Introduction:

1. **Who does “the church” belong to?**
   1. Jesus promised to *“build My church.”* (Matthew 16:18-19)
   2. **But every child of God is to be part of a local congregation**. (Acts 9:26; cf., 2 Cor. 1:1)
   3. **We are but stewards** (1 Timothy 3:5) **of what He purchased with His blood** (Acts 20:28).
   4. **We have a duty to help the Lord’s church be what God planned for it to be**.
   5. Is there **any room for us to get better**?
2. **What CAN NOT be made better!**
   1. **The organization of the church.** (Ephesians 1:22-23)
   2. **Work & mission** of the church: (1 Timothy 5:16)
   3. **The teaching of the church:** (Acts 20:27; 1 Timothy 4:2; Galatians 1:6-9)
   4. **Name of the church:** (Romans 16:16)
3. **How can we be “better” as we face our challenges**? (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
   1. **Develop a greater faith.** (Discussed last week; 3/10/24am)
      1. **Greater concern for our faith**. (Luke 17:5)
      2. **Greater knowledge & faith in “*the faith*”.** (Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Jude 3)
      3. **Greater urgency**. (Hebrews 11:4ff; Psalms 119:60)
      4. **Greater focus and attention**. (Hebrews 2:1)
      5. **Greater consistency** (James 1:22)
      6. **Greater trust & dependency…greater confidence**! (2 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 4:13)
      7. **We need to “get in the wheel barrow”.**
   2. **Develop a greater love.** 
      1. **The right kind… not just… “Phileo”** (carnal, feeling, an exercise of the heart) but **“Agape”** (divine, selfless, sacrificial, action, an exercise of the mind and the will)
      2. **A Greater Love For God… continuously** w/ **every aspect of our being** (Mark 12:30) **above all other relationships**. (Matthew 10:37)
      3. **A Greater Love For Our Brethren…** (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-12; 3:18; 1 Peter 2:17; Romans 12:10-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)
      4. **A Greater Love For Truth…** (John 18:38; Psalms 25:5; 119:160; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; 1 Kings 13:18-19; Jude 3; Titus 1:9; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:5)
      5. **A Greater Love For The Lost…** Luke 19:10; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; cf., John 16:8; Colossians 4:3-6; John 4:35; Matthew 9:37; Acts 8:4)
      6. **A Greater Love For The Church**… (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Cor. 11:17; 14:12; Hebrews 10:24; 1 Timothy 5:16; Ephesians 4:16; 5:22-33; Ephesians 4:1-3)
   3. **Develop greater Commitment**
      1. **Consider the commitment Jesus made to His church**.
         1. Leaving heaven to take the form of flesh. (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:14-18)
         2. Laying down His life though He committed no sin. (Ephesians 5:25; Hebrews 5:8-9)
      2. **Consider Jesus’ demands for total commitment**:
         1. All of our heart, soul, mind and strength. (Mark 12:30)
         2. Self-denial and sacrifice. (Matthew 16:24)
         3. Put our hand to the plow and don’t look back. (Luke 9:57-62)
         4. No excuses/reasons. (Luke 14:16-21)
      3. **Consider Paul’s & Peters example** (Philippians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 11:1)
         1. Whatever his “gains”, now counted as “loss”. (Philippians 3:7-14)
         2. Willing to forsake “liberties” and “personal rights” to save souls.   
            (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:23)
         3. Willing to endure all things for the gospel and salvation of men’s souls.   
            (2 Corinthians 6:4-10; 11:23-29)
         4. No longer living for self but for Him who loved him, died for him and reigns in heaven for him. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 2 Peter 4:1-3)
         5. Willing to “spend and be spent”. (2 Corinthians 12:15)
         6. *“It is no longer I who live…”* (Galatians 2:20; cf., Philippians 1:21ff)
         7. His call for us to be living sacrifices. (Romans 12:1-2)
      4. **Satan’s effort to thwart and kill commitment to Jesus Christ.**
         1. Cares of this world. (Mark 4:19)
         2. Distractions. (Luke 10:38-42)
         3. Keep us ignorant. (Hosea 4:6)
         4. Not look beyond the immediate moment. (Genesis 25:27ff; Hebrews 12:15-16)
         5. Asking too much. (Matthew 25:24)
      5. **The cost of lacking commitment.**
         1. Inconsistent and increasingly brief worship.
         2. Poor participation in the work and worship.
         3. Subsequent generations lose faith.
         4. Morals erode and society crumbles.
         5. Churches die.
         6. Souls are lost.
      6. **How to renew my commitment?**
         1. Looking to Jesus… (Hebrews 12:1-2)
         2. Trust in His promises. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
         3. Make up our minds & refocus! (Daniel 1:8; Col. 3:1-2; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
         4. 1st things truly 1st. (Matthew 6:33)
         5. Abound in the work of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
         6. Increase my consumption of the scriptures. (1 Timothy 4:6ff)
         7. Have the mindset of David. (2 Samuel 24:24)
         8. Repent & return to our first love. (Revelation 2:5; cf., Jeremiah 2:2)
   4. Future lessons, the need for greater…
      1. Purity
      2. Zeal/Boldness/Diligence
      3. Endurance