

# LIVING



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## WEEK SEVEN What is a Healthy Church?

### THE MISSIONARY TASK

#### Component Four: *Healthy Church Formation*

## INTRODUCTION

We've all likely had a physical with a doctor at some time or another. Visits to the doctor are purposeful in that they help us stay well and head off any health-related issues we might face. Doctors spend years studying to understand our bodies and help us best care for them. Doctors use diagnostics that help to indicate our general level of health. Similarly, our lives as Christians have indicators that help us best understand how healthy we are as disciples of Jesus. Understanding our health as Christians is important because a healthy church is comprised of healthy believers. When a church is healthy, that church multiplies. It grows and is in alignment with the command of Jesus in the Great Commission. It is this, the health of a Christian in a local body of believers, that we focus on today and that helps us define a healthy church.

## BIBLICAL MATERIAL

The International Mission Board has identified twelve characteristics describing healthy churches. Churches are a local, gathered body of baptized believers in Jesus; as such, these indicators of a healthy church are best measured in the believers of that local church. These twelve indicators should be cultivated in the lives of each believer, driving healthy believers and healthy churches.

### 1. Evangelism (Romans 10:14-15)

People come to repentance and faith by responding to the whole biblical message of the gospel. We must go and share the Gospel.

### 2. Discipleship (Matthew 28:16-20)

As Christians, we must be intentional about living transformed lives and helping others do the same. This means dying to ourselves and living for Christ.

### 3. Membership (1 Corinthians 12)

A biblical membership in the local church should be comprised of baptized believers whose lives give credible evidence of repentance of sin and faith in Jesus.

### 4. Leadership (Ephesians 4:12, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9)

A local church must have qualified biblical leadership, as found in 1 Timothy and Titus, for the shepherding and teaching of Christ's church.

### 5. Teaching and Preaching

All teaching and preaching in the local church should show the Bible as the inerrant, infallible, authoritative, sufficient, and inspired word of God, and as such, it should be the supreme authority over all we do.

### 6. Ordinances (Romans 6:3-4, Matthew 26:17-29)

The ordinances, both baptism and communion, should be practiced by all believers according to scripture and as a declaration of our commitment to Christ and his church.

### 7. Worship (Psalm 100, Romans 11:36-12:1)

Mankind was created for worship of the one true God. This worship shows up in regular corporate worship and in our everyday lives. The aim of our worship is to glorify God. Scripture helps us understand rightful worship.

## 8. Prayer (Acts 2:42)

Christians must devote themselves to public and private prayer. It is in prayer that we are able to acknowledge our need for God, confess our sins, thank God for His provision and submit our requests to Him.

## 9. Fellowship (James 5:16, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16)

As the body of Christ, we must fellowship (spend time together), regularly looking to encourage, love and support each other as we represent Christ to the world around us.

## 10. Accountability and Discipline (Matthew 18:15-20)

Understanding our sinful nature, part of our responsibility to each other is to hold each other accountable to a Godly life. Sometimes that means discipline is needed. The goal of discipline is reconciliation, not humiliation.

## 11. Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

A healthy believer and church understand that all we have is God's. Healthy believers give of all their resources (time included) regularly and as needed. Giving shows that our trust and worship is in God alone.

## 12. Mission (Matthew 28:16-20)

A healthy believer and church support missions locally and abroad. Healthy believers leverage their lives for the mission of Christ wherever that takes them.

## MISSIONARY TASK RELEVANCY

Local churches aren't healthy because their primary objective is a focus on buildings, ministries, or missions (none of which are bad things) but rather they're healthy because they prioritize discipling believers. The missionary task recognizes that the local church is a gathered body of professing Christians. They are a broken, sinful people who confess their need for Jesus as Lord and Savior but the journey with Jesus doesn't stop at professing. Paul reminds us in Philippians 1:6 that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" and so the health of that church comes from the intentional focus on discipling its believers.



## LIFE APPLICATION

1. What is the connection between a healthy church and the health of individual Christians? Which indicators of health need the most attention in your life?
2. How would you assess your health in terms of relationships: evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and missions?
3. Several of these indicators deal with church polity and practices (membership, leadership, ordinances, and accountability). How important is it for all church members to understand these indicators and actively participate in church life?
4. Some of these indicators of church health like teaching and preaching, worship, and giving are highlighted in the Sunday morning gathering. How important is this weekly gathering in the life of the church and in the life of individual believers?
5. Prayer may be a corporate or an individual activity. Why are both necessary for the health of the church?