

“The Church”

Summary

Today, we delved into the profound significance of the church as a spiritual family. We explored how the church isn't just a building, but a living organism where each member plays a vital role. The message emphasized our connection as believers, referencing Galatians 6:10 which calls us to 'do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.' This spiritual family isn't just about receiving, but about every joint supplying strength to the whole body. We were challenged to consider our role in this family and how we contribute to its growth and health. The message also touched on the importance of forgiveness within this family, reminding us that 'a brother offended is harder to win than a strong city.' As we journey in faith, let's reflect on how we can deepen our connections within our spiritual family and contribute to its flourishing.

Main Points – The Church

Title: The Church: God's Family, School, and Mission

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the nature and purpose of the church, emphasizing its role as a spiritual family, a place for spiritual growth and maturity, and God's primary instrument for reaching the world. Dr. Jerry Williamson highlights the importance of unity among believers, the need for forgiveness and healing within the church, and the significance of each member's contribution to the body of Christ.

Key Points:

- The church is the body of Christ, a living organism where each member plays a vital role
- The church serves as a spiritual family, providing support and connection among believers
- God places spiritual gifts and ministry roles in the church to promote growth and maturity
- The church is God's primary instrument for reaching the world with the Gospel
- Forgiveness and healing are essential for maintaining unity and moving to new levels in God
- Every Christian has both a local and global call to ministry

Scripture Reference:

- Ephesians 4:11-16 (Spiritual gifts and roles in the church for maturity)
- Galatians 6:10 (Doing good to all, especially to the household of faith)
- 1 Corinthians 12:14, 26-27 (Unity and interdependence of the body of Christ)

- 2 Corinthians 5:18 (Ministry of reconciliation)

Stories:

- Dr. Jerry Williamson's personal testimony of coming to Christ as a drunk and finding support in the local church
- An anecdote about a pastor who paid off the debt of a church that had been criticizing him
- A story about meeting with a church missions committee and discovering their lack of a unified definition of missions

Small Group Study Guide – The Church

The Church - God's Design for Spiritual Family

Key Takeaways:

1. The church is not just a building or organization, but a living organism - the body of Christ.
2. Being part of a church provides spiritual family, promotes wholeness and maturity, and is God's primary instrument to reach the world.
3. Every believer has both a local and global call as part of the Great Commission.
4. Spiritual maturity is not the end goal, but a means to fulfill our mission as Christians.
5. Forgiveness and unity within the church body are crucial for spiritual growth and effectiveness.

Discussion Questions:

1. How has your understanding of "church" changed after hearing this message?
2. Dr. Jerry Williamson emphasizes the church as a spiritual family. How have you experienced this in your own life? What challenges have you faced in viewing the church this way?
3. Discuss the concept of "every joint supplieth" (Ephesians 4:16). How are you contributing to the body of Christ? Are there areas where you feel you could be more involved?
4. The sermon mentions the five-fold ministry gifts (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher). How have you seen these different gifts operate in the church? Why is a balance of these gifts important?
5. How does understanding your dual call (local and global) impact your view of your role in the church and in missions?
6. Reflect on a time when you were hurt by someone in the church. How did you handle it? What did you learn from that experience?

Practical Applications:

1. Identify one way you can contribute more actively to your church family this week. (e.g., serving in a ministry, reaching out to a fellow member, etc.)

2. Spend time in prayer, asking God to reveal any unforgiveness or offense you may be harboring towards someone in the church. Follow the steps outlined in the sermon to forgive and bless that person.

3. Research and learn more about the five-fold ministry gifts. Reflect on how you might be operating in one or more of these areas.

4. Consider how you can participate in both local outreach and global missions. Make a plan to get involved in at least one local and one global initiative this year.

5. Practice the "ministry of presence" this week by being intentional about attending church services and small group meetings, recognizing the spiritual impact your presence can have on others.

6. Write a note of encouragement to someone in your church family, expressing appreciation for how they contribute to the body of Christ.

Discussion Questions – The Church

How does viewing the church as a spiritual entity rather than just a physical building or organization change our perspective and engagement with it?

In what ways can we cultivate a stronger sense of spiritual family within our local church, and how might this impact our personal growth and the church's overall mission?

How can we better understand and appreciate the different roles within the five-fold ministry (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) in our church community?

What are some practical ways we can contribute to the church's mission of reaching both our local community and the world at large?

How can we balance the pursuit of spiritual maturity with actively fulfilling our mission as Christians?

In what ways can we foster an environment of forgiveness and healing within our church family, especially when dealing with offenses from fellow believers?

How does the concept of 'every joint supplying' challenge us to be more active participants in our church community?

What are some potential dangers of isolating ourselves from church community, and how can we encourage those who feel they don't need church?

How can we better appreciate and benefit from the 'ministry of presence' in our church gatherings?

In what ways can we support and uplift our church leaders, especially during times of transition or sabbatical?

Scriptures – The Church

Here are the [scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon](#):

Explicitly Mentioned:

1. Matthew 12:46 and Mark 3:33 - Jesus identifying his spiritual family
2. Galatians 6:10 - Doing good to everyone, especially believers
3. 1 Corinthians 12:14, 26-27 - The body having many parts, suffering/rejoicing together
4. Ephesians 4:11-16 - Christ giving apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers
5. 2 Corinthians 5:18 - Ministry of reconciliation
6. Proverbs 18:19 (alluded to) - "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city"

Alluded to or Thematically Relevant:

1. Acts 2:42-47 - Early church fellowship and growth
2. Romans 12:4-5 - Many members in one body
3. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 - Unity and diversity in the body
4. Hebrews 10:24-25 - Not forsaking assembling together
5. Matthew 28:19-20 - The Great Commission
6. John 17:20-23 - Jesus' prayer for unity among believers
7. Ephesians 2:19-22 - Being built together as God's household
8. 1 Peter 2:9-10 - Believers as a chosen people, royal priesthood
9. Matthew 6:14-15 - Forgiving others
10. Luke 6:27-28 - Loving and blessing enemies
11. Colossians 3:12-14 - Putting on love and forgiving one another

The sermon touched on many biblical themes related to the nature and purpose of the church, spiritual gifts, unity, forgiveness, and the believer's role in both local and global ministry.

Devotional – The Church

Here's a 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional:

Day 1: The Church as Spiritual Family

Reading: Ephesians 2:19-22

Devotional: Today's reading reminds us that as believers, we are part of God's household - a spiritual family. Just as the sermon emphasized the importance of unity and connection within the church, Paul paints a picture of believers being built together into a dwelling place for God. Reflect on your place within your local church. How can you contribute to strengthening the bonds of fellowship? Consider reaching out to someone in your church family today, offering encouragement or support. Remember, your presence and participation matter more than you may realize.

Day 2: Growing in Spiritual Maturity

Reading: Ephesians 4:11-16

Devotional: The passage today outlines God's design for spiritual growth within the church. As we heard in the sermon, God has placed various gifts and roles within the church to help us mature in faith. Take a moment to consider your own spiritual journey. Are you actively seeking growth? How are you allowing others to speak into your life and challenge you? Pray for openness to learn from those around you, and ask God to reveal areas where you can step into greater maturity. Remember, spiritual growth isn't just for personal benefit, but equips us to better serve others and fulfill God's mission.

Day 3: The Ministry of Reconciliation

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Devotional: Today's Scripture highlights our calling as ambassadors for Christ, entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. The sermon reminded us that every believer has both a local and global call to share God's love. How are you living out this calling in your daily life? Consider the relationships and environments where God has placed you. Are there opportunities to be a peacemaker or to share the hope of Christ? Ask God for courage and wisdom to represent Him well, remembering that He has already reconciled us to Himself through Christ.

Day 4: Overcoming Offense

Reading: Proverbs 18:19 and Matthew 5:23-24

Devotional: These verses address the challenging topic of offense and reconciliation within close relationships. As we were reminded in the sermon, offense between brothers can be particularly difficult to overcome. Reflect on your own relationships within the church family. Is there any unresolved hurt or offense that you've been holding onto? Remember, forgiveness is not just a suggestion but a command from Christ. Take time to pray, asking God to soften your heart and give you the strength to forgive. If needed, make a plan to seek reconciliation, knowing that unity in the body of Christ is a powerful testimony to the world.

Day 5: The Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit

Reading: Acts 1:8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Devotional: Today's passages remind us of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers and the church. The sermon touched on the transformative power experienced in corporate worship and the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Reflect on your own experience of the Holy Spirit's presence. How have you seen His power at work in your life and in your church community? Take time to pray, inviting the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh and to manifest His gifts through you for the benefit of others. Remember, we are called not just to be recipients of God's power, but channels of His love and grace to a world in need.