

INTRO: Imagine with me that you play a basketball. You grow up in your backyard, like my children, shooting hoops. I mean, you are so into backyard basketball, that you want the right shoes. You might even buy some jerseys to make it look like you are on the team. And for years, you are the master of backyard basketball. You run your own drills. You watch some YouTube for coaching. And you figure that all by yourself you'll become the next great one, the next Jordan (cuz we all know that he was the greatest). You've concluded that you are able to self taught, self coached — that you don't need other people to be the greatest basketball player of all time. Clearly — such a person is *delusional*. All the backyard basketball by yourself will only get you so far if you've never actually played in a game, on a team. All the self-coaching will only get you so far if you've never actually played on a team. When you begin to play against others, your skill grows. You get to watch others, and learn. You get to practice your moves, and learn. You have a coach who is helping you with subtle nuances along the way to make you better.

Maybe, this backyard basketball star is too proud to admit that he actually needs help to improve his game. **Maybe**, this backyard basketball star is afraid of others seeing his mistakes (since after all, no one is perfect) **Maybe**, this backyard basketball star is afraid of commitment because he might not like the whole team thing as much as he liked individuality. But at the end of the day, this self-taught star will only grow so much on his own. His potential will be reached real quick.

Well, I don't care all that much about basketball but this hypothetical backyard basketball star does demonstrate something that is MASSIVELY prevalent among Christianity today.

There is this cancerous ideology among the Christian community that my faith is entirely personal — just God & me. That since I repented and believed the gospel, that it's just about me & God. That since I have the Holy Spirit in me, I'm just fine on my own. That since I have the Bible, I'll don't need anyone else in my life. Since I have Christian books, podcasts, and YouTube preachers, I can be all that God wants me to be on my own. And sadly, such individuality in the name of Christianity is winning the day in Western Christianity.

Like our backyard basketball star who's unwilling to be on a team, who's unwilling to get coached, all because he thinks he's better off on his own...the world today is full of Christians who think they are fine on their own. Christians who aren't too convinced that they need fellow Christians in their lives. Christians who aren't willing to commit to the Church, because they'd rather it just be them and God. Christian's who have believed the cancerous lie that they can be mature and happy in Jesus apart this redeemed community called the Church.

The result is all around us — people who profess Christianity, but are weak in their faith. Those who profess Christianity, but don't know how to live the life of faith. Those who profess Christianity, but are proud, because no one is checking their theology or practice. Those who profess Christianity but are anemic, because they are not being fed. Those who profess Christianity yet are immature, because they can

only get so far on their own. Those who profess Christianity but don't look very Christian at all, because they have never been disciplined in their faith.

Church family — God's good design for His people was NEVER to live the life of faith alone. God's good design for His people has ALWAYS been to work out their faith in a community of fellow repenters. In a community of people who have been made right with God by faith and who are striving to live right before God by faith. Throughout the entire Bible, Old Testament & New Testament, God's people lived among a community of people that helped them walk with God.

Unquestionably - the gospel declares that you must repent and believe. Christianity is not a faith that you get by simply being born into it. Just like all Israel, wasn't true Israel (meaning all Israel didn't actually believe in the promises of the Messiah). They might have been born an Israelite, but they had to be actually repent & believe in the promises of God to rescue, restore, and redeem. And so today, proximity with the Church doesn't actually make you a Christian. We know that each and every individual must repent. You must believe the gospel for yourself. And so in that sense, Christianity is personal. The gospel, the good news of Jesus, reconciles sinners to God and in that we rejoice!

However, this glorious gospel that unites sinners to God, it actually does something else — it unites sinners to sinners! The gospel is what makes US the family of God, it is what makes US the Bride of Christ, it is what makes US the Called Out Ones (the Church).

Brothers & sisters, my eager hope and expectation this morning is to help each and everyone one of you love and value the Church this morning more! My prayer is that by the time we are done in the Word this morning, you'll see that God's good plan for every Christian is to be vitally connected to A local Church. My longing for each and every person here is that you'll be convinced from the Word of God that you were not meant to live the Christian life alone. That the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ is about reconciling you to God AND uniting you to one another in this wonderful, messy, grace-saturated, gospel-transformed community called the Church.

BIG IDEA: Being Committed to A Local Church is Vital for You Being Like Jesus

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

- A passage written to a specific LOCAL church in the city of Corinth
- A passage encouraging the LOCAL Church to:

Not be unequally yoked with unbelievers...Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

Not be partnered up with those who are lawless — *What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?*

Not make darkness your closest companions — *Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

Not be friends with the Devil — *What accord has Christ with Belial (the Devil)?*

Not making those who worship idols your companions — *What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

EMPHASIS: All of these verses are written to a specific local church and are worked out in a local church (not the universal or global church // not a whole bunch of local churches that you frequent in your city):

NOTICE: As Paul is writing to a specific LOCAL Church (Corinth), he uses plural pronouns to refer to this collective whole, this group:

I will make my dwelling among **them** and walk among them, and I will be **their** God, and **they** shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome **you**, and I will be a father to **you**, and **you** shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

- QUESTION: Did you hear it? Did you hear the corporate identity? Did you hear Paul calling the entire Church to this standard...not an individualist pursuit but something that is done together.

- WHY:

#1: Because our walk with Jesus needs the Church!

#2: Because our walk with Jesus is bigger than us!

BIG IDEA: Being Committed to A Local Church is Vital for You Being Like Jesus *because:*

TO BE CLEAR: I’m going to use the word **commitment** often this morning because biblically speaking, God’s people were always **committed** to a specific, local Church. This is often referred to as membership, which I believe is a good word and is something we practice here. But membership is actually about commitment. God is NOT interested in HIS people floating from church to, to church. Treating the Church like Old Country Buffett was never God’s intention. We don’t go to one church for the music, another for the food, and another for the preaching. We don’t drift in and out of different churches just because we got hurt (even though sometimes we must leave if sin is not repented of).

#1: The Local Church is Where we Work Out the Gospel

A. Gospel-Enabled Love is Proved in the Church — **John 13:35**

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

- The continual display of Christlike, Spirit-empowered love, mercy, grace, goodness, kindness, etc.

B. Gospel-Produced Unity is Worked Out in the Church — **Galatians 3:28**

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- All peoples coming together because they have been redeemed & united by Christ Jesus!

C. Gospel-Empowered Forgiveness should be on Display in the Church — **Matthew 18:22 & Ephesians 5:32**

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

- Jesus commands a complete or perfect forgiveness (in the context of church discipline)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

- The gospel frees us to be a forgiving people because we know just how much we have been forgiven!
- TRUTH: Forgiveness is not something we give to the unbeliever but withhold from the Christian.
- TRUTH: We expect fellow Christians to sin against us (because after all we are still sinners), but we are eager to offer forgiveness because in doing so we are applying the gospel of radical forgiveness that we have been given!

D. Gospel-Saturated Submission is Continually Worked Out in the Church

- We initially submit to Jesus when we obey the Gospel - **Romans 1:5**

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

- We continue to submit to Jesus by submitting to one another - **Ephesians 5:21 & Philippians 2:3**

submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

- We continue to submit to Jesus by submitting to pastor-elders in the local church - **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.

TRUTH: It is my estimation that the professing Christians do not commit to A particular local church today because submission goes against the flesh. Submitting to one another & submitting to a particular team of pastor-elders, is contrary to our fallen nature.

GOSPEL: The gospel path begins with submission & the gospel path continues with submission — this is the life of faith! And the life of faith is always good, even though it is hard!

- **REMEMBER:** Being Committed to A Local Church is Vital for You Being Like Jesus *because* the Local Church is Where we Work Out the Gospel

#2: The Local Church is Where we Learn to Live for Christ

- A. We encourage one another to love Jesus & live for Jesus — **Hebrews 10:24**

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

- **QUESTION:** Are you ever discouraged? Are you ever doubting? Are you ever overwhelmed by fear? Are you ever anxious? Are you ever losing the battle to sin?
- **GOD'S SOLUTION:** Be so committed to fellow Christ followers in A local church that you are known, loved, & cared for at the level of your soul!

- B. We lay down our lives for one another in sacrificial service — **Galatians 5:13**

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- **TRUTH:** Serving begins in the household of God.
- **TRUTH:** Jesus laid down His life for His followers and He calls us to lay down our lives for one another.

- C. We imitate one another as we all follow Christ — **1 Corinthians 11:1**

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

- **TRUTH:** We all need examples of how to work out our faith better!

- **TRUTH:** None of us are enough like Christ! The Spirit of God will and does work through the lives of fellow Christians as we do life together!
- **ILL:** How often have you watched someone else work out their faith in the context of marriage, parenting, singleness, contentment, finances — and had an “AHA” moment! This is God’s design — that each of us would become more like Christ in the context of the Church!

D. We lovingly confront & expose unrepentant sin — **1 Corinthians 5:11-13**

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

- **TRUTH:** It is the job of a biblically healthy Church to lovingly confront sin — always with the hope that the brother or sister in sin will repent and continue following Jesus.
- **TRUTH:** It is the job of a biblically healthy Church to lovingly expose the sin of those who refuse to repent and who have hardened their heart to Christ.
- **TRUTH:** It is in vogue today to be a church drifter precisely because we don’t want anyone to get to close because if they did, they’d confront our sin.
- **REMEMBER:** Being Committed to A Local Church is Vital for You Being Like Jesus *because* the Local Church is Where we Learn to Live for Christ

#3: The Local Church is Where we Use Spiritual Gifts

A. Spiritual gifts are given by God to be used in THE Church (a specific, local church) — **Romans 12:4-5**

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

- **SAD REALITY:** Christians who are never committed to a, particular local church will never know the benefits to their soul of being part of a functioning Body!

B. Spiritual gifts are given by God for the building up of the Church — **1 Corinthians 12:7**

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

- **REMEMBER:** Spiritual gifts are never for the building up of yourself
 - **REMEMBER:** Spiritual gifts are given for you to use in A (singular) local Church (not to somehow bless the universal church)
 - **REMEMBER:** Spiritual gifts are given to serve specific saints in your local church (i.e. think Acts 6 and the establishing of the deacons in a specific local Church)
- C. The Holy Spirit speaks through fellow Christians — **Hebrews 3:13 & 2 Corinthians 7:6**

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

- When the Word is telling us how to stay faithful to Jesus for the long haul (till the end) — it doesn’t tell us to listen to worship music, ask God to give us a word, or even read your Bible. It tells us to press into this thing called the Church & in that context to encourage & exhort one another every day!

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,

- When the Apostle Paul is discouraged (yes, even writers of the Bible got discouraged), the Holy Spirit did not personally come and rest on Paul. God did not send him some mystical help. God sent Titus to Paul to be used by the Holy Spirit to encourage Paul!
- **LIE:** The Holy Spirit only works in unforeseen, mystical ways (i.e. when you are alone with God on a mountain top or in your closet).
- **TRUTH:** The Holy Spirit works through the Word being brought to your attention by fellow Christians (i.e. that’s what it means to speak the truth to one another in love)!
- **REMEMBER:** Being Committed to A Local Church is Vital for You Being Like Jesus *because* the local church is where we use spiritual gifts for the building up of the body!

CONCLUSION:

#1: Followers of Jesus were never meant to walk the life of faith alone

#2: Followers of Jesus who try to walk the life of faith alone will struggle, suffer, and may not even make it to the end.

#3: Followers of Jesus are given this family called the Church to work out the gospel together until Jesus calls us home.

THE CHURCH DEFINED

committed to defining the church biblically

#4: Committing to, submitting to, joining up with a, *particular local Church* is God's good plan for ALL those who follow Him.

CHALLENGE: Would you commit, by faith, to the local church for the sake of your faith and the sake of your brothers & sisters in Christ who need you to follow Christ!