

Title: Be Committed to Christ's Church

Passage: Ephesians 4:6-16

Introduction:

Dating experience

- Social stage of a relationship where one is merely assessing the suitability of the other with little commitment.
- contrast: marriage as a covenant, lasting commitment

Question: Why do people merely "date" the church (vs. be committed)?

Reasons for "church dating":

- Sense of independence
 - One wants to keep a sense of freedom and don't want to be kept accountable to others
- Indifferent or uninformed
 - One doesn't realize or appreciate the benefits of being committed to a local church
- Immaturity
 - One's misperception that a relationship with Jesus is only about Himself but yet ignores His body (church)
 - ex: you tell someone that you love someone but ignore their spouse (or say you like their head but not the body)
- Indecisive
 - One doesn't know what is really wanted in a church
 - Treat church like a grocery store where we go to different churches for different things or aspects
- Critical mindset
 - One is always looking for something better - a more "perfect" church or church more "perfect" for them.

Overview:

I. Why is it important to have a high view of the Church?

II. Why be a committed member to the local church?

III. Implications

I. Why is it important to have a high view of the Church?

Church = Universal, global church

- Definition: People who are part of the body of Christ who have repented of their sins, trusted and placed their faith in Christ, and follow Him as their Lord.

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my *church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

- church = *ekklesia* (Greek word) = "called ones"
- Ephesians chapters 1-2
 - God has called us by His grace and put us in a body of other believers

Ephesians 2:22

In him you also are being built *together* into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

- “together” = never meant to be isolated but with others

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

- Jesus’ high view of the church = He loved so much that He sacrificed Himself for the church

Biblical metaphors/word pictures to describe the church:

- household of God

1 Timothy 3:15

if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Galatians 6:10

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

- family

Matthew 12:50

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

- building

Ephesians 2:22

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

- flock of sheep

John 10:7-9

So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

- Christ’s body

Ephesians 4:15-16

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

- bride

Revelation 19:7

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

Question: Do you love what Jesus loves - His church?

II. Why be committed member to the local church?

- Bible uses the word “church” repeatedly that also points to local bodies of believers that meet in specific locations (not just the universal, global church)
- Books of the Bible that were written to specific churches: Acts, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, etc.
- church: meeting in local homes

Romans 16:3-5

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. *Greet also the church in their house.* 1 Corinthians 16:19

The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.

Importance of being a committed member to a local church

Many passages imply church membership where people gathered together regularly

- choosing leaders among them. People must have met regularly so could know each other and select accordingly

Acts 6:3

Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

- record keeping of attendees, including their demographics

1 Timothy 5:9, 11 (reference to lists of widows kept by church)

Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,...But refuse to enroll younger widows

- Discipline involved “telling it to the church” at an escalated level, which must have been the local church

Matthew 18:17

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

- Expulsion of believer. Paul advised church to expel a person because of his persistent sin

1 Corinthians 5:4-5

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

- Church leaders: God has entrusted certain members to their care for whom they will give God an account for their life in Christ. Membership must exist so leaders know who they are to “watch over [their] souls.”

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- Mutual accountability

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

- Looking to each other's interests to be done in community through the church

Philippians 2:4

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Romans 12:9-13

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

- Bearing with one another requires context of community through the church.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ

Colossians 3:13-15

bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

- watch against those who destroy the church

Romans 16:17

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

- Choosing and sending missionaries

Acts 15:22

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

- Make sure the Gospel is preached faithfully

Galatians 1:9

As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

What is the local church?

- God's institution to proclaim the Gospel, to affirm those who profess their faith in Christ and oversee their discipleship, and to expose imposters
- In other words: The church is taking responsibility for you and you are taking responsibility for the church.

Question: Are you a committed member of a local church where you sharing your life with others for the glory of God?

- Jesus came to die for the church
- Contrast: He did not die for a para-church organization or non-profit ministry

Why become a member?

- Makes visible your commitment to Christ
 - a way to raise the flag of faith
 - It is hard to love others and stay committed but it is worth it!
- Membership/commitment makes a powerful statement in a "low commitment" culture
 - I am committed to this group of people
 - I am here to give more than to get.
- It keeps us accountable and prevent us to be overly-independent
 - To whom? Proper church leaders and in context of fellowship with others
- Helps your pastors be more faithful in shepherding others
- Gives you an opportunity to make promises and keep them

Implications

- Non-believers: Membership is only if you know Christ. God wants you to be part of His body/church.
- Committed Believers: Continue to be faithful in the commitment you made.
 - It is about giving (emotionally, materially, etc.), not receiving
 - It is a lifestyle of service
 - It is about you being part of the team and what is happening
- Non-committed believers: Find a local church that is faithful to the Bible, committed to missions, and other marks of a healthy church. Be committed to beyond what you are just doing.
 - Note: you will never find the perfect church

Related Passages

Ephesians 4:6-16

one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into

Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

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Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.