

Prayer:

Father, please instruct us on the design and desire you have for your people and grow us in the way.

Overview of the Course:

Vocation: What Am I Called to Do and to Be?

1. **The Caller and the Called:** *What is the Context of Calling?*
 - Your life is not your own. God is the Caller; we are the called. Find your calling in His Word.
 - Love Christ by obedience to His call and thus pursue your purpose: to glorify and enjoy Him forever.
2. **The Meaning of Means:** *What is the Concept of Calling?*
 - You are part of a royal priesthood. All work for the Lord is sacred – it has meaning and worth.
 - God loves His people through His people. Loving your neighbor is the framework of faithful calling.
3. **The Scope of the Summons:** *What is the Content of Calling?*
 - Christ is Lord over every sphere of life. You are called to glorify and enjoy Him in all things.
 - The Dominion Mandate and the Great Commission are equally ultimate ends.
4. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Work**
 - The framework applied to our work – in all our labor, including our jobs, and in our rest.
 - Common pitfalls: idolatry, identity, and indifference. Truths we must not forget in our work.
5. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Families**
 - The family is the basic unit of all society; it's the institution through which humanity lives on.
 - Abandoning God's Word as to the structure and functions of the family is devastating to all.
6. **Calling Lived Out – In Our Church**
 - The church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and is marked by certain defining traits.
 - Faithful followers of Christ will be members of His church and obey His commandments therein.
7. Calling Lived Out – In Our Society
8. Wrong Way: How NOT to Discern God's Will
9. Proper Path: How to Discern God's Will
10. Productivity: Stewarding Our Most Limited Resource (Time)

Goal of Lesson 6:

In this lesson, we are examining what it means to be called by God within the sphere of Christ's church.

The goal is to understand better what a church is, what membership within it entails, and how to faithfully live out our vocation as followers of Christ within the midst of the flock to which He's called us.

Questions – Stir our thoughts and get to know the room.

- How many of you grew up in the church?
 - How many have only been members for 10 years or less?
 - 5 years or less?
- How many of you DID NOT grow up in a Presbyterian church?
 - Which church backgrounds did you all have?

Lesson 6: Calling Lived Out – In Our Church

What is the Christian's calling inside the sphere of the church?

When asked that question, people immediately translate it in their heads to be asking: what are Christians who are called into the ministry supposed to do? You hear the words "calling" and "church" in the same sentence and suddenly visions of ordinations and the laying on of hands come to mind.

There is a difference between being a member of Christ's church and being an officer in it. All officers are members, but not all members are officers. All officers begin their service within the church as members.

In fact, Paul requires this in 1 Timothy 3:6 when he lists qualifications for overseers and deacons:

"He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil."

While we will speak a bit about officers today, the focus of our lesson is not any calling into full-time, vocational, ecclesiastical ministry. Rather, it's about what God calls all Christians to do inside the sphere of His church.

What do we mean by church? How does the Bible speak of it?

- The New Testament word for church is ekklesia (ἐκκλησία) - pronounced ek-klay-see'-ah.
 - It is a compound of the preposition "ek" meaning "out of" and "kaleo" meaning "to call."
 - Together in the Greek it means "called-out assembly" (a.k.a. "congregation").
- Jesus is the Great Teacher and He often used metaphors to convey meaning and provide explanation in His teaching. What are some of the ways He speaks of Christians and the church?
 - **The Bride of Christ** (Beloved and Adorned)
 - **Mark 2:19-20** – "And Jesus said to them, "Can the **wedding guests** fast while the **bridegroom** is with them? As long as they have the **bridegroom** with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the **bridegroom** is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day."
 - **Revelation 21:1-3** – "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as **a bride adorned for her husband**. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."
 - **The Body of Christ** (Different, but United under One Head)
 - **1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27** – "For just as the **body** is one and has many members, and all the members of the **body**, though many, are **one body**, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into **one body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit... Now you are the **body of Christ** and individually members of it.

- **Colossians 1:17-18** – “And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **And he is the head of the body, the church.** He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.”
- **The Flock of the Good Shepherd** (Sheep – Vulnerable, In Need of a Shepherd)
 - John 10:3-4, 11, 14-16, 27-28
 - **v. 11** – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”
 - Guided by His **under shepherds**, the elders (1 Peter 5:1-4)
 - **v. 1a, 2a** – “So I exhort the elders among you...shepherd the flock of God that is among you.”
- **The People of God** (Chosen Race, Royal Priesthood, Holy Nation)
 - **1 Peter 2:9-10** – “But you are a **chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are **God's people**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- **The Household of God** (Fellow Citizens, Members)
 - **Ephesians 2:19** – “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints and **members of the household of God...**”
- **A Spiritual House** (Living Stones)
 - **1 Peter 2:4-5** – As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **you yourselves like living stones** are being built up as a **spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

What do we learn from these names and descriptions of the church?

- Christians are not atomistic individuals freely floating around in their own independent world at their own personal whims.
- Rather, Christians are members of a defined body in submission to Christ, our Head.

In a training course for new members, Greg Bahnsen (OPC Pastor and Seminary Professor) summarizes the concept of Church Membership in this way:

Scripture tells us that from the earliest days of the church people were “added” to a body of believers (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4), a body distinguished from a larger social group, which merely came into contact with gospel preaching (Acts 5:11-13). This body of believers to whom converts were added was set apart from the general public by being called “the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10).

It is precisely those who are members of this household who are legitimately recognized as voting for its officers (Acts 6:3, 5), participating in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:17; cf. 11:20-22, 29), utilizing the church court (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 6:415), being subject to its discipline (1 Corinthians 5:12), and uniting as many members into one body of Christ, serving each other (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11-27).

He asks:

What is it that distinguished those who were members of the household of faith from other people? The Biblical answer is that (Acts 2:44; 4:32; Hebrews 13:17):

1. they were publicly recognized as professing faith in Christ,
2. they were united in a lifestyle of self-sacrificial love for each other, and
3. they placed themselves under the shepherding discipline of the elders.

This is what we mean today by "church membership." The initial, outward signs of joining with the body of Christ, the church, are public profession of faith in Christ and baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:37-42).

He says that despite clear teaching of scripture, it's not unusual for people in our world (even church-going Christians) to subordinate the concept of church membership. He states:

Accordingly, "church" is thought of and treated by most Americans as an individualistic, spectator sport – without commitments, without oversight, and without discipline.

As a follower of Christ, effectually called unto Him and given faith to believe and confess Him as Lord, what then is your vocation (your calling and duty) within the church?

1. You need to become a member of a church.

- We said that scripture defines members of Christ's church through three distinctive characteristics. These are what the Bible describes as notable features of members of the body of Christ.
 1. Profess faith in Christ.
 2. Sacrificially love one another.
 3. Submit to government of the church.
- That's what scripture describes (indicative), but what does it command (imperative)?

1) Profession of faith in Christ

- **Matthew 10:32** – "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven..."
- **Romans 10:9** – "...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

2) Love, service, and submission to one another

- **John 13:34-35** – "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples."

- **Ephesians 5:15, 21** – “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

3) Obedience to the leaders of the church

- **Hebrews 13:17** – “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”
- If the commands of Christ are required and those commands represent the inspired definitional elements of church membership, then church membership is morally required by God.
 - *Note:* church membership is normative and ought to be pursued by all who love and serve Christ (as He said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.”), but it is not a prerequisite for salvation (e.g., the thief on the cross).
- **The vows members take at Carriage Lane Presbyterian Church**
 1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save [except] in His sovereign mercy?
 2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
 3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
 4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
 5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?
- **What should you therefore do?**
 - Find a church that is faithful and true to Christ.
 - Join that church, attend it regularly, serve within it, uphold your vows of membership, and worship God weekly on the Lord’s Day in spirit and in truth.

2. You need to recognize what a true church is.

- There are many organizations in our world, even Christian in their profession and intent, but only one church of Jesus Christ.
- There are also many so-called “churches” who would like to claim that name, but who do not meet the standards set forth in scripture which define what a true church of Christ is.
- **The Marks of a Church** (Top 3 are reformational core, listing all of Bahnsen’s 5 here, some use 9.)
 1. **Adherence to apostolic doctrine**
(Acts 2:41-42; 1 Timothy 3:15; cf. Galatians 1:6–9; Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11).

2. **Administration of the sacraments:** baptism and the Lord's Supper ["breaking bread"] (Acts 2:41, 42, 46; Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 11:20).
 3. **Church Discipline** - in purity, harmony, and good order (Acts 4:35; 5:9-11; 6:1-7; 15:1ff; Matthew 16:19; 18:17-20; 1 Corinthians 5:2, 7, 11, 13; 6:1, 4, 5).
 4. Inwardly, fellowship in worship toward God and mutual concern for His people (Acts 2:42, 44-47; Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:7-27).
 5. Outwardly, service toward the world in evangelistic outreach (Acts 2:40, 41, 47; Matthew 28:18-20) and seeking transforming holiness in every area of life (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Colossians 1:9-23; Matthew 5:14-16).
- No church is perfect in these areas, but any true manifestation of the Church of Jesus Christ will display all of these marks to some degree. It is our duty to work towards greater fidelity in every area.
 - Bahnsen concludes with an appropriate warning:
 - Some organizations have become so deficient or degenerate with respect to some of the above marks, however, that they can no longer be deemed true manifestations of Christ's church on earth. From them Christ removes their "candlestand" (Revelation 2:5), or they become unwitting "synagogues of Satan" (Revelation 2:9); they do not correspond to "the Jerusalem which is above" (Galatians 4:25-26). They no longer qualify to be called a church of Christ.
3. **You need to know apostolic doctrine.**
- **Acts 2:41-42** – "So those who **received his word** were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they **devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching** and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."
 - **Ephesians 2:19-21** – "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."
 - **Confessional Summary** (Members must *profess* faith in Christ. Officers must subscribe to the *Confession*.)
 - **PCA BCO III. The Constitution Defined** (<https://pcaac.org/bco>)
 - The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word Of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, together with the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church.
 - **Westminster Standards** (<https://westminsterstandards.org>)
 - **Confession of Faith** – Recommend reading Chs. 25-31 for today's lesson.
 - I. Of the Holy Scripture

- II. Of God, and of the Holy Trinity
- III. Of God's Eternal Decree
- IV. Of Creation
- V. Of Providence
- VI. Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof
- VII. Of God's Covenant with Man
- VIII. Of Christ the Mediator
- IX. Of Free Will
- X. Of Effectual Calling
- XI. Of Justification
- XII. Of Adoption
- XIII. Of Sanctification
- XIV. Of Saving Faith
- XV. Of Repentance unto Life
- XVI. Of Good Works
- XVII. Of the Perseverance of the Saints
- XVIII. Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation
- XIX. Of the Law of God
- XX. Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience
- XXI. Of Religion Worship, and the Sabbath Day
- XXII. Of Lawful Oaths and Vows
- XXIII. Of the Civil Magistrate
- XXIV. Of Marriage and Divorce
- XXV. Of the Church
- XXVI. Of the Communion of the Saints
- XXVII. Of the Sacraments
- XXVIII. Of Baptism
- XXIX. Of the Lord's Supper
- XXX. Of Church Censures
- XXXI. Of Synods and Councils
- XXXII. Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead
- XXXIII. Of the Last Judgement

- **Larger Catechism**

- Preliminary Questions (1-5)
- What man ought to believe concerning God (6-90)
- Having seen what the Scriptures principally teach us concerning God, it follows to consider what they require as the duty of man (91-196)

- **Shorter Catechism**

- Preliminary Questions (1-3)
- What man is to believe concerning God (4-38)
- What duty God requires of man (39-107)

- **What should you do to grow in your understanding of Apostolic teaching?**

- Read your bible and pray for understanding.
- Read our confessional standards to gain a systematic understanding of what the Reformed church views as orthodox doctrine taught within Holy Scripture.
- Sit under faithful preaching and teaching; and ask your elders if you have questions.

4. You need to understand the sacraments.

- **Sacraments** – (WCF XXVII. Of the Sacraments)
 1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, ([Rom. 4:11](#), [Gen. 17:7,10](#)) immediately instituted by God, ([Matt. 28:19](#), [1 Cor. 11:23](#)) to represent Christ and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: ([1 Cor. 10:16](#), [1 Cor. 11:25–26](#), [Gal. 3:27](#), [Gal. 3:17](#)) as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world; ([Rom. 15:8](#), [Exod. 12:48](#), [Gen. 34:14](#)) and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word. ([Rom. 6:3–4](#), [1 Cor. 10:16,21](#))
 4. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained. ([Matt. 28:19](#), [1 Cor. 11:20](#), [23](#), [1 Cor. 4:1](#), [Heb. 5:4](#))
- **Baptism** – (WCF XXVIII. Of Baptism)
 1. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, ([Matt. 28:19](#)) not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)) but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, ([Rom. 4:11](#), [Col. 2:11–12](#)) of his ingrafting into Christ, ([Gal. 3:27](#), [Rom. 6:5](#)) of regeneration, ([Tit. 3:5](#)) of remission of sins, ([Mark 1:4](#)) and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. ([Rom. 6:3–4](#)) Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world. ([Matt. 28:19–20](#))
 5. Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, ([Luke 7:30](#), [Exod. 4:24–26](#)) yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it: ([Rom. 4:11](#), [Acts 10:2](#), [4](#), [22](#), [31](#), [45](#), [47](#)) or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated. ([Acts 8:13](#), [23](#))
- **Lord's Supper** – (WCF XXIX. Of the Lord's Supper)
 1. Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in His Church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body. ([1 Cor. 11:23–26](#), [1 Cor. 10:16–17,21](#), [1 Cor. 12:13](#))
 2. The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed His ministers to declare His word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; ([Matt. 26:26–28](#), [Mark 14:22–24](#), [Luke 22:19–20](#), [1 Cor. 11:23–26](#)) but to none who are not then present in the congregation. ([Acts 20:7](#), [1 Cor. 11:20](#))

5. You need to practice church discipline.

- PCA BCO – Part II – The Rules of Discipline (Chapters 27-46)
- *Recommended Resource:* The Handbook of Church Discipline by Jay Adams

Some definitions from Dr. Adams:

- **Discipling** - The word *disciple*, which means “student,” is clearly related to teaching. A disciple of Christ is a student of Christ. He has been chosen by Him to sit at His feet and learn from Him (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus said that when a student is fully trained, he will *be* like his teacher (Luke 6:40).
 - Note, carefully, He did not just say “think” like his teacher. He will *become* like him in every way – including teaching. Others recognized this as true of Jesus’ disciples (cf. Acts 4:13).
 - Discipling involves both seeing and hearing (cf. John 4:32; 5:19, 20; 8:28-31, 38). Note that this method has a theological base (it is not mere apprenticeship). The Son learned from His Father by observing Him and listening to Him.
- **Discipline** - Discipline is also related to learning. When there is structure that comes through discipline, learning is possible. Where it is absent, learning is impossible. How is that? Structure through discipline brings “peace” (Hebrews 12:5-11). Peace and order are necessary for learning.
 - In many schools today (be they public, church, or home), discipline is lacking – and, consequently, learning suffers. As a Father, God disciplines His children. That is not because He is mean or cruel; rather, this is an act of love (Revelation 3:19).
 - These days, society in general, and individuals in particular, are undisciplined. This accounts, at least in part, for the unrest that leads to so many other ills. Christians must not follow the world’s ways in this matter. Self-control, an essential element of good discipline, is listed among the pieces of the Spirit’s fruit (Galatians 5:23). All disciples must become disciplined in order to learn any new godly habit patterns.
- **Church discipline** – The church at large has failed to exercise church discipline. Apart from church discipline, it is impossible to tell who is and who is not true to the faith. Church discipline draws the line between the world and the church.
 - Jesus gave us the plan for exercising church discipline in Matthew 18:15-20. We may neither depart from it, nor devise one of our own. He promises to be present when discipline is properly exercised (verse 20 has nothing to do with small prayer meetings. It is a word of assurance that, where discipline is carried on, He will be present working through the process).
 - There are several stages that must be followed. First, when an offence separates believers, the one who is offended must go along to confront the offender. If they can straighten matters out, that is the end of the matter.
 - However, if the offender refuses to hear him, then the offended must go to him again, this time accompanied by one or two others. If they are also unsuccessful, then they become witnesses to explain and give evidence as to what happened when the matter formally comes before the church (first before the officers – see 2 Thessalonians 3:14 – and then, if necessary, before the whole body).

- If the offender will not hear the church, he must be put out of the church. He has rejected Christ's authority which is ministered in church discipline. Upon repentance, he must be restored (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).
- At each stage, the goal is to honor God, to purify His church, and to restore the brother or sister through reconciliation. What moves the process ahead to a higher stage in each case is the failure of the brother to hear (repent).

6. You need to serve one another in the church.

- **Officers:** We've already mentioned the command in Hebrews 13 to obey your leaders.
- **Members:** How are you to treat all members of the body – fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?
 - **There are 59 "One Another" passages in the New Testament**
 - These are found through tracking the instances of the Greek word *allelon* (ἀλλήλων) which means "one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally."
 - It occurs some 100 times in the New Testament with approximately 59 being written as specific commands teaching us both how and how not to relate to one another.
 - Some are repeated multiple times (e.g., "love one another" more than a dozen times).
 - **A brief survey of the "One Another" passages:**
 - "...be at peace with one another." (Mark 9:50)
 - "...wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)
 - "...love one another." (John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17)
 - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..." (Romans 12:10)
 - "...honor one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10)
 - "Live in harmony with one another..." (Romans 12:16)
 - "...stop passing judgement on one another." (Romans 14:13)
 - "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..." (Romans 15:7)
 - "...instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)
 - "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16)
 - "...when you come together to eat, wait for one another." (1 Corinthians 11:33)
 - "...have equal concern for each other." (1 Corinthians 12:25)
 - "...serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)
 - "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another." (Galatians 5:26)
 - "Carry one another's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2)
 - "...be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)
 - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)
 - "...forgiving one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)

- "Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
- "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)
- "...in humility consider one another better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)
- "Do not lie to one another..." (Colossians 3:9)
- "Bear with one another..." (Colossians 3:13)
- "...forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
- "Teach...and admonish one another..." (Colossians 3:16)
- "...make your love increase and overflow for one another." (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
- "...encourage one another..." (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11)
- "...build one another up..." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- "...spur one another on to love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
- "...do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
- "Don't grumble against one another..." (James 5:9)
- "Confess your sins to one another..." (James 5:16)
- "...pray for one another." (James 5:16)
- "...live in harmony with one another..." (1 Peter 3:8)
- "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling..." (1 Peter 4:9)
- "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve one another..." (1 Peter 4:10)
- "...clothe yourselves with humility towards one another..." (1 Peter 5:5)