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.** (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**. (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. (Today’s focus)**
      1. **The right kind… not just…**
         1. **“Phileo”** (carnal, feeling, an exercise of the heart) but
         2. **“Agape”** (divine, selfless, sacrificial, action, an exercise of the mind and the will)(John 21:15-17)
         3. **There are varying amounts and degrees of each.** (John 3:16, “*God* ***SO LOVED*** *the world*…”;
            1. **All or part** of our heart, soul, mind & strength? (Mark 12:29-31)
         4. **A choice we can and should bestow on everyone.** (Romans 5:6-8;   
            Matthew 5:43-46)
      2. **A Greater Love For God… Our Creator/Maker/Savior/Redeemer!** (Psalms 95:6; 100:3)
         1. **Understanding Mark 12:30**, to love **continuously** w/ **every aspect of our being**.
            1. **All our heart** - our affections, will & understanding… undivided.   
               (2 Kings 20:3)
            2. **All of our soul** - our living person, life, time. (Ephesians 5:15-17;   
               2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
            3. **All of our mind** - our intellect, thought and reason. (Mindset)   
               (2 Corinthians 10:5)
         2. **Above all other relationships**. (Matthew 10:37)
            1. **Viewed not as a burden.** (1 John 5:3)
            2. **Willing to sacrifice & serve.** (John 13:34)
            3. **Willing to submit & yield in obedience.** (John 14:15)
            4. **All require** time.
      3. **A Greater Love For Our Brethren…**
         1. **Why is this a “new commandment”**? (John 13:34-35)
         2. **Something “manifested”.** (1 John 4:7-12; 3:18)
         3. **Based on the value God has assigned** to everyone… **Need focused**. (Acts 4:32; Titus 3:14)
         4. **Love what we have together.** (1 Peter 2:17)
         5. **Preference for our brethren**. (Romans 12:10-13)
         6. ***“Excel still more”*** (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)
      4. **A Greater Love For Truth…**
         1. **Defined by God**. (John 18:38; Psalms 25:5; 119:160)
         2. **“Close enough” or “pretty much” is not good enough.** (2 Thessalonians 2:10;   
            1 Kings 13:18-19; cf., vs. 9)
         3. **Grow in our value of truth.** (Proverbs 23:23)
         4. **Worth fighting for.** (Jude 3; Titus 1:9; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:5; it requires humility!)
      5. **A Greater Love For The Lost…**
         1. Is it part of our **purpose and existence**? (Luke 19:10; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3)
         2. But willing to **spend the time/make the effort**? (Luke 15:4-7;;
         3. **Only those who are “not far”?** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; cf., John 16:8)
         4. **Prayerfully diligent.** (Colossians 4:3-6; John 4:35; Matthew 9:37; Acts 8:4)
      6. **A Greater Love For The Church…**
         1. **We need to “take care” of it**. (1 Timothy 3:5)
         2. **Ties into our love for the truth.** (1 Timothy 3:15)
         3. **Coming together for the better**… (1 Corinthians 11:17; 14:12; Hebrews 10:24)
         4. **Concerned for its’ work, purity, unity and growth**. (1 Timothy 5:16; Ephesians 4:16; 5:22-33; Ephesians 4:1-3)
4. **Future lessons:** 
   1. A better church through greater
      1. **Commitment**
      2. **Purity**
      3. **Zeal/Boldness/Diligence**
      4. **Endurance**