

Last week we talked about the importance of change. We want to be a Church who enables and supports the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to make you and I more like Jesus. We want you to want to be different. This week I want to talk about what it means to belong to the Church.

As I was working on my Masters in Ministry from Hope International I had the opportunity to take a class on the importance of practicing spiritual disciplines. Obvious spiritual disciplines include worship, prayer, and Bible study. Lesser known and thus less practiced disciplines include fellowship, fasting, silence, and solitude. It was in this class that my mentor challenged me to more consistently practice the disciplines of Silence and Solitude. So, every year since I try to go away for a couple of days to practice the spiritual disciplines of Silence and Solitude.

The reason Silence and Solitude are important for me is because I am an introvert. Being an introvert means that interacting with people requires that I generate emotional energy in order to do that well. Being an extrovert, like my wife, means that she gains emotional energy when interacting with other people. It drives Kristi crazy to be with others and not be accomplishing something. In order for her to get satisfaction from the presence of others there needs to be activity. Whether it be house cleaning or card playing Kristi is more satisfied when it is done with others. However, while she likes to act, I like to contemplate. I like to go watch movies by myself, or play a round of golf by myself, or go fishing by myself. I have discovered a lot of good things when I go away and practice Silence and Solitude. I am always re-energized afterward.

When people ask me about that practice they think I just sit in a room all day by myself, and while there is some of that I am with several other people who are doing the same thing. I have been a little surprised by one of the things I have learned through this practice. I have grown to appreciate others...and more specifically the presence of others.

Now don't get me wrong. Engaging with others is still quite a drain on me emotionally, but I also know that the value of many experiences in life increases exponentially when you experience it with others, especially with others we love.

Where am I going with all of this?

Here at regeneration we have a saying, "You didn't come to church, because you are the Church. So, go and be the Church." I like it, but it is a little misleading, because by you can't be the Church by yourself. The Church, by definition, is the gathering of individuals or those who are called to gather. The "You" in "You are the Church" is a plural you.

Paul's instruction is enlightening on why this is important.

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of

the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

(The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Co 12:12–31). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.)

What follows in 1 Corinthians 13 is hijacked at every wedding, and while it is all about the more excellent way of Love and although it is a wonderful definition of what love should look like, the context where this love is supposed to be shared is not marriage, but The Church.

Following Jesus is a community activity that can only accomplish the purpose of the Church by coming together...by belonging to one another.

There is very little personal instruction with regards to being a follower of Jesus. We don't read often, if at all, "Study your Bible or have a personal quiet time." But there is overwhelming instruction for us when it comes to our interaction with one another.

- 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Ro 12:10) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 16 Live in harmony with one another. (Ro 12:16) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. (Ro 14:13) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Ro 15:5–7) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

- 14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. (Ro 15:14) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Co 13:11) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 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. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Ga 5:13–14) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (Ga 6:1–3) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:1–6) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. (Jas 4:11) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, (1 Pe 4:7–10) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.
- 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (1 Jn 3:23–24) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). . Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

We are personally saved by Jesus, but we are communally sanctified by Holy Spirit.

The intimacy of this one another connection is deep.

When we truly belong to someone they hurt when we hurt, they are joy filled when we are joy filled, and they are implicated when we misbehave. (v.26)

26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

You and I need to appreciate this idea more. When we follow Jesus and give ourselves to belong to His Church what we say and do will have an impact on the rest of the Church. Let me use the hangnail as an example. It's a small injury, but when you have one your whole body is aware of where the pain is. Small injury, but full attention.

We are even connected historically. Often, I get into discussions where an unbeliever wants to talk about the shady past of the Church as a reason Jesus can't be trusted. So, if our reputation can be tarnished by what the Church did during the Crusades five hundred years ago, then doesn't it make sense that what you choose to do tomorrow could have a similar impact on us or on the future Church?

The last point I want to make this morning is that **there is power in our assembly**. (24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:24–25) The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016).. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.)

I can remember on Halloween night in 1987 I experienced Tesla and Def Leppard in concert at Rupp Arena. It was an amazing show. I'll never forget it. However, I don't think it would have been as amazing if I had been the only one in attendance. Some things in life are just far more powerful when there are large numbers of people who experience it together.

It's powerful when all of you are here and it will be more powerful when we have more people here.

When God made man and placed him in the garden what was the reason God provides us for making woman?

It is not good for man to be alone.

When Eve sins the serpent isolates her. And ever since the fall of mankind Satan knows that if he can encourage us to isolate ourselves he has a far better chance of destroying us.

God sent Jesus and gave us salvation through Him. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and gave us the Church so that none of us would have to be alone. It is not good for you to be alone.

Welcome to regeneration Church where we hope you will engage in Holy Spirit empowered change and hope you will find people to whom you belong.