

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of January 3, 2021

THEME: "Tri-County Bible Church"

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Sunday Read Ephesians 3:14-21

"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The fact that God used so many of these letters of Paul to local churches to be part of His Holy Scriptures suggests how important local churches are in the plans of God for His work on earth. Add to that the seven letters to local churches in the book of Revelation and we see that a large part of the New Testament is instructions to the believers in local churches. Whereas in the days of the Old Testament, God did most of His work through the nation of Israel, it is through the churches that He has placed around the world in the New Testament. Notice in today's Bible reading that the fundamental purpose of all the work of the local church is to bring glory to God. That should certainly be the desire of all those believers that God has placed in any local assembly!

SPIRIT-LED BELIEVERS

Monday Read Acts 1:13-14

"They went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas, the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." There are many ways in which the Tri-County Bible Church can identify with the establishment of the first local church there in Jerusalem at the beginning of the Church Age. One is the way that local church got started, namely with a group of believers who met in a private residence as mentioned in today's Bible reading in Acts 1. That group of believers were somewhat perplexed in that Jesus had just ascended and was back in heaven. They did what believers should do when they need guidance and direction; they met for prayer! The very fact that they decided to get together for prayer and discussion was a good thing, and one thing that came out of that meeting was the selection of a leader to help provide guidance for wherever God would lead. Tri-County Bible Church had a similar start: a group of believers met in a private home to discuss what they should do for worship and prayed for God's leading. God led that group of believers to launch into a new church ministry, the same as did that group spoken of in Acts 1. The Tri-County Bible Church had its beginning in the same manner as the local church at Jerusalem had her start!

CALLING A PASTOR

Tuesday Read Ephesians 4:11-12

"He gave some apostles; and some, prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." One of the first orders of business was to select a man to serve as a pastor. Who would God want? I received a telephone call a little after noon on that first Saturday in 1996. It was a very timely call in that just a couple of hours before, I was alerted in a phone call from my brother in North Carolina to tell me that he had received a call from a pastor who was looking for a building to accommodate his ministry. The building we rented for our new church would accommodate his congregation along with ours and our people there had a pastor opening the door for me to remain in Pennsylvania. The call came from this group of people just as I was contemplating what God would have me do since there was no need for me in North Carolina. I was assuming it would be to respond to one of a couple of offers I had received in education, both as an administrator of a Christian school in the area or as a Supervisor of practice teachers

for a college in the area. That phone call ended the pursuit; I was able to answer the call to serve as a pastor for this new local church. God had arranged the whole thing in a way that only our omniscient God could do!

SLOGAN

WednesdayRead Acts 10:34-36

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." The first worship service for this body of believers was in the private residence of one of those at the organizational meeting. Twenty-six people showed up; it was obvious we would have to find a place to rent for a meeting place. God opened the door for us to meet the next Sunday at a local hotel conference room to which fifty people showed up. As I prayed for God's wisdom in understanding why He would plan for a new church in this area which had a number of local churches that were faithful in teaching Biblical truth, the Spirit brought to mind the idea of publicizing our new church as a Ground-Level, Level-Ground Church. That "slogan" came out of nowhere because I had never heard it nor even thought of it before. But I did want this new church to have an emphasis on looking to the Bible as the instruction book for living, that the Bible had the answers to the every day problems of life. And I wanted this church to be one where everyone felt welcome and considered an equal regardless of any cultural identification; be it social or economic, race or national background, age or education - a level ground group of people. I had learned in my church planting experience, where I had visited many homes, that many people did not go to church because they did not feel they "fit in." This new church, by showing God's love, would be one which made people feel they belonged and which showed people that the Bible is the most practical and realistic guide for living.

ELDERS AND DEACONS

ThursdayRead Acts 6:3-4

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." As the congregation grew in the first month, we realized the need for a governing Board for making decisions essential for organizational purposes. It was necessary if for no other reason than our becoming incorporated with a Constitution consistent with Biblical mandates and governmental regulations. That Board served those purposes short-term, but Elders and Deacons are the Biblical way. It was very gratifying to realize that God had brought to our congregation men who had served in these capacities in churches where they had previously attended. This gave us the opportunity to have leaders on these two Boards who had experience to work with highly capable men who had never served as an Elder or Deacon, but were willing and able to follow the Spirit's leading to this responsibility. So we had two groups with delegated responsibilities consistent with the teaching of Scriptures.

TEACHERS

FridayRead I Corinthians 12:27-31

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers..." Just as satisfying was the way God provided teachers to take care of the needs of children and teens. In our very first meeting in the hotel, we were able to rent two conference rooms so the children could have their own teaching during the sermon which was more appropriate for the adults. God also brought to us, at the very beginning, a teacher who had wide experience as a Bible Club teacher for children. In the following months and years, we have seen God bring in people to meet all the various and unique needs of the ministry such as in music and positions of leadership for fellowship activities that require specialized planning as

well as those who had experience in publication to aid in promotional needs. God places His people!

FAITHFUL WORKERS

Saturday Read Exodus 36:1-2

"Every wise-hearted man, in whose heart the Lord hath put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it." Another need that became essential was for specialized personnel when God, in amazing fashion, provided us with a place we could call home here in Gilbertsville. It was truly Divine intervention that made it possible for us to have such a beautiful place, and nothing short of miraculous that we were able to obtain this property. Well, that meant we would need the skill of craftsmen to attend to the building and property needs as well as the hospitality needs created by our desire to expand the ministry by having special dinners and socials. Praise God for Spirit-led and Spirit-filled craftsmen who met this need in similar fashion to those called of God to do the building of the ark of the covenant to which today's Bible reading referred. A church body needs the faithful service of those who do so much behind the scenes.