

A HEALTHY GOSPEL CHURCH

A Healthy Gospel Church is a New Testament Church

Composition

The success of any organisation is dependent on the **composition** of its workforce and how they are arranged within the structure of the organisation. One of the key New Testament metaphors for the Church of Christ is that of many members together in one body (Romans 12:4-5) with Jesus Christ as the Head (Ephesians 4:16). This is helpful when we come to consider the healthy gospel church.

The World Health Organisation defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health refers to a state where the physical body is free from disease, while wellness refers to an overall balance of a person's physical, social, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, environmental, and occupational well-being. Creating a culture of health and wellness in the workplace boosts and maintains employee morale, improves the lives of employees, and helps drive an organisation's overall success through the contribution of employees who are performing at the optimum level.

The healthy gospel church is filled with members who perform at the optimum level in serving the Lord and the gospel of Jesus Christ. They understand their relationship with their Lord. They understand their relationship with each other. This overall healthy wellness ensures that the church “*grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*” (Eph. 4:15–16).

Committed

The healthy gospel church is **committed** to the Word of God. The Word of God is the single most important aspect of the life of the Church. The healthy gospel church embraces the whole counsel of God as He has revealed himself in His Word. The Word is what defines us – it is the foundation on which we build; it is what shapes our thinking; it is what determines what we say; and it is what normalises the way that we live. The Word of God is God's only appointed means for the nourishment, spiritual health, development, and maturity of His children. Paul reminds us of its key characteristics – the Word has its *source* in God; it is *sufficient* for all our needs; and it is the only means by which *success* and development is guaranteed (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The healthy gospel church strives to achieve excellence in its commitment to the Word of God with the help of the preacher who is competent in the study, proclamation, and application of the Word of God, by ensuring the Biblical model of servant is embraced and practiced by its leadership, and that biblical discipleship is understood and practiced by all its members.

Conformed

The healthy gospel church will be characterised by a lifestyle that is **conformed** to the teachings of the Word of God. The people will be lights in the world and distinct from the culture in which they live; they will live their lives within the boundaries of the Law of God. This conformity to the Word of God arises from the Christian's separation to Christ from the world by the grace of God and is observable in daily living which is consistent with the teaching and example of Jesus.

The Bible itself reminds us that ‘righteousness and lawlessness’ are incompatible, and ‘light and darkness’ have nothing in common (2 Corinthians 6:14). The spiritual health of the healthy gospel church is compromised when conformity to the law of God is lost, and when what is incompatible with Christian living becomes part of the mix. We are called to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15). This separation, or holiness, is a characteristic of genuine discipleship. It is all a prerequisite for effective witness in the world (1 Peter 2:9).

Connected

The healthy gospel church is a church that is well **connected**. There is the *vertical aspect* of this connectedness – we have communion with God (1 John 1:3). The church is defined by the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent through whom God makes himself known to us and through whom we have “*fellowship*” with God (2 Corinthians 13:14). This connectedness with God is ‘walking with God;’ it is ‘listening to God;’ and it is ‘talking to God.’ This is where the ongoing spiritual health of the people of God is nourished and maintained. This is where we derive the wisdom and the where-with-all to be the healthy gospel church and to grow the healthy gospel church.

There is also the *horizontal aspect* of this connectedness – the people of the healthy gospel church have communion and fellowship with each other. This horizontal aspect of the connectedness is the product of the vertical aspect of communion with God (1 John 1:7). The healthy gospel church is characterised by the “*unity of*

the Spirit in the binds of peace” (Ephesians 3:3). According to Jesus, this evident unity of their commitment to each other in the service of Christ is an essential prerequisite to effective evangelism.

Compelled

The healthy gospel church is **compelled** by the love of Jesus Christ to be the growing church. The healthy gospel church will cross boundaries, will build bridges, and will communicate the gospel to the people of the surrounding communities, towns, and cities. The Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28 is the command. The immeasurably great love of Jesus is the inspiration (John 15:13). The urgent need of those without faith in the Lord Jesus is the motivation (2 Cor.5:14). The well-connected church becomes the connecting church, and the lost world is touched by the truths of the gospel and by the practical expression of the spirit of the gospel in the life of the people of God compel others to repent and be converted (Luke 14:23).

Conditional

The healthy gospel church is persuaded that kingdom growth is ultimately **conditional** on the blessing of the God whose Church it is, and on the Holy Spirit who alone can give life and bring about the harvest of ‘A Healthy Gospel Church in Every Community in Scotland.’ We must do all that we can in our commitment to the Gospel. But ultimately, we trust in the God who alone will build his Church and will establish it on the one and only foundation, which is the person and work His Son and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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