churches can be more pure in some areas and less pure in others. . . . Most churches will tend to think that the areas in which they are strong are the most important areas, and the areas where they are weak are less important. But the New Testament encourages us to work for the purity of the church in all of these areas.**

**Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 14:12**

**Grudem: There were no perfect churches at the time of the New Testament and there will be no perfect churches until Christ returns.**

Conversely, rejection of God's revealed will for the church results in liberalism: where churches become **Grudem: primarily man-centered rather than God-centered**. Once this occurs, there is a shift away from purity and unity—sometimes resulting in becoming a false church or cult.

#### **D. Grudem: New Testament teaching on the unity of the church**

**John 10:16; John 17:21, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 10, 13; Philippians 2:2; Ephesians 4:3, 12-13**

**Grudem: Paul can *command* the church to live in unity because there already is an actual spiritual unity in Christ which exists among genuine believers. Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-26**

**Grudem: Warnings against those who cause divisions (Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 2:11-14; 5:19-21; Jude 19)**

**Grudem: Grudem: There are no direct New Testament commands to separate from Christians with whom one has doctrinal differences (unless those differences involve such serious heresy that the Christian faith itself is denied).** Translation: we separate over the gospel.

Corollary: stop looking for the perfect church and instead work toward the unity and purity of your church. We are never commanded (primarily because our modern application of church membership isn't found in Scripture) to leave one congregation for another. Pursue unity and pursue purity. You will grow as a result.

**Grudem: Unity does not actually require one worldwide church government over all Christians. In fact, the unity of believers is often demonstrated quite effectively through voluntary cooperation and affiliation among Christian groups. . . . In fact,**

even in the New Testament the apostles agreed that Paul should emphasize missionary work to the Gentiles while Peter would emphasize missionary work to the Jews (**Galatians 2:7**). Peter and Paul were unified in message, but diverse in audience. Unity in diversity was something we saw even in the Trinity.

## E. Grudem: Brief history of organizational separation in the church

**Grudem: During the first thousand years of the church there was for the most part outward unity. . . . The first major division in the church came in A.D. 1054 when the Eastern (now Orthodox) church separated from the Western (Roman Catholic) church. . . . The Reformation in the sixteenth century then separated the Western church into Roman Catholic and Protestant branches. . . . In the centuries following the Reformation, Protestantism splintered into hundreds of smaller groups.**

**Grudem: Although the previous paragraphs spoke of separation in the sense of (1) the formation of *separate organizations* there are two other, more severe kinds of separation that should be mentioned: (2) "*No cooperation*": in this case a church or Christian organization refuses to cooperate in joint activities with other churches (activities such as evangelistic campaigns or joint worship services or mutual recognition of ordination). (3) "*No personal fellowship*": this involves the extremely strict avoidance of all personal fellowship with members of another church, and prohibits any joint prayer or Bible study, and sometimes even ordinary social contact, with members of another church group.**

## F. Grudem: Reasons for separation

**Grudem: We can find *both right and wrong reasons for separation*.** It is good to note that Grudem is very non-judgmental in this section—he takes a very open-handed approach (which itself is a healthy approach where Scripture is predominantly silent).

### 1. Grudem: Doctrinal reasons

**What about churches teaching a false gospel? **Separate**.** This reason ties back to last week's lesson in defining a true church. If a 'church' does not preach the gospel, it is not a true church. Leaving a false church is not leaving *the church*. True believers should not partner with those devoted to sharing poisonous doctrines.

**What about true churches with false non-salvific doctrines? **Epistles**.** **Grudem: Paul's response even to people in erring churches . . . is not to tell faithful Christians to separate from those churches, but to admonish the churches, work for their repentance, and pray for them.** All churches have work to do—some have more doctrinally-oriented work to do. Church discipline is a separate matter.

**Grudem: However, even when withdrawal or separation is not absolutely required, many Christians may find that it is *wise* or *expedient* to withdraw before the church has become a false church, but when serious doctrinal deviation occurs. Why wait until false church status is reached?** This is where discernment is needed.

## 2. Grudem: Matters of conscience

Jim's translation of Grudem's words: be very cautious separating because you don't feel good

Grudem also talked about church governance structures where higher authorities demand obedience to a sinful practice. Obviously, in these cases, we are to obey God and not man.

## 3. Grudem: Practical considerations

**Grudem: Christians may decide to separate from a parent church if, after prayerful consideration, it seems that staying in the parent church will very likely result in more harm than good.**

Jim's concern with Grudem's words: no biblical evidence was given for this consideration

## 4. Grudem: Are there times when cooperation and personal fellowship are prohibited?

**Grudem: The biblical passages we have looked at seem to require that Christians practice "no cooperation" in certain activities with another group only when the other group is an unbelieving one.**

**Grudem: The third and most extreme kind of separation, the avoidance of all personal fellowship with members of another entire church group, is never commanded in the New Testament. Such an extreme measure of "no fellowship" is only implied in serious cases of church discipline of individuals, not in cases of differences with entire churches.**

## Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **What . . . should [you] be doing in order to work for greater purity in your own church?**
2. **Are there marks of a more-pure church that evangelicals generally in this century have been negligent in emphasizing?**
3. **In your lifetime, what encouraging signs do you see that the church is increasing in purity? What signs do you see that the church is increasing in unity?**
4. **In what ways do you think your own local church could grow in unity among its members?**

5. **In what ways could your church demonstrate greater unity with other true churches in the same geographical area?**
6. **What are some ways in which the worldwide unity of true believers is already being expressed and demonstrated?**
7. **Do you think it hinders evangelism and witness to society generally when the popular culture thinks of unbelieving or false churches and believing churches both as “Christians”? Can anything be done to change that impression?**

### **Scripture Memory Passage: Ephesians 4:14-16**

**14 That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

### **Hymn: “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (John Fawcett, 1782)**

**Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love:  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.**

**Before our Father’s throne  
We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims, are one,  
Our comforts and our cares.**

**We share our mutual woes,  
Our mutual burdens bear,  
And often for each other flows  
The sympathizing tear.**

**When we asunder part,  
It gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart,  
And hope to meet again.**

**This glorious hope revives  
Our courage by the way,  
While each in expectation lives,  
And longs to see the day.**

**From sorrow, toil and pain,  
And sin, we shall be free;  
And perfect love and friendship reign  
Through all eternity.**

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 46: The Power of the Church

---

*What kind of authority does the church have? How should church discipline function?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Ephesians 4:14-16**

**14 That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

#### Introduction

In week one of our series on the church, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. Last week, we looked at purity and unity in the church. Today, we look at the power of the church.

#### Explanation and Scriptural Basis

**Grudem:** *The power of the church is its God-given authority to carry on spiritual warfare, proclaim the gospel, and exercise church discipline.*

#### A. Grudem: Spiritual warfare

**2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-18**

**Grudem:** *It certainly includes the power of the gospel to break through sin and hardened opposition and awaken faith in the hearts of unbelievers. Romans 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Acts 13:8-11; 16:16-18; 12:1-17, 20-24*

**Grudem:** *Paul realizes that he can use this spiritual power not only against those outside the church who oppose the gospel, but also against those within the church*

who are active opponents of his apostolic ministry. 1 Corinthians 4:19-20; Acts 5:1-11; 13:8-11; 2 Corinthians 10:8-11; 13:2-4, 10

Do we have the same power Paul had access to? 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 implies we do.

Grudem: He [God] will grant sufficient power to accomplish his purposes through the church.

## B. Grudem: The keys of the kingdom

Note: This section is taken from an article Grudem wrote about what the, “**keys of the kingdom**,” mentioned in **Matthew 16:19** meant. If it seems awkwardly inserted, it is.

Grudem: Elsewhere in the New Testament a key always implies *authority to open a door and give entrance to a place or realm*. **Luke 11:52; Revelation 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1; Isaiah 22:22**

Grudem: The “**keys of the kingdom of heaven**” therefore represent at least the authority to preach the gospel of Christ (cf. **Matthew 16:16**) and thus to open the door of the kingdom of heaven and allow people to enter.

Grudem: Peter first used this authority by preaching the gospel at Pentecost. **Acts 2:14-42**

Who has this authority today? Grudem: All believers have this “key” in a secondary sense, for they can all share the gospel with others, and thereby open the kingdom of heaven to those who will enter it.

Grudem: The plural “keys” suggests authority over more than one door. Thus, more than simply entrance into the kingdom is implied; some authority within the kingdom is also suggested. **Matthew 18:17-18** . . . . “**The keys of the kingdom of heaven**” . . . included both (1) ability to admit people to the kingdom through preaching the gospel, and (2) authority to exercise church discipline for those who do enter.

Grudem makes the assumption since we (present day) have the authority Peter did in preaching the gospel, that we should have the authority that Peter did in binding and loosing.

Grudem: What persons or actions are subject to the kind of church discipline implied by the authority of the keys? In both **Matthew 16:19** and **18:18**, the term “whatever” is neuter in Greek, and seems to indicate that Jesus is speaking not specifically to persons (“whoever,” for which a masculine plural would be ordinarily expected), but rather more generally to situations and relationships that come up within the church. . . . Yet the authority of the keys with respect to church discipline is not completely

unlimited. It will only be effective against true sin . . . as defined by God's Word. . . . Therefore the authority to carry out discipline in the church is an authority that must be carried out in accordance with the standards of Scripture.

**Grudem:** Is it possible to be any more specific about the kind of spiritual authority that is involved in this use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Both **Matthew 16:19** and **18:18** use an unusual Greek verbal construction (a periphrastic future perfect). It is best translated by the NASB, "**Whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**" . . . Jesus is teaching that church discipline will have heavenly sanction. But it is not as if the church must wait for God to endorse its actions after the actions have occurred. Rather, whenever the church enacts discipline it can be confident that God has already begun the process spiritually. . . . Jesus promises that the spiritual relationship between God and the person subject to discipline will be immediately affected in ways consistent with the direction of the church's disciplinary action. Legitimate church discipline, therefore, involves the awesome certainty that corresponding heavenly discipline has already begun.

**Grudem:** This teaching on the power of the keys has a significant application to individual Christians who begin to be subject to the discipline of a true church: Christians should **submit** to this discipline and not run from it, because God himself has also put them under discipline for that sin.

### C. **Grudem: The power of the church and the power of the state**

**Grudem:** The church must never take up the sword to carry out its purposes. **John 18:36; 2 Corinthians 10:4**. Grudem also argues that the government should never use the sword to carry out Christianity because true faith is not compelled. (**Romans 13:1-7** outlines the government's responsibility to punish evil, but the government's responsibility does not include spreading Christianity)

**Grudem:** *The civil government should not enforce laws requiring or prohibiting kinds of church doctrine, or abridging the people's freedom to worship as they choose. On the other hand, the church does not and should not rule over the state, as if it were some kind of higher authority over the state; it is not. Rather, the authority of the church and that of the state belong to distinct spheres (Matthew 22:21; John 18:36; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4), and each should respect the authority God has given the other in its own sphere of operation.*

## D. Grudem: Church discipline

### 1. Grudem: The purpose of church discipline

#### a. Grudem: **Restoration** and **reconciliation** of the believer who is going astray

**Grudem:** The primary purpose of church discipline is to pursue the twofold goal of *restoration* (of the offender to right behavior) and *reconciliation* (between believers, and with God). **Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1; James 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5**

**Grudem:** If church members were actively involved in giving private words of gentle admonition and in praying for one another when the first clear evidence of sinful conduct is seen, very little formal church discipline would have to be carried out, because the process would begin and end with a conversation between two people that never becomes known to anyone else.

#### b. Grudem: To keep sin from **spreading** to others. **Hebrews 12:15** (this tends to be our nature, and early confrontation helps mitigate this issue); **1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 1 Timothy 5:20** (no one is immune to rebuke; "sin" = present active participle); **Galatians 2:11** (Peter was not immune to rebuke)

#### c. Grudem: To protect the purity of the church and the honor of Christ (specifically to a lost and watching world; **Romans 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:6**)

### 2. Grudem: For what sins should church discipline be exercised?

**Grudem:** There does not seem to be any explicit limitation specified for the kinds of sin that should be subject to church discipline. The examples of sins subject to church discipline in the New Testament are extremely diverse: divisiveness (**Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10**), incest (**1 Corinthians 5:1**), laziness and refusing to work (**2 Thessalonians 3:6-10**), disobeying what Paul writes (**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15**), blasphemy (**1 Timothy 1:18-20**), and teaching heretical doctrine (**2 John 10-11**).

**Grudem:** A definite principle appears to be at work: all sins that were explicitly disciplined in the New Testament were **publicly** known or **outwardly** evident sins, and many of them had continued over a period of time. The fact that the sins were publicly known meant that reproach was being brought on the church, Christ was being dishonored, and there was a real possibility that others would be encouraged to follow the wrongful patterns of life that were being publicly tolerated.

**Grudem:** There is always the need, however, for mature judgment in the exercise of church discipline, because there is lack of complete sanctification in all our lives.

Furthermore, when we realize that someone is already aware of a sin and struggling to overcome it, a word of admonition may in fact do more harm than good. We should also remember that where there are issues of conduct on which Christians legitimately disagree, Paul encourages a wide degree of **tolerance** (Romans 14).

### 3. Grudem: How should church discipline be carried out?

a. Grudem: Knowledge of the sin should be kept to the **smallest** group possible. **Matthew 18:15-17**

b. Grudem: Disciplinary measures should increase in strength until there is a **solution**. **Matthew 18:15-17; 5:23** (Grudem: This means that whether we have been wronged or others think they have been wronged, *it is always our responsibility to take the initiative and go to the other person. Jesus does not allow us to wait for the other person to come to us.*); **18:18-20** (the context of this passage is inside the context of church discipline)

**What are the ramifications of this final disciplinary step?** No communion (unbelievers do not participate in communion), **Grudem: avoiding fellowship** (**1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15**), and **Grudem: welcoming and greeting** (**2 John 10-11**)

c. Grudem: Discipline of church leaders. **1 Timothy 5:19-21**. **Why are leaders treated differently in this space?** **1 Timothy 3:2; 4:12**

d. Grudem: Other aspects of church discipline. **How do we restore?** Quickly (**2 Corinthians 2:3-11**), gently (**Galatians 6:1**), repeatedly (**Matthew 18:21-35**)

### Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **Have you previously thought of yourself as holding any of the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”? . . . What are you doing with them?**
2. **If you accept the principles that the church should not rule the state and the state should not rule over or restrict the freedom of the church, are these principles being played out effectively in your own country or local situation?**
3. **Are you aware of situations where a gentle word of admonition has resulted in a positive change in your own behavior or the behavior of another Christian? Are you aware of situations where church discipline has gone a step or two further than this and has resulted in restoration of the erring person?**

4. **If a church refuses to carry out church discipline at all for a number of years, even though there is an evident need for it, what will be the harmful results in the church?**
5. **Have there been times when you wished that someone would have come to you earlier with a word of admonition or counsel concerning an area of sin that you were unaware of?**
6. **Are there now any relationships in your life where **Matthew 5:23** and **Matthew 18:15** . . . tell you that you have an obligation to go to another person and seek to make the situation right?**

### Scripture Memory Passage: **2 Corinthians 10:3-4**

**3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds**

### Hymn: “Onward Christian Soldiers” (Sabine Baring-Gould, 1865)

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before:  
Christ the royal Master leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle, see his banners go.

*Refrain:*

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before.

At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee;  
On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory:  
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise;  
Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise.

Like a mighty army moves the church of God;

Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod;  
We are not divided, all one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,

But the church of Jesus constant will remain;

Gates of hell can never 'gainst that church prevail;

We have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail.

Onward, then ye people, join our happy throng,

Blend with ours your voices in the triumph song;

Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King;  
This through countless ages men and angels sing.

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 47: Church Government

---

*How should a church be governed? How should church officers be chosen? Should women serve as pastors of churches?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **2 Corinthians 10:3-4**

**3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds**

#### Introduction

In week one of our series on the church, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. Two weeks ago, we looked at purity and unity in the church. Last week, we looked at the power of the church (spiritual warfare, the keys of the kingdom, the church and the state, and church discipline). Today, we look at church government—the officers of the church, forms of church government, and the role of women in church government.

#### Explanation and Scriptural Basis

While talking about church government today, the word, 'church,' will be used almost exclusively of the local church. Additionally, Grudem keeps a very open hand on the majority of today's topics.

#### A. Grudem: Church officers

*Grudem: A church officer is someone who has been **publicly** recognized as having the right and responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church.*

**Grudem: According to this definition, elders and deacons would be considered officers in a church, as would the pastor (if that is a distinct office). The church treasurer and church moderator would also be officers (these titles may vary from church to church). All of these people have had public recognition, usually at a service in which they are**

**“installed” or “ordained” in an office. In fact, they *need* public recognition in order to fulfill their responsibilities.** [Jim: chaos could ensue otherwise—who would preach, take care of funds, etc.]

**Grudem: By contrast, many other people exercise gifts in the church, but we do not say they have an “office” because they do not need formal public recognition for their gifts to function.** [You do not need to be in an office to worship, instruct, fellowship, evangelize, or serve.]

### 1. Grudem: Apostle

- a. **Grudem: Qualifications of an apostle. The two qualifications . . . were (1) having seen Jesus after his resurrection with one’s own eyes . . . [Acts 1:22], and (2) having been specifically commissioned by Christ as his apostle [Matthew 10:1-7; Acts 1:8, 24-26; 26:16-17].**
- b. **Grudem: Who were apostles? The initial group of apostles numbered twelve—the eleven original disciples who remained after Judas died, plus Matthias, who replaced Judas. . . . Acts 14:14 calls both Barnabas and Paul apostles. . . James the brother of Jesus (who was not one of the twelve original disciples) seems to be called an apostle in Galatians 1:19.** There may have been other New Testament apostles, but the New Testament is not clear. **1 Corinthians 15:5-9** may indicate that Paul was the last apostle called by Christ. **Grudem: Since no one today can meet the qualification of having seen the risen Christ with his own eyes, there are no apostles today.**

### 2. Grudem: Elder (pastor/overseer/bishop)

- a. **Grudem: Plural elders: The pattern in all New Testament churches.** Elders are like cherubim—whenever they show up, there are more than one of them. **Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 4:14; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 11:30; 15:2; Hebrews 13:17**

**Grudem: No passage suggests that any church, no matter how small, had only one elder. . . . We do not see a diversity of forms of government in the New Testament church, but a unified and consistent pattern in which every church had elders governing it and keeping watch over it.**

- b. **Grudem: Other names for elders: pastors, overseers, bishops.** Elders are also called “pastors” [Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2, 4] or “bishops” or “overseers” [Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:5-7; Philippians 1:1] in the New Testament.

- c. **Grudem: The functions of elders. Elders, then, had the responsibility to rule [1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2-5] and to teach [Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9] in New Testament churches.**
- d. **Grudem: Qualifications for elders. Grudem: Character traits and heart attitudes . . . that cannot be fulfilled in a short time but will only become evident over a period of several years of faithful Christian living. 1 Timothy 3:2-7; 4:12; Titus 1:6-9; 2:7**
- e. **Grudem: What is the meaning of “husband of one wife”? 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6**

[Skip this section] **Grudem: Some people have thought that it excludes from the office of elder men who have been divorced and have then married someone else, since they have then been the husband of two wives. . . . A better interpretation is that Paul was prohibiting a polygamist (a man who *presently* has more than one wife) from being an elder. Several reasons support this view: (1) All the other qualifications listed by Paul refer to a man’s *present status* not his entire past life. . . . (2) Paul could have said “having been married only once” if he had wanted to, but he did not. [Grudem footnote: The Greek expression for “having been married only once” would be ἄπαξ γεγάμενος using the word “once” (ἄπαξ, G562) plus a perfect participle, giving the sense, “having been married once and continuing in the state resulting from that marriage.” . . . Another way Paul could have expressed the idea of having been married only once is using a perfect participle of γίνομαι (G1181) to say “having been a husband of one wife” (γέγοναμι ἄς γυναῖκός ἀνήρ). This is, in fact, the force of the requirement for widows in 1 Timothy 5:9, “having been the wife of one husband” (the force of the perfect participle γεγонуῖα (from γίνομαι, G1181) carries over from the previous phrase, and all the qualifications for enrolling widows in 1 Timothy 5:9-10 speak of past history in their lives). But in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 the sense is different, because present tense forms of εἶμι (G1639, “to be”) are used: (literally) “It is necessary for a bishop *to be* blameless, the husband of one wife.”]**

- f. **Grudem: The public installation of elders. 1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 14:23**

### 3. **Grudem: Deacon**

**Grudem: The word *deacon* . . . is the ordinary word for “servant” when it is used in contexts not dealing with church officers. Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6**

**Grudem: The function of deacons is not spelled out here, but the qualifications for deacons suggest some functions.** Jim's note: Service is the underpinning theme in whatever function is intended.

**Grudem: There are other texts in which it is difficult to know whether the New Testament is speaking about a deacon as a special church officer or is simply using the word to refer to a "servant" in a general sense. Romans 16:1; Romans 13:4; 15:8; 1 Corinthians 3:5**

**Grudem: It is significant that nowhere in the New Testament do deacons have ruling authority over the church as the elders do, nor are deacons ever required to be able to teach Scripture or sound doctrine.**

#### 4. **Grudem: Other offices?**

**Grudem: In many churches today, there are other offices, such as treasurer, moderator (one responsible for chairing church business meetings), or trustees (in some forms of church government, these are people who have legal accountability for the property owned by the church). Moreover, churches with more than one paid staff member may have some staff members (such as music director, education director, youth worker, etc.) who are "publicly recognized as having the right and responsibility to perform certain functions in the church," and who thus fit our definition of church officer . . . but who may not be elders or deacons in the church. There does not seem to be any reason to say that these should not be offices in the church as well. . . . If they are established, it would be necessary to see that they not overshadow the importance of the offices specifically named in Scripture, and that they not have any authority that is not subject to the governing authority of those officers that are clearly named in Scripture.** Be practical, but don't assume practical = biblical.

### **B. Grudem: How should church officers be chosen?**

**Grudem: In the history of the church there have been two major types of process for the selection of church officers—selection by a higher authority, or selection by the local congregation.**

**Grudem: In most other Protestant groups church officers are chosen by the local church, or by some group within the local church, even though the form of church government may vary in other significant ways (see below).**

**Grudem: There are several reasons why it seems most appropriate that church officers (such as elder and deacon, and certainly including the "pastor") should be chosen or at**

least affirmed or recognized in some way by the whole congregation. **Acts 6:3** and Grudem: In the New Testament generally, final governing authority seems to rest not with any group outside the church or any group within the church, but with the [local] church as a whole. **Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4**. Grudem: If the entire congregation selects the officers of the church, there is more accountability to the congregation. Grudem: Historically, false doctrine often seems to be adopted by the theologians of the church first, by the pastors second, and by the informed laity, who are daily reading their Bibles and walking with the Lord, last. Therefore, if the leadership begins to stray in doctrine or in life, and there is no election by the congregation, then the church as a whole has no practical means of getting hold of the situation and turning it around. Grudem: Government works best when it has the consent of those governed. **Exodus 4:29-31; 1 Samuel 7:5-6; 10:24; 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 1:39-40; 12:1, 15**

### C. Grudem: Forms of church government

Grudem: Each form has some weaknesses as well as strengths. . . . While some aspects of church government seem to be reasonably clear from the New Testament, other matters . . . are less clear. . . . There ought to be room for evangelical Christians to differ amicably.

Grudem: Forms of church government can be broken down into three large categories, which we may term “episcopalian,” “presbyterian,” and “congregational.”

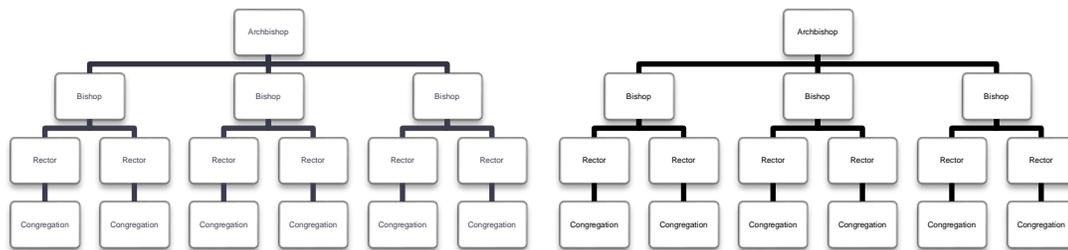
Grudem: The *episcopalian* forms have a government by . . . church officers known as a priesthood, and final authority for decision-making is found outside the local church. Authority is in the bishop who is appointed from above.

Grudem: The *presbyterian* forms have a government by elders, some of whom have authority not only over their local congregation, but also, through the presbytery and the general assembly, over all the churches in a region and then in the denomination as a whole. Authority is in the elders, who are appointed from the people and confirmed from a general assembly.

Grudem: The *congregational* forms of church government all have final governing authority resting with the local congregation, although various degrees of self-rule are given up through denominational affiliation, and the actual form of local church government may vary considerably. Authority is in the congregation with no higher authority than the congregation.

## 1. Grudem: **Episcopal**

**Grudem:** In the episcopal system, an archbishop has authority over many bishops. They in turn have authority over a “diocese,” which simply means the churches under the jurisdiction of a bishop. The officer in charge of a local parish is a rector (or sometimes a vicar, who is an “assistant” or one who substitutes for the rector). Archbishops, bishops, and rectors are all priests, since they have all at one time been ordained to the episcopal priesthood (but in practice the rector is most often called the priest).



**Grudem:** The argument for the episcopal system is not that it is found in the New Testament, but that it is a natural outgrowth of the development of the church which began in the New Testament. Basically—it’s been that way for a long time.

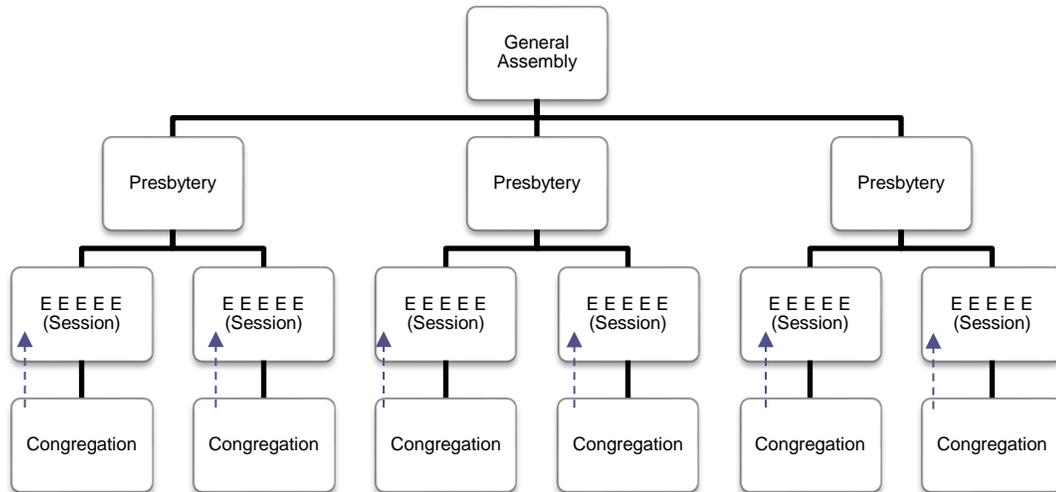
Grudem’s objections to this method:

(1) The office of “bishop” is not a distinct office in the New Testament, but is simply a synonym for the name “elder.”

(2) The theory of a group of bishops established to replace the apostles is not taught in the New Testament, nor is there an implication of a need for *physical* continuity of ordination through the laying on of hands by those who have been ordained in an unbroken chain of succession from the apostles.

## 2. Grudem: **Presbyterian**

**Grudem:** In this system, each local church elects elders to a session. The pastor of the church will be one of the elders in the session, equal in authority to the other elders. This session has governing authority over the local church. However, the members of the session (the elders) are also members of a presbytery, which has authority over several churches in a region. This presbytery consists of some or all of the elders in the local churches over which it has authority. Moreover, some of the members of the presbytery are members of the “general assembly” which usually will have authority over all the presbyterian churches in a nation or region.



**Grudem: E . . . stands for elder, and the dotted lines indicate that the whole congregation elects the elders**

**Grudem: The arguments in favor of this presbyterian system are: (1) that those who have wisdom and gifts for eldership should be called on to use their wisdom to govern more than just one local church, and (2) a national (or even worldwide) government of the church shows the unity of the body of Christ. Moreover (3) such a system is able to prevent an individual congregation from falling into doctrinal error much more effectively than any voluntary association of churches.**

Grudem's objections to this method:

**(1) Nowhere in Scripture do *elders* have regularly established authority over more than their own local church.**

**(2) This system, in practice, results in much formal litigation, where doctrinal disputes are pursued year after year all the way to the level of the general assembly.**

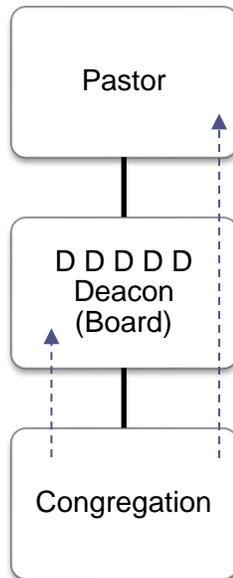
**(3) The effective power in church government seems, in practice, to be too removed from the final control of the lay people in the church.**

**(4) Although in some cases it is true that a doctrinally sound denomination with a presbyterian system of government can keep a local church from going astray in its doctrine, in actuality very frequently the opposite has been true: the national leadership of a presbyterian denomination has adopted false doctrine and has put great pressure on local churches to conform to it.**

(5) Although the presbyterian system does represent in one form the national or even worldwide unity of Christ's church, such unity can certainly be shown in other ways than through this system of government.

3. Grudem: **Congregational**

- a. Grudem: **Single** elder (or single pastor). The pastor is seen as the only elder in the church, and there is an elected board of deacons who serve under his authority and give support to him.



Grudem: The arguments in favor of this system are clearly presented in A.H. Strong's *Systematic Theology*.

(1) The New Testament does not require a plurality of elders

Grudem: Another Baptist theologian, Millard Erickson, supports Strong's claim that the New Testament does not require plural elders in a church. He says that the New Testament examples of elders are "descriptive passages" that tell about a church order that already existed, but that "churches are not commanded to adopt a particular form of church order" (*Christian Theology* p. 1084).

(2) Strong adds that "James was the pastor or president of the church at Jerusalem," and cites [Acts 12:17](#); [21:18](#); and [Galatians 2:12](#) to show that this leadership by James was a pattern which could then be imitated by other churches.

(3) Strong notes that some passages have “bishop” in the singular but “deacons” in the plural, hinting at something similar to this common Baptist form of government. **1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7**

(4) Finally, the “angel of the church” in **Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14**, according to Strong, “is best interpreted as meaning the pastor of the church; and, if this be correct, it is clear that each church had, not many pastors, but one.”

Grudem’s objections to this method:

(1) It seems inconsistent to argue that the New Testament falls short of giving a clear *command* that all churches should have a plurality of elders when the passages on qualifications of elders in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-7** are used as scriptural *requirements* for church officers today. How can churches say that the *qualifications for elders* found in these verses are commanded for us today but the *system of plural elders* found in these very same verses is not commanded, but was required only in that time and in that society? . . . Moreover, it seems to be quite unwise to ignore a clear New Testament pattern which existed throughout all the churches for which we have evidence at the time the New Testament was written. . . . We may ask, why should we follow Strong and adopt as the norm a pattern of church government which is *nowhere* found in the New Testament, and reject a pattern *everywhere* found in the New Testament?

(2) James may well have acted as moderator or presiding officer in the church in Jerusalem, for all churches will have some kind of designated leader like this in order to conduct meetings. But this does not imply that he was the “pastor” of the church in Jerusalem in a “single elder” sense. In fact, **Acts 15:2** shows that there were *elders* (plural) in the church in Jerusalem, and James himself was probably numbered among the apostles (see **Galatians 1:19**) rather than the elders.

(3) In **1 Timothy 3:2** and **Titus 1:7**, the Greek definite article modifying “bishop” simply shows that Paul is speaking of general qualifications as they applied to any one example. In fact, in both cases which Strong cites we know there were *elders* (plural) in the churches involved. **1 Timothy 3:2** is written to Timothy at Ephesus, and **Acts 20:17** shows us that there were “elders” in the church at Ephesus.

(4) The angels of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 are unusual and rather weak evidence for single elders. “The angel of the church in Ephesus” (Revelation 2:1) can hardly mean that there was only one elder in that church, since we know there were “elders” there in this very large church (Acts 20:17).

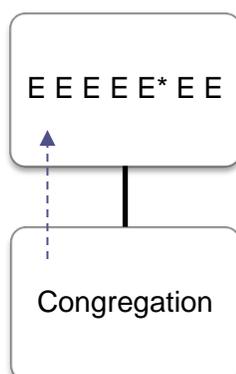
(6) A common practical problem with a “single elder” system is either an excessive concentration of power in one person or excessive demands laid upon him.

**Grudem:** Here it should be noted that the “single elder” view of church government really has no more New Testament support than the “single bishop” (episcopal) view. Both seem to be attempts to justify what has already happened in the history of the church, not conclusions that have grown out of an inductive examination of the New Testament itself.

**Can't we just have the deacons serve as elders too?** (Yes, but that's not the role of a deacon)

b. **Grudem:** **Plural local** elders

**Grudem:** The elders govern the church and have authority to rule over it, authority which has been conferred by Christ himself, the head of the church, and by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17). In this system of government, there is always more than one elder, a fact which distinguishes this form of government from the “single elder system” discussed above. In a contemporary congregation, the “pastor” (or “senior pastor”) would be one among the elders in this system. He does not have authority over them, nor does he work for them as an employee. . . . In addition, the pastor will ordinarily have considerable authority to make decisions and provide leadership in many areas of responsibility that have been delegated to him by the elder board as a whole. Such a system would allow a pastor to exercise strong leadership in the church while still having equal governing authority with the other elders.



\* Pastor

**Grudem:** The strength of this system of government is seen in the fact that the pastor does not have authority on

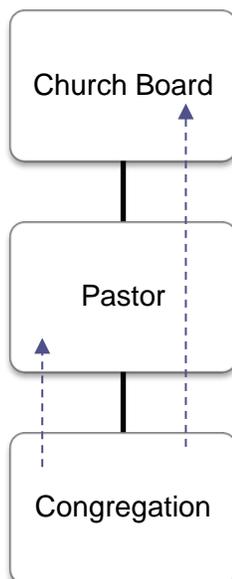
his own over the congregation, but that authority belongs collectively to the entire group of elders (what may be called the elder board). Moreover, the pastor himself, like every other elder, is subject to the authority of the elder board as a whole. This can be a great benefit in keeping a pastor from making mistakes, and in supporting him in adversity and protecting him from attacks and opposition.

**Grudem:** Though elders have substantial governing authority over the church, it should not be unlimited authority.

**Grudem:** The arguments . . . for restrictions on the authority of church officers may be summarized as follows: (1) Church officers in the New Testament were apparently chosen by the whole congregation. (2) The final governing authority in New Testament churches seemed to rest with the whole church. (3) Accountability to the congregation provides a safeguard against temptations to sin. (4) Some degree of control by the entire congregation provides a safeguard against the leadership falling into doctrinal error. (5) Government works best with the consent of those governed. . . . (6) . . . It is right to include all believers in some of the crucial decision-making processes of the church.

**Grudem:** While it is important to have *some recognized checks* on the authority of elders, and to rest ultimate governing authority with the congregation as a whole, it still is necessary, if we are to remain faithful to the New Testament pattern, to have a strong level of authority vested in the elders themselves.

### c. Grudem: Corporate board



**Grudem:** Patterned after the example of a modern corporation, where the board of directors hires an executive officer who then has authority to run the business as he sees fit. This form of government could also be called the “you-work-for-us” structure.

**Grudem:** There is no New Testament precedent or support for such a form of church government. . . . This structure . . . deprives the pastor of sharing in the ruling authority that must be his if he is to carry out his eldership responsibilities effectively.

#### d. Grudem: Pure democracy



**Grudem: This view . . . takes congregational church government to its logical extreme.**

**Grudem: In this system *everything* must come to the congregational meeting. . . . While this structure does attempt to do justice to some of the passages cited above regarding the need for final governing authority to rest with the congregation as a whole, it is unfaithful to the New Testament pattern of recognized and designated elders who have actual authority to rule the church in most situations.**

- e. **Grudem: “No government but the Holy Spirit.” Grudem: In this case, the church would deny that any form of government is needed, it would depend on all the members of the congregation being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their own lives, and decisions would generally be made by consensus. This form of government never lasts very long. Not only is it unfaithful to the New Testament pattern of designated elders with governing authority in the church, but it is also subject to much abuse.**

#### 4. Grudem: Conclusions

**Grudem: The form of government adopted by a church is **not** a major point of doctrine. . . . Nevertheless, a church can be *more pure* or *less pure* on this point, as in other areas. As we are persuaded by Scripture concerning various aspects of church government, then we should continue to pray and work for the greater purity of the visible church in this area as well.**

#### D. Grudem: Should women be church officers?

Grudem and John Piper wrote *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* for more on this.

**Grudem: Men and women have equal value to God, and should be seen by us as having absolutely equal value as persons, and equal value to the church.**

**Grudem: Evangelical churches have often failed to recognize the full equality of men and women, and thereby have failed to count women equal in value to men.**

**Grudem: The Bible does not permit women to function in the role of pastor or elder within a church. 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**

**Grudem:** With regard to other offices, such as treasurer, for example, or other staff positions such as youth minister or counseling director or children's minister, and so forth, the only question to be asked is whether these offices include the ruling and teaching functions reserved for elders in the New Testament. If not, then *all of these offices would be open to women as well as to men* for we must be careful not to prohibit what the New Testament does not prohibit.

### **Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)**

1. **No matter what kind of church government structure you currently find yourself in, are there ways in which you could be more encouraging and supportive to the current leaders in your church?**
2. **If you are currently an officer in your church, or if you someday would like to be one, is your pattern of life such that you would like to see it imitated by others in the church?**
3. **Whether or not your church has officers who are called "elders," who are the people who carry out the functions of elders in your church?**
4. **Before reading this chapter, what was your view on the question of women serving as teaching pastors or elders in a church? How has this chapter changed your view, if at all?**

### **Scripture Memory Passage: 1 Peter 5:1-4**

**1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

### **Hymn ("Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," John Newton, 1779)**

**Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God;  
He whose Word cannot be broken formed thee for his own abode:  
On the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded, thou may'st smile at all thy foes.**

**See, the streams of living waters, springing from eternal love,  
Well supply thy sons and daughters, and all fear of want remove:**

**Who can faint, while such a river ever flows their thirst t'assuage?  
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver, never fails from age to age.**

**Round each habitation hov'ring, see the cloud and fire appear  
For a glory and cov'ring, showing that the Lord is near:  
Thus deriving from their banner light by night and shade by day,  
Safe they feed upon the manna which he gives them when they pray.**

**Savior, if of Zion's city I, through grace, a member am,  
Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in thy name:  
Fading is the worlding's pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show;  
Solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion's children know.**

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 48: Means of Grace Within the Church

---

*What are the different activities within the life of the church that God uses to bring blessing to us? What do we miss if we neglect involvement in a local church?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **1 Peter 5:1-4**

**1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

#### Introduction

In week one, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. In week two, we looked at purity and unity in the church. In week three, we looked at spiritual warfare, the keys of the kingdom, the church and the state, and church discipline. Last week, we looked at the officers of the church and the major forms of church government. This week, we look at the ways in which God gives grace through the church itself.

#### Explanation and Scriptural Basis

##### A. Grudem: How many means of grace are available to us?

**Grudem: All of the blessings we experience in this life are ultimately undeserved—they are all of *grace*. In fact, for Peter, the entire Christian life is lived by grace (1 Peter 5:12).**

**Grudem:** But are there any special *means* that God uses to give additional grace to us? Specifically, *within the fellowship of the church* are there certain means—that is, certain activities, ceremonies, or functions—that God uses to give more grace to us? . . . Of course, personal prayer, worship, and Bible study, and personal faith, are all means through which God works to bring grace to us as individual Christians. But in this chapter we are dealing with the doctrine of the church.

**Grudem:** We may define the means of grace as follows: *The means of grace are any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians.*

**Grudem:** The following list may not be exhaustive, but it does include most of the means of grace that believers have access to within the fellowship of the church:

1. Teaching of the Word
2. Baptism
3. The Lord's Supper
4. Prayer for one another
5. Worship
6. Church discipline
7. Giving
8. Spiritual gifts
9. Fellowship
10. Evangelism
11. Personal ministry to individuals

**Grudem:** The Holy Spirit works through all of them to bring various kinds of blessing to individuals.

**Grudem:** The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally believed that God's "grace" comes to people only through the official ministry of the church, particularly through the priests of the church. Therefore, when it specifies the means of grace (what it calls the "sacraments") that are available to people within the church, it has in view activities that are supervised and/or performed by only the priests of the church. The seven "sacraments" in Roman Catholic teaching are the following:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Eucharist (the Lord's Supper as experienced in the mass)
4. Penance
5. Extreme unction (popularly known as the "last rites," the anointing with oil that is administered to a dying person)
6. Holy orders (ordination to the priesthood or diaconate)
7. Matrimony

**Grudem: There is not only a difference in the lists given by Catholics and Protestants; there is also a difference in fundamental meaning. Catholics view these as “means of salvation” that make people more fit to receive justification from God. But on a Protestant view, the means of grace are simply means of additional blessing within the Christian life, and do not add to our fitness to receive justification from God. Catholics teach that the means of grace impart grace whether or not there is subjective faith on the part of the minister or the recipient, while Protestants hold that God only imparts grace when there is faith on the part of the persons administering or receiving these means. And while the Roman Catholic Church firmly restricts the administration of the sacraments to the clergy, our list of means of grace includes many activities that are carried out by all believers.**

## B. Grudem: Discussion of specific means

### 1. Grudem: Teaching of the **Word**

**Grudem: It is appropriate that we list the teaching of the Word as the first and most important means of grace within the church**

Before salvation: **Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:24; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Timothy 3:15**

After salvation (the focus here): **Acts 20:32; Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 32:47; 2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19; Psalm 19:7; Romans 15:4; Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 23:29; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Acts 6:7; 12:24; 13:49**

### 2. Grudem: Baptism

Since we will spend an entire Sunday school lesson on baptism and communion next week, we will not spend much time on them here today.

**Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:2-5; Colossians 2:12** [Grudem: The statement that it is “*through faith in the working of God*” that this happens reminds us that there is no magical property in the act of baptism itself, which causes a spiritual result to come about, yet the verse also indicates that when faith accompanies baptism there is genuine spiritual work in the life of the person being baptized]; **Acts 2:38; 8:39; 16:34**

**Grudem (on baptism): A public act of confessing Jesus as Savior, an act which in itself brings joy and blessing to a believer. Moreover, it is a sign of the believer’s death and resurrection with Christ. . . . Baptism is a physical symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ and our participation in them.**

### 3. Grudem: The Lord's supper

**Grudem: In addition to baptism, the other ordinance or ceremony that Jesus commanded the church to carry out is participation in the Lord's Supper. . . . The Lord's Supper is not simply an ordinary meal among human beings—it is a fellowship with Christ, in his presence and at his table.**

**1 Corinthians 10:16-17** (communion is more than just symbolic—we are actually participating with Christ); **11:29-30; Matthew 26:26; John 6:55-56)**

### 4. Grudem: Prayer

**Grudem: Corporate prayer within the church as it assembles, and prayer by church members for one another, are powerful means which the Holy Spirit uses daily to bring blessing to Christians within the church** [we sometimes only focus on the private prayer, but the New Testament focuses on the public prayer as well]

**Acts 4:24-31; 12:5; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20; Hebrews 4:16**

### 5. Grudem: Worship

**2 Chronicles 5:13-14; Acts 13:2; John 4:23-24; Philippians 3:3**

### 6. Grudem: Church discipline

**Grudem: Because church discipline is a means by which the purity of the church is advanced and holiness of life is encouraged, we certainly should count it as a "means of grace" as well.**

**2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 Corinthians 5:1-7; 4:19-20; Matthew 16:19; 18:18-20; 1 Timothy 5:20**

**Grudem: It would be very healthy for the church to begin to think of church discipline not as an onerous burden placed upon it by the Lord, but as a genuine "means of grace" by which great blessing can come to the church—in reconciling believers to one another and to God, in restoring the erring brother or sister to walk in obedience, in warning all to "stand in fear" (1 Timothy 5:20), in increasing moral purity in the church, and in protecting and advancing Christ's honor.**

### 7. Grudem: Giving

**2 Corinthians 8:5; 9:6-15**

### 8. Grudem: Spiritual gifts

We will spend a few weeks on spiritual gifts in August, so we will be brief here.

**1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 14:12; 12:7-11**

## 9. Grudem: Fellowship

**Hebrews 10:24-25.** Grudem: An emphasis on the fellowship of believers with one another as a means of grace would also help to overcome an excessive focus on the ordained clergy as the primary dispensers of grace within the church, and particularly when the church as a whole is assembled.

**Acts 2:42, 46-47.** Grudem: It would also be healthy for Christians to recognize that a measure of God's grace is experienced when Christians talk together and eat together, when they have times of work and play together, enjoying one another's fellowship.

## 10. Grudem: Evangelism

Grudem: In *Acts*, there is a frequent connection between proclaiming the gospel (even in the face of opposition) and being filled with the Holy Spirit (see *Acts 2:4* with vv. 14–36; 4:8, 31; 9:17 with v. 20; 13:9, 52). Evangelism is a means of grace, then, not only in the sense that it ministers saving grace to the unsaved, but also because those who evangelize experience more of the Holy Spirit's presence and blessing in their own lives. Sometimes evangelism is carried out by individuals, but at other times it is a corporate activity of the church (as in evangelistic campaigns). And even individual evangelism often involves other church members who will welcome an unbelieving visitor and give attention to his or her needs. So evangelism is rightly considered a means of grace in the church.

## 11. Grudem: Personal ministry to individuals

Grudem: This means of grace operates when one or more Christians within the church take time to minister, in various ways, to very specific needs of another individual in the church.

- Grudem: *Words of encouragement or exhortation or wise counsel* (**Colossians 3:16**; Ephesians 4:29; James 5:20; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Grudem: *Giving to assist the material needs of a brother or sister* (**James 2:16**; **1 John 3:17**; Acts 4:34; Galatians 2:10)
- Grudem: *Anointing with oil* (Mark 6:13; **James 5:14**)
- Grudem: *Laying on of hands* (Luke 4:40; Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:41; 6:5; 8:23-25; Luke 5:13; 13:13; Matthew 9:18; Mark 5:23; 7:32; Acts 28:8; Mark 8:22; Matthew 14:35-36; Luke 6:19; Mark 10:16; Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15; Mark 6:2; Acts 14:3; 19:11; 4:29-30; 6:6; 13:3; 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 5:22; **Hebrews 6:1-2**)

### C. Grudem: Conclusions

**Grudem:** When any of these are carried out in faith and obedience, we should eagerly expect and look for evidence that the Holy Spirit is actually ministering to people at the same time as these actions are being done. We as Christians ought not to neglect to “meet together” (Hebrews 10:25), but ought to look forward eagerly to any assembly of believers in which any of these means would occur, expecting that God will bring blessing from each of these means!

**Grudem:** All of these means of grace occur within the fellowship of the church. Those who neglect the fellowship of the church willfully cut themselves off from all of these means of grace and thereby cut themselves off from most of the ordinary means that the Holy Spirit uses to bring blessing to his people.

**Grudem:** These means of grace ought to give us great appreciation for the amazing privilege of being members of the body of Christ, the church.

### Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Before . . . this chapter, did you think that it made very much difference if a Christian continued to be active in the fellowship of the church or not? How has this chapter changed your perspective on that question, if at all?
2. Which of the means of grace mentioned in this chapter do you think you appreciated least before reading the chapter? How has your appreciation for that means of grace increased? How do you think this will affect your actions from now on?
3. Which of the means of grace are actually least helpful in your own life? Are there some that have become rather mechanical, and that you are performing only as an outward or physical activity, without any real participation in your heart? What could you do to increase the effectiveness of those means in your life?
4. As you look over the list of the means of grace again, name one or more in which you could begin to help the church be more effective in bringing blessing to its people.

### Scripture Memory Passage: Acts 2:41-42

**41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. **42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**Hymn ("I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord," Timothy Dwight, 1800)**

**I love thy kingdom, Lord, the house of thine abode,  
The church our blest Redeemer saved with his own precious blood.**

**I love thy church, O God: her walls before thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of thine eye, and graven on thy hand.**

**For her my tears shall fall, for her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be giv'n, till toils and cares shall end.**

**Beyond my highest joy I prize her heav'nly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise.**

**Jesus, thou Friend divine, our Savior and our King,  
Thy hand from ev'ry snare and foe shall great deliv'rance bring.**

**Sure as thy truth shall last, to Zion shall be giv'n  
The brightest glories earth can yield, and brighter bliss of heav'n.**

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 49: Baptism

---

*Who should be baptized? How should it be done? What does it mean?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Acts 2:41-42**

**41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

#### Introduction

In week one, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. In week two, we looked at purity and unity in the church. In week three, we looked at spiritual warfare, the keys of the kingdom, the church and the state, and church discipline. In week four, we looked at the officers of the church and the major forms of church government. Last week, we looked at the ways in which God gives grace through the church itself. This week, we look at the first of the two ordinances of the church—baptism.

Last week we discussed the differences between means of grace (a Protestant view) and means of salvation (a Roman Catholic view where the word sacraments is typically used). That difference continues this week in that Roman Catholic doctrine teaches baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of salvation (sacraments) while the majority of Protestants teach baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances (ordained by Christ). **Grudem: Even the most conscientious Baptist would not object to calling baptism "a testament to inner grace" while Catholics would not object to calling baptism "a channel that mediates grace."**

The confusion comes when **Grudem: Protestants such as those in the Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed traditions, have been willing to use the word "sacraments" to refer to baptism and the Lord's Supper, without thereby endorsing the Roman Catholic position.** They use the Roman Catholic word without the Roman Catholic meaning. Baptists typically use the word ordinances to keep the distinction of word and meaning. It is important to know that this is not necessarily a theological problem, just a semantic difference.

Jim takes an open hand on this distinction, with a preference for 'ordinances.'

## Explanation and Scriptural Basis

### A. Grudem: The mode and meaning of baptism

Grudem: The practice of baptism in the New Testament was carried out in one way: the person being baptized was **immersed** or put completely under the water and then brought back up again. Baptism by *immersion* is therefore the “mode” of baptism or the way in which baptism was carried out in the New Testament.

Grudem: The Greek word baptizo (G966) means “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water. **Mark 1:5, 10; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39**

Grudem: The symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion. **Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12**. Grudem: When the candidate for baptism goes down into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Baptism thus very clearly pictures death to one’s old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ. But baptism by sprinkling or pouring simply misses this symbolism.

### B. Grudem: The subjects of baptism

Grudem: The pattern revealed at several places in the New Testament is that only those who give a believable profession of faith should be baptized. This view is often called “believers’ baptism,” since it holds that only those who have themselves believed in Christ (or, more precisely, those who have given reasonable evidence of believing in Christ) should be baptized. This is because baptism, which is a *symbol of beginning the Christian life* should only be given to those who have *in fact* begun the **Christian life**. This is also called credobaptism (baptism based off of a creed—or something believed). Points #1 and #2 below are **credobaptist** points.

1. Grudem: The argument from the new testament narrative passages on baptism  
**Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 32-33**

2. Grudem: The argument from the meaning of baptism

Grudem: The outward symbol of beginning the Christian life should only be given to those who show evidence of having begun the Christian life. The New Testament authors wrote as though they clearly assumed that everyone who was baptized had also personally trusted in Christ and experienced salvation. **Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12**

### 3. Grudem: Alternative #1: The Roman Catholic view

**Grudem:** The Roman Catholic Church teaches that baptism should be administered to **infants**. The reason for this is that the Catholic Church believes that baptism is *necessary* for salvation, and that the act of baptism itself *causes regeneration*. Therefore, in this view, baptism is a means whereby the church bestows saving grace on people. And if it is this kind of a channel of saving grace it should be given to all people. . . . Essential to understanding the Roman Catholic view of baptism is the realization that Catholics hold that the sacraments work apart from the faith of the people participating in the sacrament.

**Objection:** **Grudem:** The Reformation centered upon this issue. Martin Luther's great concern was to teach that salvation depends on faith alone, not on faith plus works. But if baptism and participating in the other sacraments are necessary for salvation because they are necessary for receiving saving grace, then salvation really is based on faith plus works. In contrast to this, the clear New Testament message is that justification is by faith alone. [Ephesians 2:8-9](#); [Romans 6:23](#)

**Conclusion:** **Grudem:** As for the Roman Catholic view that baptism conveys grace apart from the subjective disposition of the recipient or the minister (a position that is consistent with baptizing infants, who do not exercise faith for themselves), we must recognize that no New Testament examples exist to prove this view, nor is there New Testament testimony to indicate this.

### 4. Grudem: Alternative #2: The Protestant **paedobaptist** view

**Grudem:** Another important view is that baptism is rightly administered to all infant children of **believing** parents. This is a common view in many Protestant groups (especially Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed churches). This view is sometimes known as the covenant argument for paedobaptism. It is called a "covenant" argument because it depends on seeing infants born to believers as part of the "covenant community" of God's people. . . . The argument that infants of believers should be baptized depends primarily on the following three points:

#### a. **Grudem:** Infants were circumcised in the **old** covenant

**Grudem:** In the Old Testament, circumcision was the outward *sign* of entrance into the covenant community or the community of God's people. Circumcision was administered to all Israelite children (that is, male children) when they were eight days old. **Objection:** **Grudem:** Circumcision was given to every male living

among the people of Israel even though true circumcision is something inward and spiritual. Romans 2:28-29; 9:6

b. Grudem: Baptism is parallel to **circumcision**

Grudem: In the New Testament, the outward sign of entrance into the “covenant community” is baptism. Therefore baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision. It follows that baptism should be administered to all infant children of believing parents. To deny them this benefit is to deprive them of them a privilege and benefit that is rightfully theirs—the *sign* of belonging to the community of God’s people, the “covenant community.”

Objection: Grudem: The New Testament does not talk about a “covenant community” made up of believers *and* their unbelieving children.

- c. Grudem: **Household** baptisms. Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Corinthians 1:16. Objection: Grudem: There are indications of saving faith on the part of all of those baptized. Acts 16:32-34; 1 Corinthians 16:15. Jim’s issue: These texts do not state infants were baptized.

### C. Grudem: The effect of baptism

Grudem: When baptism is properly carried out then of course it brings some spiritual benefit to believers as well. There is the blessing of God’s favor that comes with all **obedience**, as well as the joy that comes through public profession of one’s **faith**, and the reassurance of having a clear physical picture of dying and rising with Christ and of washing away sins.

### D. Grudem: The necessity of baptism

Grudem: While we recognize that Jesus commanded baptism (Matthew 28:19), as did the apostles (Acts 2:38), we should **not** say that baptism is necessary for salvation. **Luke 23:43**. Grudem: But it is necessary if we are to be obedient to Christ, for he commanded baptism for all who believe in him.

### E. Grudem: The age for baptism

Grudem: Old enough to give a *believable* profession of **faith**

### F. Grudem: Remaining questions

#### 1. Grudem: Do churches need to be divided over baptism?

Summary of Grudem: If both sides (credobaptists and paedobaptists) were to make theological concessions, then unity could occur, like it has in the Evangelical Free Church. Otherwise, this is going to be very difficult because of membership.

## 2. Grudem: Who can baptize?

Grudem: Scripture simply does not specify any restrictions on who can perform the ceremony of baptism. . . . Since baptism is the sign of entrance into the body of Christ, the church (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13 on inward spiritual baptism), then it seems appropriate that it be done *within the fellowship of the church* wherever possible. . . . Since baptism is a sign of beginning the Christian life and therefore of beginning life in the true church as well, it is fitting that the local church be assembled to give testimony to this fact and to give visible welcome to the baptized person.

## Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Have you been baptized? When? If you were baptized as a believer, what was the effect of the baptism on your Christian life (if any)? If you were baptized as an infant, what effect did the knowledge of your baptism have in your own thinking when you eventually learned that you had been baptized as an infant?
2. What aspects of the meaning of baptism have you come to appreciate more as a result of reading this chapter (if any)?
3. When baptisms occur in your church, are they a time of rejoicing and praise to God? What do you think is happening to the person being baptized at that moment (if anything)?
4. Have you modified your own view on the question of infant baptism versus believers' baptism as a result of reading this chapter?

## Scripture Memory Passage: Romans 6:3-4

**3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

## Hymn ("Up from the Grave He Arose," Robert Lowrey, 1874)

Low in the grave he lay—Jesus, my Savior,  
Waiting the coming day—Jesus, my Lord.

Refrain:

Up from the grave he arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er his foes.

**He arose a Victor from the dark domain,  
And he lives forever with his saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!**

**Vainly they watch his bed—Jesus, my Savior;  
Vainly they seal the dead—Jesus, my Lord.**

**Death cannot keep his prey—Jesus, my Savior;  
He tore the bars away—Jesus, my Lord.**

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 50: The Lord's Supper

---

*What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? How should it be observed?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Romans 6:3-4**

**3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

#### Introduction

In week one, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. In week two, we looked at purity and unity in the church. In week three, we looked at spiritual warfare, the keys of the kingdom, the church and the state, and church discipline. In week four, we looked at the officers of the church and the major forms of church government. In week five, we looked at the ways in which God gives grace through the church itself. Last week, we looked at the first of the two ordinances of the church—baptism. This week, we look at the second of the two ordinances of the church—the Lord's Supper.

**Grudem: The previous chapter discussed baptism an ordinance that is only observed once by each person, as a sign of the beginning of his or her Christian life. This chapter discusses the Lord's Supper an ordinance that is to be observed repeatedly throughout our Christian lives, as a sign of continuing in fellowship with Christ.**

#### Explanation and Scriptural Basis

##### A. Grudem: Background in the history of redemption

**Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

**Grudem: Is there a background to this ceremony in the Old Testament? It seems that there is, for there were instances of eating and drinking in the presence of God in the old covenant as well. Exodus 24:9-11; Deuteronomy 14:23, 26; Genesis 2:15-17;**

**Matthew 26:29; Revelation 19:9.** Grudem: From **Genesis to Revelation**, then, God's aim has been to bring his people into fellowship with himself, and one of the great joys of experiencing that fellowship is the fact that we can eat and drink in the presence of the Lord. It would be healthy for the church today to recapture a more vivid sense of God's presence at the table of the Lord.

## B. Grudem: The meaning of the Lord's Supper

Grudem: The meaning of the Lord's Supper is complex, rich, and full. There are several things symbolized and affirmed in the Lord's Supper.

### 1. Grudem: Christ's **death**

Grudem: When the bread is broken it symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body, and when the cup is poured out it symbolizes the pouring out of Christ's blood for us. **1 Corinthians 11:26**

### 2. Grudem: Our **participation** in the benefits of Christ's death

**Matthew 26:26.** Grudem: As we individually reach out and take the cup for ourselves, each one of us is by that action proclaiming, "I am taking the benefits of Christ's death to myself." When we do this we give a symbol of the fact that we participate in or share in the benefits earned for us by the death of Jesus.

### 3. Grudem: Spiritual nourishment

**John 6:53-58**

### 4. Grudem: The **unity** of believers

**1 Corinthians 10:16-17**

### 5. Grudem: Christ affirms His love for me

Grudem: The fact that . . . Jesus invites me to come—is a vivid reminder and visual reassurance that Jesus Christ loves me individually and personally.

### 6. Grudem: Christ affirms that all the blessings of salvation are reserved for me

Grudem: When the Lord welcomes me to this table, he assures me that he will welcome me to all the other blessings of earth and heaven as well, and especially to the great marriage supper of the Lamb, at which a place has been reserved for me.

### 7. Grudem: I affirm my **faith** in Christ

Grudem: As I take the bread and cup for myself, by my actions I am proclaiming, "I need you and trust you, Lord Jesus, to forgive my sins and give life and health to my soul, for only by your broken body and shed blood can I be saved." In fact, as I

partake in the breaking of the bread when I eat it and the pouring out of the cup when I drink from it, I proclaim again and again that my sins were part of the cause of Jesus' suffering and death.

### C. Grudem: How is Christ present in the Lord's Supper?

#### 1. Grudem: The Roman Catholic view: **transubstantiation**

Grudem: According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the bread and wine actually **become** the body and blood of Christ. . . . When this happens, according to Roman Catholic teaching, grace is imparted to those present *ex opere operato* that is, "by the work performed," but the amount of grace dispensed is in proportion to the subjective disposition of the recipient of grace. (translation: everybody gets grace, but everybody doesn't get the same amount of grace) **Grudem: Moreover, every time the mass is celebrated, the sacrifice of Christ is repeated (in some sense), and the Catholic church is careful to affirm that this is a real sacrifice, even though it is not the same as the sacrifice that Christ paid on the cross.**

Grudem: In Catholic teaching, because the elements of bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ, the church for many centuries did not allow the lay people to drink from the cup of the Lord's Supper (for fear that the blood of Christ would be spilled) but only to eat the bread.

Grudem: In response to the Roman Catholic teaching on the Lord's Supper, it must be said that it first fails to recognize the symbolic character of Jesus' statements when he declared, "**This is my body,**" or, "**This is my blood.**" Jesus spoke in symbolic ways many times when speaking of himself. **John 15:1; 10:9; 6:41.**

Grudem: The Roman Catholic view fails to recognize the clear New Testament teaching on the finality and completeness of Christ's sacrifice once for all time for our sins. **Hebrews 9:25-28; John 19:30**

#### 2. Grudem: The Lutheran view: **consubstantiation**

Grudem: Martin Luther rejected the Roman Catholic view of the Lord's Supper, yet he insisted that the phrase "This is my body" had to be taken in some sense as a literal statement. His conclusion was not that the bread actually *becomes* the physical body of Christ, but that the physical body of Christ *is present* "in, with, and under" the bread of the Lord's Supper. The example sometimes given is to say that Christ's body is present in the bread as water is present in a sponge—the water is not the sponge, but is present "in, with, and under" a sponge, and is present wherever the sponge is present. Other examples given are that of magnetism in a magnet or a soul in the body. **1 Corinthians 10:16**

**Grudem:** However, in order to affirm this doctrine, Luther had to answer an important question: How can Christ's physical body, or more generally Christ's human nature, be everywhere present? Is it not true that Jesus in his human nature ascended into heaven and remains there until his return? Did he not say that he was leaving the earth and would no longer be in the world but was going to the Father (John 16:28; 17:11)? In answer to this problem Luther taught the *ubiquity* of Christ's human nature after his ascension—that is, that Christ's human nature was present everywhere ("ubiquitous"). But theologians ever since Luther's time have suspected that he taught the ubiquity of Christ's human nature, not because it is found anywhere in Scripture, but because he needed it to explain how his view of consubstantiation could be true.

**Grudem:** In response to the Lutheran view . . . Berkhof rightly objects that Luther really makes the words of Jesus mean, "This accompanies my body."

3. **Grudem:** The rest of Protestantism: a **symbolic** and **spiritual** presence of Christ

**Grudem:** In distinction from Martin Luther, John Calvin and other Reformers argued that . . . the bread and wine *symbolized* the body and blood of Christ, and they gave a visible sign of the fact that Christ himself was truly present.

**Grudem:** Today most Protestants would say, in addition to the fact that the bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ, that Christ is also *spiritually present* in a special way as we partake of the bread and wine.

#### D. **Grudem:** Who should participate in the Lord's Supper?

First: **Grudem:** Most Protestants would agree, first, that **only** *those who believe in Christ* should participate in it, because it is a sign of being a Christian and continuing in the Christian life. **Grudem:** Paul warns that those who eat and drink unworthily [whatever that refers to—it is wide open and is interpreted in a variety of ways] **face serious consequences. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30**

Second: **Grudem:** Many Protestants would argue . . . *only those who have been baptized* should participate in the Lord's Supper. This is because baptism is so clearly a symbol of *beginning* the Christian life, while the Lord's Supper is clearly a symbol of *continuing* the Christian life. **Grudem:** But others, including the present author, would object to such a restriction as follows: A different problem arises if someone who is a genuine believer, but not yet baptized, is not allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper when Christians get together. In that case the person's nonparticipation symbolizes that he or she is not a member of the body of Christ. The best solution? Get baptized as soon as possible after conversion.

Third: **Grudem: The third qualification for participation is that self-examination. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.** **Grudem: In the context of 1 Corinthians 11 Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for their selfish and inconsiderate conduct when they come together as a church. 1 Corinthians 11:20-21.** **Grudem: The problem at Corinth was not a failure to understand that the bread and cup represented the body and blood of the—they certainly knew that. The problem rather was their selfish, inconsiderate conduct toward each other while they were at the Lord’s table. They were not understanding or “discerning” the true nature of the church *as one body*.**

#### E. Grudem: Other questions

**Grudem: Who should administer the Lord’s Supper? Scripture gives no explicit teaching on this question.**

**Grudem: How often should the Lord’s Supper be celebrated? 1 Corinthians 11:26**

#### Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **What things symbolized by the Lord’s Supper have received new emphasis in your thinking as a result of reading this chapter? Do you feel more eager to participate in the Lord’s Supper now than before you read the chapter? Why?**
2. **In what ways (if any) will you approach the Lord’s Supper differently now? Which of the things symbolized in the Lord’s Supper is most encouraging to your Christian life right now?**
3. **What view of the nature of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper have you been taught in your church previously?**
4. **Are there any broken personal relationships that you need to make right before you come to the Lord’s Supper again?**

#### Scripture Memory Passage: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

**23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” 25 In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.”**

**26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.**

## Hymn ("Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face," Horatius Bonar, 1855)

Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face;  
Here would I touch and handle things unseen,  
Here grasp with firmer hand th' eternal grace,  
And all my weariness upon thee lean.

Here would I feed upon the bread of God,  
Here drink with thee the royal wine of heaven;  
Here would I lay aside each earthly load,  
Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.

This is the hour of banquet and of song;  
This is the heav'nly table spread for me:  
Here let me feast, and, feasting, still prolong  
The brief, bright hour of fellowship with thee.

I have no help but thine, nor do I need  
Another arm save thine to lean upon:  
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;  
My strength is in thy might, thy might alone.

Mine is the sin, but thine the righteousness;  
Mine is the guilt, but thine the cleansing blood;  
Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace,  
Thy blood, thy righteousness, O Lord my God.

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 51: Worship

---

*How can our worship fulfill its great purpose in the New Testament age?  
What does it mean to worship "in spirit and in truth"?*

#### Scripture Memory Passage Review: **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

**23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."**

**26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.**

#### Introduction

In week one, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. In week two, we looked at purity and unity in the church. In week three, we looked at spiritual warfare, the keys of the kingdom, the church and the state, and church discipline. In week four, we looked at the officers of the church and the major forms of church government. In week five, we looked at the ways in which God gives grace through the church itself. In week six, we looked at the first of the two ordinances of the church—baptism. Last week, we looked at the second of the two ordinances of the church—the Lord's Supper. This week, we look at worship.

#### Explanation and Scriptural Basis

**Grudem: The term *worship* is sometimes applied to all of a Christian's life, and it is rightly said that everything in our life should be an act of worship, and everything the church does should be considered worship, for everything we do should glorify God. However, in this chapter I am not using the word in that broad sense. Rather, I am using worship in a**

**more specific sense to refer to the music and words that Christians direct to God in praise, together with the heart attitudes that accompany that praise, especially when Christians assemble together.**

Caution: Grudem switches terms often in this chapter—sometimes in my opinion incorrectly. This chapter (IMHO) is in dire need of an editor—it does not flow well and is not cohesively organized.

## **A. Grudem: Definition and purpose of worship**

*Grudem: Worship is the activity of **glorifying** God in his presence with our voices and hearts.*

**Grudem: In this definition we note that worship is an act of glorifying God. Yet all aspects of our lives are supposed to glorify God, so this definition specifies that worship is something we do especially when we come into God's presence, when we are conscious of adoration of him in our hearts, and when we praise him with our voices and speak about him so others may hear. Colossians 3:16**

**Grudem: In fact, the primary reason that God called us into the assembly of the church is that as a corporate assembly we might worship him.** This concept is present in the Old Testament. **Exodus 7:16** **Did the people continue in worship?** No. **What did they do?** Worshipped anything and everything else. **What did God do as a result?** Punish, call back, wash, rinse, and repeat.

**Grudem: Worship is therefore a *direct* expression of our ultimate **purpose** for living, "to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever." (from the Westminster Larger Catechism) **Isaiah 43:6-7; Ephesians 1:11-12****

**Grudem: God is worthy of worship and we are *not*. **Revelation 22:8-9; Exodus 20:1-5; Isaiah 48:11; Revelation 4:11****

**Grudem: Because God is worthy of worship and seeks to be worshiped, everything in our worship services should be designed and carried out not to call attention to ourselves or bring glory to ourselves, but to call attention to God and to cause people to think about him. **1 Peter 4:11****

## B. Grudem: The results of genuine worship

### 1. Grudem: We delight in **God**

Grudem: God created us not only to glorify him but also to enjoy him and delight in his excellence. **Psalm 27:4; 16:11; 73:25; 84:1-2, 4, 10; Acts 2:46-47; Luke 24:50-53; Revelation 4:8; 5:12**

### 2. Grudem: God delights in **us**

**Genesis 1:31; Isaiah 62:3-5; Zephaniah 3:17**

### 3. Grudem: We draw near to **God**: the amazing unseen reality of new covenant worship

Grudem: In the old covenant believers could only draw near to God in a limited way through the temple ceremonies. **Hebrews 9:1-7**. Grudem: Now, under the new covenant, believers have the amazing privilege of being able to enter directly into the holy of holies in heaven when they worship. **Hebrews 10:19-22**. Grudem: Worship in the New Testament church is not simply practice for some later heavenly experience of genuine worship, nor is it simply pretending, or going through some outward activities. It is *genuine worship* in the presence of God himself, and when we worship we enter before his throne. **Hebrews 12:18-24**

### 4. Grudem: God draws near to **us**

**James 4:8**. Grudem: This has been the pattern of God's dealings with his people throughout the Bible, and we should be confident that it will be true also today. **2 Chronicles 5:13-14; Psalm 22:3**

### 5. Grudem: God ministers to us

**Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 34:4-5, 8; 37:4; 1 John 3:2; Hebrews 12:2**

## C. Grudem: The eternal value of worship

Grudem: The fact that worship is an activity of great significance and eternal value is also evident in the fact that it is the primary activity carried on by those who are already in heaven. **Revelation 4:8-11; 5:11-14**

## D. Grudem: How can we enter into genuine worship?

This is the section in which Grudem gets tactical relative to our worship services.

Grudem: Ultimately, worship is a spiritual activity and it must be empowered by the **Holy Spirit** working within us. This means that we must pray that the Holy Spirit will enable us to worship rightly. **John 4:23-24**

**Grudem: An attitude of worship comes upon us when we begin to see God as he is and then respond to his presence. Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 14:33; Hebrews 12:18-24, 28-29**

**Grudem: Genuine worship is not something that is self-generated or that can be worked up within ourselves. It must rather be the outpouring of our hearts *in response* to a realization of who God is.**

**Grudem: Is there anything else we can do to make worship more effective? We must remember that worship is a spiritual matter (John 4:21-24), and the primary solutions will therefore be **spiritual** ones. There will need to be much prayer in preparation for worship, especially on the part of those in leadership, asking that God will bless the worship times and make himself known to us. Also, congregations will need teaching about the spiritual nature of worship and the New Testament understanding of worship in God's presence (see Hebrews 12:22-24). In addition, Christians need to be encouraged to make right any broken interpersonal relationships. Paul says that men are to lift holy hands "**without anger or quarreling**" (1 Timothy 2:8), and Jesus reminds us that we are first to "**be reconciled**" to our brother, and then come before God's altar and offer a gift (Matthew 5:24). In fact, John says that anyone who says, "**I love God**" but hates his brother "**is a liar**" (1 John 4:20). Husbands particularly need to make sure they are living "**considerately**" with their wives, and honoring them, in order that their prayers "**may not be hindered**" (1 Peter 3:7). And the entire church is responsible to watch "**that no 'root of bitterness' spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled**" (Hebrews 12:15)—an indication that sin and broken relationships among a few can spread to many and result in the withholding of God's blessing from the whole congregation.**

**Grudem: Moreover, if we are truly to draw near to God in worship, there must be a striving for personal holiness of life. Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8; James 4:8**

**Grudem: The physical setting and the structure of worship services do matter, for there are indications that Jesus thought that the atmosphere of worship was very important. Matthew 21:12-13; 6:6. Grudem: We should choose a setting for prayer or for worship that avoids distractions as much as possible. This is consistent with the fact that worship is to be done in an orderly way. 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40; Hebrews 12:28. Grudem: In addition, it is important to allow enough time for the various aspects of corporate worship.**

**Grudem: Different aspects of a worship service require different attitudes and states of mind. Listening to Bible teaching requires attentiveness to the text and the teacher. Praise requires joy and a focus on the Lord and his excellence. Prayers of petition**

require a focus on needs and a deep concern for others. Times when offerings are given require a focus on sacrificing ourselves to the Lord as well as giving to him from our means and trusting him to provide for our needs. The Lord's Supper requires a time of reflection, self-examination, and perhaps repentance, along with thanksgiving. But we cannot have all of these attitudes at once, for we are finite. Different attitudes of mind require time to attain and dwell in. For that reason it is impossible to fulfill all the tasks necessary for an assembled congregation simply in one hour on Sunday morning, and it is harmful even to try. Those who do try to do everything crowd too much into a brief time and fail to do anything well. If congregations are to fulfill the various purposes for which God wants them to assemble together, and especially to have extended times of reverent worship, they will probably need to find creative solutions that enable them to meet for longer periods of time, and omit or reschedule some activities that have become habitual or traditional on Sunday mornings but are really not necessary.

### **Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)**

1. How could your church take steps to strengthen and deepen its experience of worship?
2. Have you ever felt a strong sense of the presence of God in corporate worship? When was this? Can you describe it? Do you know what factors contributed to this sense?
3. During times of worship, can you describe the emotions that are most prominent in your consciousness? Is this experience similar to other experiences in daily life, or are these feelings unique to times of worship? Have you ever sensed that God is ministering to you while you are worshipping him? What made you aware of that?
4. Do you think there is enough genuine worship . . . in your life? If not, what are the hindrances?
5. How do you feel about the fact that God is jealous for his own honor and seeks his honor? Can you think of anything in the universe that would be more right than for God to seek his own honor? Can you think of anything other than worship of God that would make you feel more deeply that you are doing the thing for which you were created?

### **Scripture Memory Passage: Revelation 4:11**

**"You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created."**

**Hymn (“Holy, Holy, Holy,” Reginald Heber, 1826)**

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!**

**Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;**

**Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!**

**God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

**Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,**

**Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;**

**Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,**

**Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.**

**Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,**

**Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,**

**Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee**

**Perfect in pow’r, in love, and purity.**

**Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**

**All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea;**

**Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!**

**God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 52: Gifts of the Holy Spirit: (Part 1) General Questions

---

*What are spiritual gifts? How many are there? Have some gifts ceased?  
Seeking and using spiritual gifts*

#### **Scripture Memory Passage Review: Revelation 4:11**

**“You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created.”**

#### **Introduction**

In week one, we looked at a definition for the church, metaphors for the church, true and false churches, and purposes of the church. In week two, we looked at purity and unity in the church. In week three, we looked at spiritual warfare, the keys of the kingdom, the church and the state, and church discipline. In week four, we looked at the officers of the church and the major forms of church government. In week five, we looked at the ways in which God gives grace through the church itself. In week six, we looked at the first of the two ordinances of the church—baptism. In week seven, we looked at the second of the two ordinances of the church—the Lord’s Supper. Last week, we looked at worship. This week, we combine two chapters and examine the gifts of the Spirit.

At the conclusion of today’s lesson, we will only have one major doctrine left—the doctrine of the future.

## Explanation and Scriptural Basis

### A. Grudem: Questions regarding spiritual gifts in general

**Grudem:** *A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church*

#### 1. Grudem: Spiritual gifts in the history of redemption

**Certainly the Holy Spirit was at work in the Old Testament. . . . But in general there was *less powerful* activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of most believers.**

**Grudem:** *But at several points the Old Testament looks forward to a time when there would be a greater empowering of the Holy Spirit that would reach to all of God's people.*

**Numbers 11:29; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 1:8; 2:16** (the fulfillment in **Acts**)

#### 2. Grudem: The purpose of spiritual gifts in the New Testament age

**Grudem:** *Spiritual gifts are given *to equip the church to carry out its ministry until Christ returns.* **1 Corinthians 1:7; 13:10; 14:12; Ephesians 4:11-12***

#### 3. Grudem: How many gifts are there?

**Grudem:** *The New Testament epistles list specific spiritual gifts in six different passages. . . . What is obvious is that these lists are all quite different. No one list has all these gifts. . . . These facts indicate that Paul was not attempting to construct exhaustive lists of gifts when he specified the ones he did.*

#### **1 Corinthians 12:28**

1. apostle

2. prophet

3. teacher

4. miracles

5. kinds of healings

6. helps

7. administration

8. tongues

#### **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**

9. word of wisdom

10. word of knowledge

11. faith

(5). gifts of healing

(4). miracles

(2). prophecy

12. distinguishing between spirits

(8). tongues

13. interpretation of tongues

**Ephesians 4:11**

(1). apostle

(2). prophet

14. evangelist

15. pastor-teacher

**Romans 12:6-8**

(2). prophecy

16. serving (breakfast  
fifth Sunday and  
backup needed)

(3). teaching

17. encouraging

18. contributing

19. leadership

20. mercy

1 Corinthians 7:7

21. marriage

22. celibacy

**1 Peter 4:11**

whoever speaks  
(covering several  
gifts)

whoever renders  
service (covering  
several gifts)

**Grudem: There is some degree of overlap among the gifts listed at various places.**

**Grudem: Something can be said at this point about the relationship between gifts and offices in the church. As we look at these lists, it is evident that in some cases Paul names the specific gift (such as gifts of healing or administration or tongues), and in other cases he names the *persons* who have those gifts (such as apostles, prophets, or evangelists). Some lists name only the gifts themselves (such as 1 Corinthians 12:8-10), while other lists name only the people who possess those gifts (such as Ephesians 4:11 or 1 Peter 4:11). And some lists are mixed, naming some gifts and some persons who have the gifts (such as Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28).**

**Grudem: The gifts listed will have many different expressions as they are found in different people. . . . All of this simply means that no two people's gifts are exactly alike.**

**Grudem: How many different gifts are there then? It simply depends on how specific we wish to be. We can make a very short list of only two gifts as Peter does in 1 Peter 4:11.**

**Grudem: God gives the church an amazing variety of spiritual gifts, and they are all tokens of his varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10**

**Grudem: We should be willing to recognize and appreciate people who have gifts that differ from ours and whose gifts may differ from our expectations of what certain gifts should look like.**

4. **Grudem: Gifts may vary in strength**  
Romans 12:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Corinthians 14:18; 13:1-3

**Grudem: This variation in strength in spiritual gifts depends on a combination of divine and human influence. 1 Corinthians 12:11; 4:7**

**Grudem: Paul does remind us that not all have every gift or any one gift. 1 Corinthians 12:29-30**

**Grudem: Even though we have been given gifts by God, we are still responsible to use them effectively, and to seek to grow in their use that the church may receive more benefit from the gifts of which God has allowed us to be stewards.**

**5. Grudem: Do Christians possess gifts temporarily or permanently?**

**Grudem: In most cases, it seems that the New Testament pictures a *permanent* possession of spiritual gifts.**

**Grudem: Moreover, we must remember that *the Holy Spirit is still sovereign in distributing gifts: he "apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11)*. The word here translated "apportions" is a present participle, which indicates continuing activity over time, and we could paraphrase, "*The Holy Spirit is always continuing to distribute or apportion gifts to each person individually just as he wills to do.*" This means that, although it is *ordinarily* the custom of the Holy Spirit to continue to empower the same gift or gifts in people over time, nonetheless, there is a continual willing and deciding of the Holy Spirit to do this or not, and he may for his own reasons withdraw a gift for a time, or cause it to be much stronger or much weaker than it was.**

**Grudem: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 . . . indicates that the present spiritual gifts which we have are only for this age, and will be superseded by something far greater. Therefore in that sense no gift is "permanent" since every gift will be rendered useless at the time of the Lord's return.**

Side note: Grudem would say **Romans 11:29** should not be used in this discussion since **Grudem: Paul is talking about the status of the Jewish people . . . but the question of gifts of the Holy Spirit in the sense of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is not in view at all in Romans 11:29.**

**7. Grudem: Discovering and seeking spiritual gifts**

**Grudem: Paul seems to assume that believers will know what their spiritual gifts are. Romans 12:6-8**

**Grudem: The person wondering what his or her spiritual gifts are should simply begin to try ministering in various areas and see where God brings blessing.**

**1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1**

**Grudem: Here the "greater" gifts are those that most edify the church.**

8. **Grudem: Gifts are tools for ministry, and not necessarily related to Christian maturity**

**Grudem: Spiritual gifts are given to every believer (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10). Even immature Christians receive spiritual gifts from the Lord—this was certainly evident in the Corinthian church, which had an abundance of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7), but was still very immature in many areas of doctrine and conduct. . . . So spiritual gifts are not necessarily a sign of spiritual maturity.**

B. **Grudem: Have some gifts ceased? The cessationist debate**

**Grudem: Within the evangelical world today there are differing positions over the question, “Are all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament valid for use in the church today?”**

**Grudem: Some would say yes.** (Grudem is a continuationalist and Pentecostal-ish-like charismatic)

**Grudem: Others would say no, and would argue that some of the more miraculous gifts (such as prophecy, tongues plus interpretation, and perhaps healing and casting out of demons) were given only during the time of the apostles, as “signs” to authenticate the apostles during the early preaching of the gospel. They state that these gifts are no longer needed as signs today, and that they ceased at the end of the apostolic age, probably at the end of the first century or beginning of the second century A.D.**

**Grudem: We should also realize that there is a large “middle” group with respect to this question, a group of “mainstream evangelicals” who are neither charismatics or Pentecostals on the one hand, nor “cessationists” on the other hand, but are simply undecided, and unsure if this question can be decided from Scripture.**

**1 Corinthians 13:8-13** tends to be the key passage in this discussion/debate.

I am skipping over points 1-7 because the books below do it justice and provide adequate depth.

Resources: John MacArthur's *Charismatic Chaos*; Wayne Grudem's *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*; Richard Gaffin's *Perspectives on Pentecost*; and John MacArthur's *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective*

8. **Grudem: A final note: cessationists and charismatics need each other**

**Grudem: Finally, it can be argued that those in the charismatic and Pentecostal camps, and those in the cessationist camp (primarily Reformed and dispensational**

Christians) really need each other, and they would do well to appreciate each other more. The former tend to have more practical experience in the use of spiritual gifts and in vitality in worship that cessationists could benefit from, if they were willing to learn. On the other hand, Reformed and dispensational groups have traditionally been very strong in understanding of Christian doctrine and in deep and accurate understanding of the teachings of Scripture. Charismatic and Pentecostal groups could learn much from them if they would be willing to do so. But it certainly is not helpful to the church as a whole for both sides to think they can learn nothing from the other, or that they can gain no benefit from fellowship with each other.

### **Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)**

1. Before reading this chapter, what spiritual gift or gifts did you think you had? Has your understanding of your own spiritual gift(s) changed after studying this chapter? In what way?
2. Explain how each of the spiritual gifts that you understand yourself to have is greater than what would have been known to most old covenant believers. Explain how each gift is a foretaste of some knowledge or ability you will have after Christ returns.
3. What can you do to stir up or strengthen those spiritual gifts in you that need strengthening? Are there some gifts that you have been given but have neglected? Why do you think you have neglected them? What could be done to stir up or rekindle them in you?
4. As you think about your own church, which spiritual gifts do you think are most effectively functioning at the present time? Which are most needed in your church? Is there anything you can do to help meet those needs?
5. What do you think could be done to help churches avoid having controversies, and even divisions, over the question of spiritual gifts? Are there tensions in your own church with regard to these questions today? If so, what can you do to help alleviate these tensions?
6. Do you think that some spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament ceased early in the history of the church, and are no longer valid for today? Has your opinion on this question changed as a result of reading this chapter?
7. In your viewpoint, would a church be healthier and more unified if it concentrated on a few gifts and used them carefully and well, or if it encouraged a multiplicity of different gifts, and allowed them to be used at many different times by many different people? If you answered with the latter option, what things might your church do to include a greater diversity and distribution in the use of spiritual gifts? What are some

of the dangers that might accompany such widespread use, and how can they be guarded against?

### Scripture Memory Passage: **1 Peter 4:10-11**

**10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11** If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### Hymn ("Come, Thou Almighty King", Anonymous, 1757)

Come, thou almighty King, Help us thy name to sing,

Help us to praise:

Father, all glorious, O'er all victorious,

Come, and reign over us, Ancient of Days.

Come, thou incarnate Word, Gird on thy mighty sword,

Our prayer attend:

Come, and thy people bless, And give thy Word success;

Spirit of holiness, on us descend.

Come, holy Comforter, Thy sacred witness bear

In this glad hour:

Thou who almighty art, Now rule in every heart,

And ne'er from us depart, Spirit of pow'r.

To the great One in Three, Eternal praises be,

Hence evermore.

His sovereign majesty May we in glory see,

And to eternity love and adore.

# Systematic Theology

## Part 6: Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 53: Gifts of the Holy Spirit: (Part 2) Specific Gifts

---

*How should we understand and use specific spiritual gifts?*

#### **Scripture Memory Passage Review: 1 Peter 4:10-11**

**10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11** If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

#### **Explanation and Scriptural Basis**

**Grudem:** In this chapter we will build on the general discussion about spiritual gifts in the previous chapter and examine several specific gifts in more detail. We will not consider every gift mentioned in the New Testament, but will focus on several gifts that are not well understood or whose use has aroused some controversy today. Therefore we will not examine gifts whose meaning and use are self-evident from the term involved (such as serving, encouraging, contributing, showing leadership, or showing mercy), but will rather concentrate on those in the following list, primarily taken from 1 Corinthians 12:28 and 12:8-10:

1. prophecy
2. teaching
3. miracles
4. healing
5. tongues and interpretation
6. word of wisdom/ word of knowledge
7. distinguishing between spirits

## A. Grudem: Prophecy

**Grudem:** It should be defined not as “predicting the future,” nor as “proclaiming a word from the Lord,” nor as “powerful preaching—but rather as “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to **mind**.”

Grudem discusses how this definition is more in line with the way in which Old Testament prophets functioned, is more consistent with the New Testament usage of the word prophet (in non-biblical writings), and how a prophet’s words were not equal to those of Scripture in the New Testament (**Acts 21:4, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 14:29-38**)

## B. Grudem: Teaching

**Grudem:** The gift of teaching in the New Testament is *the ability to explain Scripture and apply it to people’s **lives***.

**Acts 15:35; 18:11; Hebrews 5:12; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 6:3; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:11; 6:2**

**Grudem:** Far from being based on a spontaneous revelation that came during the worship service of the church (as prophecy was), this kind of “teaching” was the repetition and explanation of authentic apostolic teaching.

**Grudem:** Teaching in terms of the New Testament epistles consisted of repeating and explaining the words of Scripture (or the equally authoritative teachings of Jesus and of the apostles) and applying them to the hearers.

## C. Grudem: Miracles

**Grudem:** We should realize that the English word *miracles* may not give a very close approximation to what Paul intended, since the Greek word is simply the plural form of the word *dynamis* (G1539) “power.” This means that the term may refer to any kind of activity where God’s mighty **power** is evident. **Acts 5:19-20; 12:6-11; 5:1-11; 13:9-12; 28:3-6**

## D. Grudem: Healing

### 1. Grudem: Introduction: sickness and health in the history of redemption

**Grudem:** Physical sickness came as a result of the fall of Adam, and illness and disease are simply part of the outworking of the curse after the fall, and will eventually lead toward physical death.

**Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Corinthians 15:23**

**Grudem: Our complete possession of redemption from physical illness will not be ours until Christ returns and we receive resurrection bodies.**

**Grudem: But the question that confronts us with respect to the gift of healing is whether God may from time to time grant us a foretaste or a down payment of the physical healing which he will grant us fully in the future.**

**2. Grudem: The purposes of healing**

**Grudem: A “sign” to authenticate the gospel message, and show that the kingdom of God has come**

**Grudem: Brings comfort and health to those who are ill, and thereby demonstrates God’s attribute of mercy toward those in distress**

**Grudem: Equips people for service, as physical impediments to ministry are removed**

**Grudem: Provides opportunity for God to be glorified as people see physical evidence of his goodness, love, power, wisdom, and presence**

**3. Grudem: What about the use of medicine?**

**2 Chronicles 16:12-13** (bad use—without God); **2 Kings 20:7** (good use—with God); **Luke 8:43** (it’s not all-powerful)

**4. Grudem: Does the New Testament show common methods used in healing?**

**Grudem: The methods used by Jesus and the disciples to bring healing varied from case to case, but most frequently they included laying on of hands. **Luke 4:40; Matthew 9:18; Luke 5:13; 13:13; Acts 28:8; Mark 6:2****

**Grudem: Another physical symbol of the Holy Spirit’s power coming for healing was anointing with oil. **Mark 6:13; James 5:14-15****

**Grudem: The New Testament often emphasizes the role of faith in the healing process. **Luke 8:48; 17:19; James 5:15; Mark 2:5; Matthew 15:28; 8:10, 13****

**5. Grudem: How then should we pray for healing?**

**Matthew 6:13; **3 John 2**; James 4:2**

**Grudem: It is right to ask God for healing, and we should go to him with the simple request that he give physical healing in time of need.**

**Grudem: But we also need to realize that there is more than one kind of mistake to make: (1) *Not praying for healing at all* is not a correct solution, for it involves**

disobedience to James 5. (2) Telling people that *God seldom heals today* and that they should expect nothing to happen is not a correct solution either, for it does not provide an atmosphere conducive to faith and is inconsistent with the pattern we see in the ministry of Jesus and the early church in the New Testament. (3) Telling people that *God always heals today* if we have enough faith is a cruel teaching not supported by Scripture (see section 6 below).

**Grudem:** Those with “gifts of healings” (a literal translation of the plurals in 1 Cor. 12:9, 28) will be those people who find that their prayers for healing are answered more frequently and more thoroughly than others.

#### 6. **Grudem:** But what if God does not heal?

**Grudem:** We must realize that not all prayers for healing will be answered in this age. 2 Corinthians 12:9; 4:16; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:19; James 1:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 119:71, 67

**Grudem:** God can bring increased sanctification to us through illness and suffering—just as he can bring sanctification and growth in faith through miraculous healing. But the emphasis of the New Testament, both in Jesus’ ministry and in the ministry of the disciples in Acts, seems to be one that encourages us in most cases eagerly and earnestly to seek God for healing, and then to continue to trust him to bring good out of the situation, whether he grants the physical healing or not.

### E. **Grudem:** Tongues and interpretation

**Grudem:** It should be said at the outset that the Greek word *γλῶσσα* (G1185) translated “tongue,” is used not only to mean the physical tongue in a person’s mouth, but also to mean “language.” In the New Testament passages where speaking in tongues is discussed, the meaning “languages” is certainly in view.

#### 1. **Grudem:** Tongues in the history of redemption

Before Babel (**Genesis 11**), everyone spoke one language. After Babel, multiple languages existed. At Pentecost, a sort of un-Babeling occurred and the Gospel was able to be understood by those speaking different languages.

**Grudem:** The result was that Jewish visitors to Jerusalem from various nations all heard in their own languages a proclamation of “**the mighty works of God**” (**Acts 2:11**).

## 2. Grudem: What is speaking in tongues?

**Grudem:** *Speaking in tongues is prayer or praise spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker.*

*a. Grudem: Words of prayer or praise spoken to God*

**1 Corinthians 14:2, 28.** Note: **1 Corinthians 14** is Grudem's go-to chapter for tongues.

*b. Grudem: Not understood by the speaker*

**1 Corinthians 14:2, 11, 13-19**

**Grudem:** It seems, therefore, that *at times* speaking in tongues may involve speech in actual human languages, sometimes even languages that are understood by some of those who hear. But at other times—and Paul assumes that this will ordinarily be the case—the speech will be in a language that “**no one understands**” (1 Corinthians 14:2).

**Grudem:** Some have objected that speaking in tongues must always consist of speech in *known* human languages, since that is what happened at Pentecost. But the fact that speaking in tongues occurred in known human languages *once* in Scripture does not require that it *always* happen with known languages, especially when another description of speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14) indicates exactly the opposite.

**Grudem:** Moreover, we must realize that 1 Corinthians 14 is Paul's general instruction based on a wide experience of tongues-speaking in many different churches, whereas Acts 2 simply describes one unique event at a significant turning point in the history of redemption (Acts 2 is historical narrative while 1 Corinthians 14 is doctrinal instruction). Therefore it would seem appropriate to take 1 Corinthians 14 as the passage that most closely describes the ordinary experience of New Testament churches, and to take Paul's instructions there as the standard by which God intends churches to regulate the use of this gift.

*c. Grudem: Prayer with the Spirit, not with the mind*

**1 Corinthians 14:14-15**

**Grudem:** Paul sees this kind of prayer as an activity that occurs in the spiritual realm, whereby our spirits speak directly to God but our mind is somehow bypassed and does not understand what we are praying.

d. *Grudem: Not ecstatic but self-controlled*

**Grudem:** The New English Bible translated the phrase “**speaking in tongues**” as “**ecstatic speech**,” thus giving further support to the idea that those who speak in tongues lose awareness of their surroundings or lose self-control or are forced to speak against their will. Moreover, some of the extreme elements in the Pentecostal movement have allowed frenzied and disorderly conduct at worship services, and this has, in the minds of some, perpetuated the notion that speaking in tongues is a kind of ecstatic speech. But this is not the picture given in the New Testament.

**1 Corinthians 14:27-28**

e. *Grudem: Tongues without interpretation*

**Grudem:** No speech in tongues without interpretation should be given in the church service.

**1 Corinthians 14:20-28**

f. *Grudem: Tongues with interpretation: edification for the church*

**1 Corinthians 14:5**

**Grudem:** The gift of interpretation as *reporting to the church the general meaning of something spoken in tongues.*

g. *Grudem: Not all speak in tongues*

**1 Corinthians 12:30**

## F. **Grudem: Word of wisdom and word of knowledge**

**1 Corinthians 12:8**

**Grudem:** These two gifts are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. . . . This warns us that our conclusions will probably be somewhat tentative in any case.

**Grudem:** The major alternatives for understanding these gifts are two:

(1) These gifts are commonly thought to be the ability to receive a special revelation from the Holy Spirit and on that basis to speak words that give wisdom in a situation or give specific knowledge of a situation in the life of someone present in a congregation. In this interpretation these gifts would be more “miraculous.”

(2) The other interpretation of these gifts would see them as more “non-miraculous” or ordinary: the “word of wisdom” simply means the ability to speak a wise word in

various situations, and “word of knowledge” is the ability to speak with knowledge about a situation.

## G. Grudem: Distinguishing between spirits and spiritual warfare

*Grudem: Distinguishing between spirits is a special ability to recognize the influence of the Holy Spirit or of demonic spirits in a person.*

**1 Corinthians 12:2; 1 John 4:1**

**Grudem:** Beyond this, it is also possible that the gift would involve distinguishing between various *types* of evil spirits, such as a spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:11), a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16), a dumb and deaf spirit (Mark 9:25, 29), and a spirit of error (1 John 4:6).

## Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Have you ever experienced a gift of prophecy as defined in this chapter? What have you called it? Has this gift (or something like it) functioned in your church? If so, what have been the benefits—and dangers? If not, do you think this gift might be of help to your church? (Why or why not?)
2. Does the gift of teaching function effectively in your church? Who uses this gift in addition to the pastor or elders? Do you think your church adequately appreciates sound Bible teaching? In what areas (if any) do you think your church needs to grow in its knowledge and love of the teachings of Scripture?
3. Of the other gifts discussed in this chapter, have you ever used any of them yourself? Are there any which you think your church needs but does not have at this time? What do you think would be best for you to do in response to this need?

## Scripture Memory Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

**7** But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of *all*: **8** for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, **10** to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

**Hymn (“Come, O Come Thou Quickening Spirit”, Heinrich Held, 1664)**

**Come, O come, thou quick'ning Spirit, God from all eternity!  
May thy power never fail us; dwell within us constantly.  
Then shall truth and life and light banish all the gloom of night.**

**Grant our hearts in fullest measure wisdom, counsel, purity,  
That we ever may be seeking only that which pleaseth thee.  
Let thy knowledge spread and grow, working error's overthrow.**

**Show us, Lord, the path of blessing; when we trespass on our way,  
Cast, O Lord, our sins behind thee and be with us day by day.  
Should we stray, O Lord, recall; work repentance when we fall.**

**Holy Spirit, strong and mighty, thou who makest all things new,  
Make thy work within us perfect and the evil foe subdue.  
Grant us weapons for the strife and with vict'ry crown our life.**