

How To Be a Healthy Church

Reading - 1 Thessalonians 1

Introduction

1. Jesus gave us the greatest command...love
 - a. Asked Jesus what the greatest command
 - b. Matt 22:37-39 “He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the greatest and most important command. ³⁹ The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - c. John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”
 - d. This is our highest calling as followers of Christ
2. Healthy Churches
 - a. What makes a church healthy?
 - b. What makes a church unhealthy?
 - c. Talking about the Thessalonians...healthiest...most celebrated church in NT
 - d. What made the Thessalonians healthy?
 - e. Answer: They exhibited this love of Christ
3. Godly love derives from a supernatural change in us
 - a. Before salvation...We don't have God's love
 - b. After being regenerated our soul comes alive and have new heart of flesh
 - c. Now able to love as God wants us to
4. What does Godly love look like?
 - a. This is a work that happens in the heart...can't see it with your eyes
 - b. It's not ooey gooey feelings
 - c. We can't measure it
 - d. Can't score it on a score card

An example of a healthy church is the Thessalonians

- They embodied Godly love and service for each other
- Lived out Christ's command

Point 1. A Healthy Church is Motivated by Love

1. The Thessalonians love

- This highest command from Christ...the Thessalonians had it
- 1:3 "your work produced by faith, your labor motivated by love"
- This is the supernatural love because they went from darkness to light
- 1:9 "you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"
- Because of this they walk in newness of life...abundant love they didn't have before
- 4:9-10 ⁹ About brotherly love: You don't need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. ¹⁰ In fact, you are doing this toward all the brothers and sisters in the entire region of Macedonia. But we encourage you, brothers and sisters, to do this even more"
- The Thessalonians exhibit the love we receive from God when we are saved

2. This love enables all things in Christian life

- evangelism, service, prayer for others...
- Sourced from your new heart of flesh

3. Common misconceptions about ministry and serving

- We think of doing ministry we think of pastors
- We think of being on a serving schedule (not dogging on it)
- What about the other 6 days a week?
- Popular to talk about living on mission
- Popular to talk about being communal
- What does that actually mean or look like?

4. This is the ministry of the "One another's"

- Over 50 verses in the NT
- 14 "love one another"
- About 40 descriptions of how that's carried out among each other

- d. Pray, encourage, build up, speak truth, bear with, show honor, esteem higher, stir up, admonish, exhort, pray for, care for, comfort, teach, forgive, be kind, etc...
 - e. You can do these when...motivated by Godly love
 - f. This is how you measure love...by how it is carried out towards others
5. Being Communal
- a. Can't be communal on Sunday mornings
 - b. You need to be plugged in
 - c. Home groups, serving schedule
 - d. getting to know people, knowing their lives, ministering to each other...not sitting on the sidelines
 - e. This is how the Thessalonians were
6. How did Paul know they were loving each other well?
- a. 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing."
 - b. They're already exhorting, encouraging, warning, comforting, helping, serving
7. To be a healthy church you need to be motivated by love
- a. You cannot work hard enough to make do this
 - b. It comes from supernatural love of God
 - c. not motives....strategy, wealth, attention, programs
 - d. Seeing others as Christ sees them

Point 2. A Healthy Church is a Strong Witness

1. If a church is ministering the "one another's"...they'll be a light
- a. That church will impact it's community...spread the gospel...by seeing needs and responding in love
 - b. Same on a personal level
2. The Thessalonians public witness
- a. 1:6-7 " ⁶and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. As a result, you became an example to all the believers in

Macedonia and Achaia.⁸For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith^[c] in God has gone out.

3. Being missional means being a good missionary
 - a. You're not an effective missionary if you are known for being
 - b. Selfish, Angry, Gossiper, Harsh, Rude
 - c. Not an effective church...unwelcoming, strife
 - d. Matthew 5:16 "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."
 - e. What is your light? How does it shine?
 - f. It is your good works...your "one another's"
4. That's what's amazing....that we can be used
 - a. Galatians 5:13-14 "¹³For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity^[b] for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself."
 - b. What freedom?...Free to not be slave to passions and sins
 - c. Now we're able to walk in supernatural power
 - d. We are/can be....Conduits of God's love, mercy, truth towards others!
 - e. We are ministers of the gospel, proclaimers of truth
 - f. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, walking with God, able to impact those around us
5. Good works are not enough to spread the gospel
 - a. This is not the "preach the gospel and use words if nessecary"...that is an unbiblical take
 - b. we must preach with our mouths...(sin and repentance)
 - c. Thessalonians preached - 1:8 "For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out."
 - d. Thessalonians preached the gospel...we must preach with our mouths
 - e. But you can preach...and not be effective because your life is not reflecting the love of God
 - f. The Thessalonians were effective in Macedonia and Achaia because they were known for their immense love and care for each other
6. Your ineffective when you are not living out the one another's

- a. 4:11-12 “seek to lead a quiet life, mind your own business, work with your own hands... so that you may behave properly in the presence of outsiders”
- b. So what kind of missionary are you?
- c. Will you be effective?
- d. Will others want to know where your great love comes from?

Point 3. Unhealthy Churches

1. We can be fruitful & powerful conduits of God's love and truth
 - a. or we can be unfruitful
 - b. Paul feared this for the Thessalonians...it's real
 - c. 3:5 “when I could no longer stand it, I also sent him to find out about your faith, fearing that the tempter had tempted you and that our labor might be for nothing.”
 - d. Possibility for them...and for every church today
2. Why wouldn't a church be super loving? Because of being Selfishness
 - a. Something bad happens
 - b. How can that happen?...
 - c. How dare they do that to you...
 - d. that's not how they're supposed to act
 - e. They hurt my feelings...they are such a jerk and a bad christian
 - f. Paul said in 3:5...the tempter
 - g. You should show them what that feels like
3. This is where we look to Christ
 - a. John 13:1 “Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”
 - b. Greek word “*Telos*” - to the maximum, to the uttermost
 - c. Jesus knew they would betray him...but he loved them as much as it is possible to love them...washed their feet
 - d. True service does not come from obligation...my pastor told me I had to do more...it comes from love
 - e. If you feel slighted...hurt...betrayed...by someone in the church
 - f. Christ felt that way....
 - g. Don't gossip...don't ignore them...
 - h. Romans 12:18 “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

- i. Ephesians 4:32 “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ”
4. Not what the Corinthians did
- a. fighting over communion
 - b. Suing each other
 - c. 1 Corinthians 6:6-8 “one believer^[b] sues another—right in front of unbelievers! ⁷ Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers.” (NLT)
 - d. The issue here is not suing...or wine instead of grape juice
 - e. The issue is selflessness / Self centeredness
 - f. Self centeredness is the quickest way for a church to fall
 - g. Not being able to forgive....not walking in love
 - h. Not considering others higher than yourselves (Phil. 2)
5. If your whole view of church is to come receive receive receive...your experience
- a. the music wasn't great, the sermon was meh, no one talked to me
 - b. you are an example of a Corinthian church member
 - c. If you're view is to come, receive the word with Joy, bring your life into submission, and carry the word in love to others looking for their good and not you're own....the world will know you're his disciple

If a church is doing that...that is an effective church

- You'll be a good witness
- A church whose word of the Lord rings out in their region

Conclusion

1. It's about your heart
- a. A healthy church has a congregation...living life for others...
 - b. John 15:12-13 “This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends”
 - c. bringing your entire life under submission to Christ's command
 - d. Walking in Jesus ways

2. It's about your focus

- a. Focused on ourselves - God's word does not come to fruition in our lives
- b. Focused on others - God's word flourishes in our lives
- c. You'll see the power of the HS at work in your life

3. This is God's design for a church

- a. Not writing to the pastors
- b. God never designed the ministry needs of a church to be shouldered by a few staff pastors
- c. Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another"
- d. A healthy church is to be filled with people speaking truth, teaching, admonishing, encouraging one another
- e. That is your call as a believer in a local church

4. My hope for us today

- a. That people would not sit on their hands as believers waiting to be served and leave the ministry up to the pastors, but that they would look to be proactive in their own personal ministry and serve, minister, encourage, build up, love, and pray for one another in addition to regular scheduled team service
- b. Yes be on the regular serving schedule...but also purpose in your heart to be active in love and service towards others in your daily life

5. The Thessalonians success

- a. Theological problem about the end times...some were quitting jobs...being idle
- b. Paul writes to correct it...But here is how he starts the letter
- c. 2 Thess 1:3-5 "³We ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, since your faith is flourishing and the love each one of you has for one another is increasing. ⁴Therefore, we ourselves boast about you among God's churches—about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions that you are enduring. ⁵It is clear evidence of God's righteous judgment that you will be counted worthy of God's kingdom, for which you also are suffering, "
- d. Even with a theological issue...
- e. The Thessalonians succeeded in their ministry of each other... fulfill Christ's greatest command
- f. May we be a church like they were