

8-11-2012, COTR Texarkana

Title: Live Life Together

Purpose: Provoke people to connect to other believers at COTR.

Spiritual Truth: God wants us connected to other believers. Satan wants to isolate us.

Text: Heb 10:24-25, Pr 18:1

Topic: Local Church, Satan, Isolation, Church Family

Live Life Together

I. Introduction

A. Review: Last week

1. 2 Cor. 2:11 (NLT) [Paul called Christians to forgive one another and reconcile]
..so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes
2. Last week's message was called "An Evil Presence". It was about how satan used Judas to betray Jesus. Listen to messages @ChurchOnTheRock.org or on your iphone or Android

B. Today: **One of satan's strategies is to isolate us from other believers.**

1. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NCV) [Living life together was the norm for NT believers]
²⁴ Let us think about each other and help each other to show love and do good deeds.
²⁵ **You should not stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing, but you should meet together and encourage each other.** Do this even more as you see the day coming.
2. Proverbs 18:1 (ESV) [Proverbs is a book of principles for a happy life]
¹ Whoever **isolates himself** seeks his own desire; (NIV) he defies all sound judgment.
3. We can live in community with other believers, i.e. local church, or in isolation.
4. In my 32 years of ministry I've observed that believers who are vitally connected to a local church have a more vibrant, productive spiritual life than those who don't.
5. **Spiritual Truth: God wants us connected to other believers. Satan wants to isolate us.**

C. **1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)** Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around **like a roaring lion** looking for someone to devour.

1. Video: Lions attack their prey when they're alone. The herd rescues and protects.

D. Title: **Live Life Together**

E. Purpose: **Provoke people to connect to other believers at COTR.**

II. Satan tries to isolate us from other believers in the local church. He uses:

A. Conflict...real or imagined

1. Acts 15:36-40 (NLT) ...Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's...visit each city where we previously preached...to see how the new believers are doing." ³⁷ Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. ³⁸ But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them... ³⁹ **Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated...**
 - a. Churches split and people leave because of conflicts.

B. Offenses...We get hurt, disappointed or wounded by other Christians.

1. Proverbs 18:19 (NLT) **An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city.** Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars.
 - a. I have a friend, a worship leader, who was hurt and quit church 20 years ago.
 - b. Church would be great if it wasn't for people.

- C. **Busyness...** I have a friend at COTR that I've been trying to get together with for 6 months.
- D. **Past bad experiences in church...** therefore, we come to the church building but are isolated from the church members.
 - 1. We're unwilling to make a commitment to another church.
 - 2. We're unwilling to open our heart again at a deep level.
 - 3. Sometimes it's easier to love at a distance than up close.
- E. **Personal sin; rebellion...** I don't want accountability. My life is my business. Nobody tells me what to do.
- F. **Flawed theology.** We believe more in American individualism than the Body of Christ.
- G. **Whatever the reason, if satan can isolate us he can destroy us and the people close to us.**
 - 1. When I was in Japan I went to 4 Christian groups. I had a crisis of faith for a month or so. Nobody came looking for me because I wasn't committed anywhere.
 - 2. If you cut off a body part it dies; if a Christian is isolated we begin to die spiritually.

III. The Benefits of being a part of a church family

- A. **Friends who share your Christian values.**
 - 1. COTR mission/ vision: *We make disciples by* Connecting people to God, **Friends**, Ministry and the World.
 - 2. This is why we offer the Connect class, café snacks SAM, Wed meal, Life Groups...
 - 3. You can find friends through the "Ministry Guide".
- B. **A spiritual covering**
 - 1. Hebrews 13:17 (NLT) Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. **Their work is to watch over your souls**, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.
- C. **An opportunity for spiritual growth**
 - 1. If you're around worldly people you'll be worldly. If you're around people who read the Bible, worship, pray and serve God you'll grow spiritually.
- D. **An opportunity for significance** as we work together to reach people for Jesus.
 - 1. Matthew 28:19 (NIV) **...go and make disciples of all nations...**
 - 2. A spiritual synergy takes place. We can do more together than on our own.
- E. **Testimonies about "Living Life Together" at COTR:**
 - 1. A young boy and his dad come to Texarkana after a divorce with nothing. The church helps them meet Christ and build a new life.
 - 2. A young man in ministry goes through a tragedy and gets healed so he can enter ministry again.
 - 3. A group of our friends hears God's call to Africa to evangelize and help the poor. They sacrifice time and invest money to go. Others donate money to help them go.
 - 4. A woman starts coming after a painful divorce, takes time to heal and then starts a ministry that has impacted 40+ nations.
 - 5. A man starts a ministry for inner city kids, disciples them and helps some go to college and into the ministry.
 - 6. A family that has a child battling a life threatening disease has dozens of people committed to pray and encourage them.
 - 7. A woman carrying the scars of multiple abortions finds healing and peace.
 - 8. People go to the Homeless Shelter or the Housing Projects to feed people and show the love of Christ because Jesus said, "when I was hungry you fed me."
 - 9. People of different skin color come to see if people different from them really care.
 - 10. A homeless person comes to see if people will love him even though he doesn't have any \$. They do. His life begins to change.

11. A 20 year old is deciding what to do with her life. Friends help her go to a ministry training experience and she accepts God's call to full time ministry.
12. Hundreds of children and teenagers learn about Jesus and the Bible week after week. They grow up to serve the Lord instead of living for themselves.
 - a. This is what church is all about. This is what can happen when people "Live Life Together".

IV. I don't go to church just for me; I go for you

A. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NCV) Let us think about **each other** and help **each other** to show love and do good deeds. ²⁵ You should not stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing, but you should meet together and encourage **each other**...

1. Church is more than what I receive; it's an opportunity to serve the Lord by serving people. Church isn't just about me; it's about me helping you. It's about people loving kids in nurseries; serving food in the café; praying around the altar; giving clothes to somebody in need...
2. "I have a friend" who goes to church sometimes but usually goes to church in his living room chair. He is doing ok but those of us who need what the "eye, foot, thumb" has are missing out. We need each other.

V. Conclusion: Every Christian needs a Christian family.

A. Acts 4:21-31 (NIV) [Peter and John were arrested for telling people about Jesus]

²¹ After further threats they let them go... ²³ On their release, **Peter and John went back to their own people** and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God... ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

1. Peter and John weren't serving God by them self. They were connected to a family of believers that helped them face life's challenges. It's the same today.
2. We need each other. God never intended the Christian life to be lived alone.
3. When we are living life together we can face whatever tomorrow brings.

VI. Response: My dream is that our church is a place where people can find friends to live life together as we reach the world for Christ.

A. I want to invite you to be a part.

B. I want to ask you to do your part to help keep this church healthy and strong.

C. Prayer: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

D. Souls