AUTOPSY OF A DECEASED CHURCH

PART 1: THE AUTOPSY

CHAPTER 10: THE CHURCH HAD NO CLEAR PURPOSE
PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now…

THE MIRACLE

THE MIRACLE ON ICE

1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey Coach Herb Brooks upset with players had the players skate sprints.
- During practices Brooks asked players who they played for – they replied with the names of their colleges.
- Finally one of the players said “I play for the United States of America.”
- They would go on to beat the USSR and Finland for the gold medal in hockey.
LESSONS FROM “THE MIRACLE”

- The American hockey players got it.
- They not only knew the game they were playing: they knew for whom they were playing: “I play for the United States of America.”
- They clearly understood their purpose.
- They clearly understood how to carry out their purpose.

THE CHURCHES DID NOT GET IT

- “We were going through the motions.”
- “Everything we did seemed to be like we were in a rut or a bad routine.”
- “We became more attached to our ways of doing church than we did to asking the Lord what He wanted us to do.”
- “We were playing a game called church. We had no idea what we were really supposed to be doing.”
- “We stopping asking what we should be doing for fear that it would require too much effort or change.”

THE REAL PICTURE

- The church was not really a church.
- It had no purpose.
- None of the members talked about fulfilling the Great Commission.
- None of the members talked about carrying out the Great Commandment in the church.
PURPOSELESS CHURCHES

- Do not come close to speaking with a burning passion about making a difference in the community.

- Engaged in an activity called “This is the way we’ve always done it.”

None of the members asked what they should be doing; they were too busy doing what they’ve always done.

WHEN THE CHURCH HAS A BIBLICAL PURPOSE

- Philippians 1:3-5 – Partnership in the gospel.

- The church understood her purpose.
- The members at Philippi knew what they were supposed to do.
  - Live the gospel
  - Proclaim the gospel
  - Partner with Paul in the gospel
- Their purpose was totally and completely gospel-centered – live and share the gospel.

RESULTS OF REMEMBERING YOUR PURPOSE
They forgot their purpose.
Deadly and slow process.
Attitudes shifted from gospel-centered and other-centered to self-centered.
An outward focus became an inward obsession.
Routines and traditions and rituals replaced the original purpose of being a gospel-driven people.
*A church without a gospel-centered purpose is no longer a church at all.*

God, reignite the hearts of our church members, including me, to have a passion for the gospel. Teach our church to share the gospel with others. Teach us to live as men and women who are true bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ. Remind us of our purpose. Convict us of our purpose. Empower us to live our purpose.

Using the illustration of the United States Olympic hockey team of 1980, explain the need in dying churches to rediscover their purpose.
QUESTION 2.

- How can routine and tradition get in the way of a church fulfilling her purpose?

QUESTION 3.

- What did Paul mean in Philippians 1:3-5 when he thanked the church for her partnership in the gospel?