

Reflecting on Myth #1:
***Christianity is about my personal relationship with God,
so I don't really need the church.***

Sunday, July 18, 2021

Introduction: This week, we seek to debunk a common myth about the church, namely that because Christianity is about a personal relationship with God, individuals don't need the church.

The Biblical counter to this claim comes in two parts:

1. In the New Testament, there is no expression of the universal church outside the local church.

(1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 8:1; Gal 1:13; Eph 3:10)

2. In the New Testament, salvation into the family of God and connection to the body of Christ are one and the same. (Eph 5:25-30; 1 Cor 12:12-27)

– When God saves someone, he saves them into a community, into a church (Eph 5:25-30)

– One can never become what God intends for them without the body of Christ

(1 Cor 12:12-27)

Discussion Starters:

1. Our first myth is, "Christianity is about my personal relationship with God, so I don't really need the church." What parts of this myth are true? What parts of this myth are false?

2. In this week's message, we consider that the traditional understanding of the universal church and the local church is flawed. Most Christians see them as very distinct, such that a person can be a part of one, but not part of the other. The New Testament, through its use of the term for church (*ἐκκλησία*) makes it clear that there is no universal church outside the local church. How does reality this sit with you? Why does this distinction matter?

3. Through two images for the church—the bride of Christ and the body of Christ—the New Testament affirms that each believer is placed into the church at salvation. What makes this "placement" arguably more complicated for 21st century believers than for their first century counterparts? How can these complications be overcome?

4. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul compares the body of Christ with the human body to address the claim that individual parts don't need the whole (e.g., the eye doesn't need the hand, the head doesn't need the feet, etc.). While it is clear that all parts of the human body depend on one another and work together, why do individual churchgoers often convince themselves they don't need to commit to a local body of believers?

5. What are ways that the church (i.e., the people, not the building) can mutually encourage and influence spiritual health? How has this happened in your life recently?

6. What other myths about the church do you hope the series will include? **Note:** If you come up with any good ones, please submit them to Pastor Pete. (He has planned four weeks, but will consider adding one or two if necessary!)