

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.
Sunday January 12, 2020. "Gathering. Vision series"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II Sunday.

This Sunday we started a new series that we do every year called; ***"I Love My Church"***. We've done this series for the past several years, but we have a lot of new people here, and as many church experts say; "vision leaks". Even us regular people forget what we're supposed to be about, we drift in our understanding and commitment to being the church. And as ALL churches do, we slide into institutionalism, and we turn inward and care more about taking care of our own than we do reaching the world for Christ. So an annual revisit to our core values is a way to realign our hearts, minds, and all that we do with what Jesus intended when he started this movement over 2,000 years ago.

A little 'setting a foundation' for you.

So, what does the church mean to you?

How do you see the church doing well following the teachings of Jesus?

Where do you see the church struggle in following the teachings of Jesus?

We started the message with the realization, and graphs that show church attendance and membership has declined over the past several years. And people have said that church just isn't relevant anymore. That church doesn't have anything to say in their lives. Now it would be really easy to just dismiss these criticisms as people not having the desire to follow Jesus, and this most likely true in some cases. Living fully as Jesus said; *"laying down our life and picking up the cross daily"*. Many of us who attend church regularly don't even do this fully. But we have to admit and own that the church has to hold some of the responsibility for the decline in attendance. We have to ask.

Do we represent Christ well?

Do we live compelling lives that would draw others towards Jesus?

To enter into this series we want to live lives that show we are for people. Paul told us in **Romans 8:31** that God is *"for us"*, and gave up everything for us, so we have to honestly ask ourselves; are we *"for"* others in the same way that God is *"for us"*.

So we rolled out an additional understanding to our current theme *"Fill the City"* the phrase **#ForLaGrange**. We want the people in our community to know AND feel, that we are *"for"* them in the same way God is *"for"* us.

Our first value is; **Gathering**- *a loving community of diverse people regularly coming together with others who are at different places in their spiritual journey but who are searching.*

Our primary scripture was **Colossians 3:10-17**, which gave us what a community looks like when they gather. Then Kal talked about the specific things that happen when we gather that produce the community described in Colossians. So read that passage and we'll ask some questions.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did you notice about what the early 'church', this Jesus movement looked like?

Kal then said there were eight things that should happen when people gather for the purpose of seeking God. These are.

1. Shared lessons.

We're all learning things we get to share with each other. If we believe and are *'for each other'*, then we need each other to share wisdom and experiences with each other to help each of us grow.

2. Shared burdens.

This is the greatest strength the church has. Bear one another's burdens. **Galatians 6** tells us to do this because it; *"fulfills the law of Christ"*. It's being there for each other so we're never alone.

3. Shared resources.

Acts 2; *"and they all sold their stuff and gave to one another as they had need"*. We all have things, skills, talents, can help support and care for each other when we're struggling.

4. Shared support.

Ecclesiastes 4 says; *"A cord of three strands is not easily broken"*. There are so many times we have to pull together, be there for one another as simply a presence, just doing life.

5. Shared sacrifices.

Church doesn't work when some people aren't pitching in to help. Church only works when EVERYONE pitches in and gives towards the work. We ARE the body and all the parts are important.

6. Shared faith.

Sometimes we don't have the...faith, confidence, etc. to hold us in place during tough times in our life. We just are experiencing things in life that are disrupting our ability to believe. We need the faith of people who are at a better place than we are. And people who we can walk with and help bring along.

7. Fun.

Bottom line is church has to be fun. This is hard work...really hard work. Church requires sacrifices, heavy commitment, and more. We find deep abiding joy in **Gathering** when we roll up our sleeves.

8. Shared remembrances.

We Gather because as a community, family, have to have shared sacred moments. The experience of communion, baptisms, and worship help remind us as a community why we do what we do.

This first core value of **gathering** reminds us we weren't designed to do life alone. We just can't thrive without community. We not only need each other, but we need to pitch in to the life of the community.

So, which of the above areas of 'sharedness' can you make a greater commitment to?