

# CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR



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Topic:  
**“The Characteristics of a Christ-Centered Church”**

## WORKSHOP

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### Topic: The Characteristics of a Christ-Centered Church

**PROPOSITION:** A Christ-Centered Church is one that places the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ at the heart of the church both in principle and in practice and keeps it there.

**I. A Christ-Centered Church makes the desire to be saved and to become a disciple of Christ the primary requirement for probationary membership.**

- A. None are to be received into probationary membership until they give satisfactory evidence their desire to flee the wrath to come and be saved from their sins. (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 28)
- B. Those who are received into probationary membership must give satisfactory answers to the following questions: (*The Book of Discipline*, Part II [2004], p. 14)
  - 1. Have you have an earnest desire to be saved from your sins?
  - 2. Will you avoid all things contrary to the teachings of God's word and endeavor to lead a holy life
  - 3. Are you purposed to give reverent attendance upon the appointed means of grace?

**II. A Christ-Centered Church makes the experience of salvation the primary requirement for full connectional membership.**

- A. None are to be received into full connectional membership until they give satisfactory evidence of their saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 28)
- B. Those who are received into full connectional membership must give satisfactory answers to the following questions: (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline*, Part II [2004], pp. 16-17)
  - 1. Have you saving faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ?
  - 2. Do you believe in the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as set forth in the Articles of Religion?
    - 1. Will you cheerfully be governed by the rules of the church?
    - 2. Will you hold sacred the ordinances of God?
    - 3. Will you endeavor to promote the Redeemer's Kingdom?
    - 6. Will you cherish friendly feelings toward all persons?
    - 7. Will you contribute of their earthly substance, according to their ability, to support the gospel and the other benevolent enterprises of the church?

**III. A Christ-Centered Church makes the commitment to becoming a disciple of Christ the primary requirement for being a member in good standing.**

- A. None who willfully neglect the means of grace can remain a member in good standing. (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 119)
- B. None who willfully neglect the weekly class meeting (the principle discipleship making entity of the church) can remain a member in good standing. (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 36)

**IV. A Christ-Centered Church makes the commitment to making Christian disciples the primary requirement for leadership in the church.**

- A. The stewards and trustees are to be appointed and sustained in office on the basis of giving satisfactory evidence of their ability, desire, and practice of witnessing to the gospel of the kingdom of God in and beyond their environs. (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 172, par. 445; p. 194, par. 491)
- B. The class leaders are to be appointed and sustained in office on the basis of their individual evangelistic efforts and their ability to provide sub-pastoral oversight. (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], pp. 36-37, 113-114, 303-304)

**V. A Christ-Centered Church makes the ability to communicate the plan of salvation the primary requirement for those entering the gospel ministry.** (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 80)

A. The *internal call* consists of those gifts and graces requisite to the proper and faithful discharge of the duties of the Christian Ministry. We expect those who profess to be moved upon by the Holy Spirit to preach:

1. To evince an unmistakable conception of salvation by faith
2. To possess a sound mind
3. To have a clear understanding of the Scriptures
4. To have a right judgment in the things of God
5. To have a good degree of utterance as a preacher

B. The *external call* is designed to confer upon the preacher who is found to possess the inward call, official authority to exercise in the name of God and in the name of the Church, the functions of the Christian Ministry.

**VI. A Christ-Centered Church makes the devotion to making Christian disciples the primary requirement for entering the itinerant ministry.** (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], p. 85)

Those entering the itinerant ministry must give satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- A. Have you saving faith in Christ?
- B. Are you going on to perfection?
- C. Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?
- D. Are you resolved to devote yourself to God and His work?
- E. Do you know the General Rules of our Church? Will you keep them?
- F. Do you constantly attend the Lord's Supper?
- G. Have you studied the doctrines of the A.M.E. Zion Church? Will you preach and maintain them?
- H. Have you studied our form of Church Discipline and Polity? Will you support and maintain them?
- I. Have you considered the Rules for Preachers, especially those relating to Diligence, Punctuality, and Doing the work to which you are assigned? Will you keep them for conscience's sake?
- J. Are you determined to employ your time in the work of God?
- K. Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
- L. Will you visit from house to house?
- M. Will you recommend fasting and abstinence both by precept and example?
- N. Are you embarrassed by debts, so as to prevent you from traveling?
- O. Do you use intoxicating drugs or tobacco?

**VII. A Christ-Centered Church makes the commitment to a Christ-Centered ministry the primary requirement for the ordained ministry.** (*The Book of Discipline*, Part II [2004], pp. 54-56, 61-62)

A. Those who are ordained to the office of deacon must make vows in the following areas: (pp. 61-62)

1. The belief that one has been moved by the Holy Spirit to seek this office in the Church of Christ and the commitment to serve God by the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people
2. The unfeigned belief in all the Canon Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
3. The commitment to read and expound the Scriptures
4. The commitment to assist the Elder in worship, communion, and baptism, and to gladly and willingly minister to all persons including the youth, the sick, poor, and impotent
5. The commitment to fashion one's self and one's family according to the doctrines of Christ so as to be wholesome examples of the flock of Christ
6. The commitment to reverently obey those in authority and to gladly follow their godly admonitions

B. Those who are ordained to the office of elder must make vows in the following areas: (pp. 54-56)

1. The belief that one has been called according to the will of Jesus Christ to the order of Elder.
2. The belief that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and the commitment to teach and instruct out of said Scriptures.
3. The commitment to diligently minister the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as He commands
4. The commitment to diligently banish and drive away all erroneous doctrines contrary to God's word
5. The commitment to diligence in spiritual formation, godliness and the spiritual disciplines
6. The commitment to fashion one's self and one's family according to the doctrines of Christ so as to be wholesome examples of the flock of Christ
7. The commitment to maintain peaceful and loving relations with all Christians, especially those one leads
8. The commitment to reverently obey those in authority, to gladly follow their godly admonitions, and to submit to their godly judgement

**VIII. A Christ-Centered Church makes evangelism and discipleship central to the duties of those who are appointed as pastors of local congregations.** (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], pp. 99-104, 303)

Most of the directives from *The Book of Discipline* concerning evangelism are addressed specifically to the pastor and the local church. His or her duties are as follows:

- A. To enlist the congregation in the support of World Missions through the A.M.E. Zion Church.
- B. To encourage the membership, by precept and example, to employ all available means of witnessing to Christ and His Church.
- C. To encourage our members to give generously of both talents and funds, for the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the establishment of new Churches.
- D. To nominate a Committee on Church Extension at the first Quarterly Conference.
- E. To nominate a Committee on Home Missions at the first Quarterly Conference.
- F. To provide for the diffusion of missionary intelligence among the members of the Church
- G. To hold meetings whenever practicable for the purpose of informing the people respecting Overseas Missions work
- H. To offer prayer for missions and missionaries; and to raise what means he or she can for the Missions cause.
- I. The Pastor who stresses his salary and finance to the exclusion of the salvation of souls need not be surprised if there is a decreasing of interest in his or her sermons on the part of the congregation. He should not only preach evangelistic sermons and conduct revivals constantly, but should organize a local Bureau of Evangelism among the devout members of his or her church to assist him or her in prayer meetings, in special services for the unsaved at the church or in their homes. Local Preachers, Exhorters, Deaconesses, Class Leaders and others can render great service in this way.
- J. Every pastor is directed to undertake an annual evangelistic quota. Lay evangelism is to be emphasized in every parish and the Lay Council is to make evangelism its primary program. Every Sunday Church School is to emphasize "Decision Day" annually, in October and also to undertake an evangelistic quota for active membership in the church school. Every class leader is to be appointed and sustained in office on the basis of his or her individual evangelistic efforts. There is to be an annual crusade for a month or more for new church members. Coaching, literature, promotional material and uniformity of approach are to be furnished by the Department of Evangelism.

**IX. A Christ-Centered Church makes evangelism and discipleship a vital part of the duties of those who are appointed as Presiding Elders in the church.** (*The Book of Discipline* [2004], pp. 96-98, 306-308)

As it relates to the ministry of evangelism, the Presiding Elder is a key figure and has been assigned following duties:

- A. To assist the Bishop in establishing new churches and enlisting local support for World Missions
- B. To motivate Pastors and Congregations to be witnessing Christians in their daily life; and to develop new Churches for the study and the practice of the faith.
- C. To bring the subjects of Church Extension and Home Missions before each Quarterly Conference.
- D. "While the office brings the Presiding Elder largely in contact with the temporal economy of the Church, his sermons and instructions should be appeals for men to be saved. He should stress this thought above all others in his Quarterly Conferences and sermons. He might leave a lasting impression upon the people, which might eventuate in souls being saved. In each Quarterly Conference let him seriously inquire of the number of conversions."

**X. A Christ-Centered Church makes evangelism and discipleship a major part of the duties of those who are elected as Bishops in the church.** (*The A.M.E. Zion Book of Discipline* [2004], pp. 92-95)

A Bishop's love for evangelism and passion for disciple making are contagious and will eventually filter down to the ministers and laity of the Episcopal District. Among his or her duties are the following:

- A. "To expand the Church through Missions and Evangelism by establishing new churches and enlisting local Bishops' support for World Missions."
- B. "To provide each Annual Conference with a program of instruction and inspiration emphasizing the necessity of evangelism."
- C. To appoint Directors of Evangelism for his Episcopal District, Annual Conferences, and Presiding Elder Districts according to his "godly judgement" and the prayerful recommendations his cabinet.