Doctrine of the Church

The Church under attack:

1. Reasons for the such a strong attack
   a. The institutionalization of the Christian church discourages assimilation of new church members into a local church
   The assault on the church has been relentless. When spirituality fades and forms of government take precedence over ministry priorities, the focus of gathering saints and nurturing them and moving them through the stages of the spiritual growth become blurry. New church members are hesitant to view the instruction and catechism (I Tim 1:3. Titus 2:15), edifications (Romans 12:17; Gal 6:1-4), encouragement (2 Cor. 9:22-24), building of the body of Jesus Christ (Eph 4:11-16), recognition and practice of holy living (2 Pet 1:4, 1 Cor. 4;16), worship (Heb 10:25) and the resolution to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8) are part of their essentials of faith journey. The vitality, power and glory of the church in the Bible (Matt 16:18-19; Matt 10:18; Col 2:10; 1 Cor 5:13) is lost with such withdrawal. This trend continues to show in local churches and major denominations. They simply stay away from the Christian church as new believers continue to see the church life as church structure being expressed in budgets, committee meetings and policy announcements on Sundays. The identity of the church is lost and people see a local church as some sort of an activity in a church warehouse somewhere between YMCA and Walmart.
   b. The influence of "personal decisions over spiritual matters" reduces the power experiencing corporate unity in church

   Contemporary culture plays a hand in clogging the minds of individuals. Since the days of great revivals 160 years ago in New England, massive and now media-boosted evangelism have led people to believe that coming to Jesus is a mere cognitive self-oriented decision based on one's choice rather than a reception of God's faith by grace. Understanding spirituality from the angle of individualism reduces the full expression of the body life of a church by which each member is embedded in the flow and nurture of His body. The sweetness of fellowship (Romans 16:16; Act 20:36-38), dynamics of prayer (Acts 4:23-24), exhortation in a community (James 5:13-16), discipline to preserve our identity (Matt 18:15-17) and accountability (Eph 4:9; 2 Thess. 2:14) are exciting elements of synergy in the Early church. Now participation of church is voluntary and on sign-up basis. Individuals increasingly see church activities as a grocery list to be checked off and consumerism sets in. One's decision on spiritual matters becomes a highly personal choice rather than a participatory act of coming under the guidance of doctrine of the church in unity under the will of God. We continue to see the breakdown of church life that impacts family decisions and personal integrity. A full life expression of a Christian church by being together, serving one another and embracing one another in Christ's love is reduced to superficial recognition (Acts 6:1-7; Romans 12:3-4). The power of a true community (Cf Apostle's Creed, repentance, forgiveness, endurance,

purity, suffering for Christ's sake, etc) is dampened by individuals not willing to travel down to the road of corporate church life (1 Cor. 7:8; Gal 5:1; S of Solomon 1:1-4; Ps 147:1-3)

c. A general lack of the systematic teaching of the doctrine of the church depreciates the full expression of the "priesthood of all believers" in a local church

We still struggle with the full implementation of the "priesthood of all believers" (Eph 4:11ff, Exodus 19:5-6, First Peter 2:4-8, Revelation 1:4-6, 5:6-10) beyond just the DISC spiritual test kit. We are God's chosen people ministering to the world through the ministry of reconciliation through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5: 18-19). Believers are still fully dependent on the pastors and/or elders to exercise the ministry of the whole church. Either the identity of the Laity as the principal body of the church is lost or that laity are slumbering waiting to be awaken (Acts 2:42-27). Insecure clergy cannot train and release the power of laity unless there is a recovery of the central doctrine of the church in Matt 28:18 : "…make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them… teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you…"

d. Dichotomy between ministry preparation and nurturing in a local church
Para church organizations take the place of training the laity for ministry instead of the local church. Skill levels are teachable and yet character formation of seminarians and lay leaders is often left unattended by a local church. Local churches assume the role of financial and prayer support but lack the direct involvement of the formation of seminarians, assuming that they will take care of their spiritual life. Training agents assume the role of teaching them their skill but leave this to the local church, assuming that the pastoral team will hold them up well. The end result is a general neglect of how a Christian learns the spiritual lessons of humility, brokenness and maturity.

The attack seeks to destroy what God has established through His son as the center of redemption and reconciliation of all mankind.

2. Reasons for advocating a strong position of the doctrine of the church
    a. The understanding of the doctrine of the church determines the direction of the pastoral ministry of a local church (Eph 2:20; John 20:21)

    The visible church is the community of God's people called out of the world and sent into the world as mature followers of Jesus Christ. The vision of the church is set forth clear and loud: to bring the Gospel to the ends of the world (Acts 1:8) and the mission is a strategy of bringing the good news out (Matt 11:1; Acts 11:12; 13:1; Phil 1:1; 1Thess 3;1). The strategizing and mobilization of the saints are an integral part of the overall pastoral ministry that influences the laity and spreads across to make the church the beacon of the world (Matt 5:14). The purpose of the pastoral ministry is to gather, to make disciples, to mobilize according to giftedness and to send.

b. The doctrine of the church instructs and directs the ministry philosophies of a local church

"One of the reasons for all kinds of frustrations arising in church is (the) pastoral leadership that lacks a firm philosophy on how and why the church should act. People in ministry often see methods, but fail to see the philosophy or strategy that lies behind the methods. Thus people usually attribute success to methods but remain indifferent to the invisible principles that determine those methods. Healthy churches do not depend on methodology. The most pressing matter is to establish the ministry philosophy." John Oak

What is the best way to recapture the glory of a local church? A glorious church is to proclaim the Gospel in its truthfulness and purity. Unless we recapture the true identity of the church, we will not be able to function in a healthy manner. What we want to see the church and reclaiming its purpose will determine how we reach the goal.

c. Strong Bible-based doctrine of the church produces healthy churches
Modern churches carry a lot of burden. Emotional wounds, obligatory ministry, spiritual droughts, personal integrity struggles, worldly influence and ego-laced ambitions are the brokenness we see in a church. Culture and socialization derails the true nature fo church. It is not a social center. Restoring Biblical manhood and human relationships will foster healthy spiritual cycles. Yet, the doctrine of the church demands a deeper conviction: Believers are disciples and they belong to the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Our redemption starts with His grace and through the Cross. Our new identity is not merely a personal restoration of a vertical relationship with God but also a recovery of our identity as the people of God in His church.

Christology
- Reestablishes a restored relationship with the Heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ
- Creates of a new identity in Christ

Ecclesiology
- Directs the pastoral ministry of a local church
- Builds philosophy of ministry (e.g. believes in the priesthood of all believers, character formation foster real growth, etc)

Local Church ministries
- Develops strategies based upon philosophy of ministry (e.g discipleship and leadership development as the best approach to complete His commission)
- Formulates ministry method (Develop 1-1 QT, structured mentorship programs, small groups as best environment to develop ministry skills, etc)