Introduction:

1. **Who does “the church” belong to?**
   1. Jesus promised to *“build My church”* (Matthew 16:18-19) which is His kingdom.
   2. Everyone who obeys the gospel by faith is “added” to the body or the church in what we call the “universal” church (all the saved of all times in all locations). (Acts 2:41, 47)
   3. **But every child of God is to be part of a local congregation that works, serves, and worships together**. (Acts 9:26; cf., 2 Corinthians 1:1)
   4. **Today, we are but stewards** (1 Timothy 3:5) **of what He purchased it with His own blood** (Acts 20:28; cf., Ephesians 5:25) nearly 2000 years ago.
   5. We have a duty to help the Lord’s church be what God planned for it to be and accomplish everything He purposed for it.
   6. Are we as a congregation “perfect”? Is there **any room for us to get better**?
2. **What CAN NOT be made better!**
   1. The **organization of the church**:
      1. **Universally**: Jesus alone as the head. (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15; Colossians 1:18; 2:19)
      2. **Congregationally**: Qualified Elders, Deacons, and Saints (Philippians 1:1; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3) shepherding, serving, working. (cf., Titus 1:5)
   2. **Work & mission** of the church: (1 Timothy 5:16)
      1. **Seek the lost through the preaching of the gospel**. (Matthew 28:18-20;   
         2 Timothy 4:1-2)
      2. **Care for the brethren’s needs**. (Acts 2, 4, 6; Romans 15:25; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
      3. **Teaching and edification**. (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:6, 11-16)
      4. **Worship and praise**. (1 Corinthians 11:17ff; Acts 20:7)
   3. **Name of the church** – “***The Church of Christ***” (Romans 16:16) (Not a denominational title but a description of our relationship with our Savior!)
   4. **For all 3 of these points, man continues to try to make better what is already perfect and in doing makes it something completely else**.
3. **How can we be “better”**? (“***Excel still more***…”, 1 Thessalonians 4:1)
   1. **Develop a greater faith.**
      1. Our “***walk***” is **a “*walk by faith*”**. (2 Corinthians 5:7)
      2. A concern of the apostles. (Luke 17:5)
         1. What was Jesus’ answer to their question? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
      3. Our faith is **not static**… it is growing or fading…
      4. A “**greater faith in God**” must begin and end with **greater knowledge and faith in “*the faith*”**. (Acts 6:7; 14:22; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 1:23;   
         1 Timothy 4:6; Jude 3)
         1. Do we study “the faith” or what others say about “the faith”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
      5. Faith commended by God is that which **hears/listens** and **responds/acts by faith w/ urgency**. (Note Hebrews 11:4ff; cf., Psalms 119:59-60; Acts 22:16)
         1. We need to be **better/more careful listeners**. (Hebrews 2:1)
         2. We need to **be more active & consistent “doers”**. (James 1:22)
      6. Keep adding on our faith: moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (2 Peter 1:5-8)
      7. **Develop complete trust and dependency**, and in turn, **greater confidence**!   
         (2 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 4:13)
         1. **We need to “get in the wheel barrow”.**
   2. **Develop a greater love.**
      1. **The right kind…** 
         1. Not just “**phileo**” (carnal, feeling, an exercise of the heart)   
            but “**agape**” (divine, selfless, sacrificial, action, an exercise of the mind and the will) (John 21:15-17)
         2. **There are varying amounts and degrees of each**. (John 3:16, “*God* ***SO LOVED*** *the world*…”)
      2. **For God…** 
         1. ***“With all your heart… soul… mind… and strength”*** (Mark 12:30)
         2. **Above all others**. (Matthew 10:37)
         3. **Expressed in our sacrifice, service, devotion, obedience.** (1 John 5:3;   
            John 14:15)
            1. **All require** time.
      3. **For others…**
         1. **As Jesus loved us… why is this a “*new commandment”*?** (John 13:34-35;   
            cf., 1 John 4:7-12)
         2. **Of one heart…** (Acts 4:32)
      4. **For truth…**
         1. **That we will seek it and digest it each day**. (2 Thessalonians 2:10;   
            cf., Proverbs 23:23)
         2. **We will “contend” for it**! (Jude 3; Titus 1:9; Galatians 1:6-9)
      5. **For the lost…**
         1. Continue to **do what Jesus came for**… (Luke 19:10; 15:4-7)
         2. Is our heart **stirred by sorrow and grief for the lost**? (Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3)
         3. Are we willing to **deal with “sinners”** and their sin and **the need to repent**?   
            (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; cf., John 16:8)
         4. **Are we looking for “opportunities”?** (Colossians 4:3-6; John 4:35; Matthew 9:37; Acts 8:4
4. Future lessons:
   1. A better church through better
      1. **Commitment**
      2. **Purity**
      3. **Zeal/Boldness/Diligence**
      4. **Endurance**