

Why Church?

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WE ARE BEING TRANSFORMED

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MESSAGE NOTES

For we are co-workers in God's service. — 1 Corinthians 3:9

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. — 1 Corinthians 12:27

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. — 1 Peter 2:5

1. Church helps us get over ourselves and learn to love more like Jesus.

*It may seem counterintuitive, but committing yourself to a church, even if it's not perfectly fit to you (as tempting as this is), is freeing. A church community frees you from the crushing weight of self-obsession. It frees you to be part of something bigger than yourself, with people who are not like you. It frees you from the bias-confirming bubbles of only being exposed to like-minded people who always affirm but never challenge you. It frees you from the burden of being accountable only to yourself: what you believe, how you like to worship, how you interpret the Bible, how you want to live and so on. — Brett McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World**

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. — Proverbs 27:17

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. — 1 Corinthians 12:26

Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. — 1 John 3:16

*If my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison with the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness at all. ... How can I possibly serve another person in unfeigned humility if I seriously regard his sinfulness as worse than my own? — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together**

If the church isn't hard, then that's a sign you probably haven't entered deeply enough into community. Because God's deepest work in us is to teach us how to love. And love doesn't mean much until it's tested by someone who is cranky, narrow-minded, bigoted, critical and harsh. — Relevant Magazine, 11/3/2010

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

— Colossians 3:12 – 16

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2. Church is designed to showcase God's indiscriminate embrace of all people from all nations and ethnicities and backgrounds.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. — 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 5

*By the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, those early followers were galvanized into one, inseparable, indivisible, indestructible living organism — the body of which Christ is the head. They literally became members of one another, needing one another, responsible to one another as the members of a physical body are responsible and necessary to each other. Slaves and free men were in that community. Rich and poor were in that fellowship, Roman citizens and non-Roman citizens were in that community. Members of the establishment and those violently opposed to the establishment were part of that community. The intelligentsia and the illiterate were members of that community. To the utter amazement of the world outside, they were bound together in an unexplainable love and unity. — Richard Halverson, quoted in Garard & Richards, *The Book of Acts**

3. Church is where we form and maintain our greatest spiritual friendships.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, — Ephesians 2:19

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. — James 5:16

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. — Hebrews 3:13

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. — Romans 12:10 – 13

*Live in a thick web of interdependent relationships. Quietly defy the individualism that is wreaking havoc across the West. Surrender your autonomy to love. Place yourself in the constraint of community, for it is there we are set free. Give up your preferences for the sake of others. Enroll in the school of agape. When you fail a course, throw yourself upon God's mercy. Come back to the table, eat the bread, drink the wine, ingest the forgiving love of God. Repent. Repent again. And again. Risk vulnerability. We will get hurt, and we will hurt in return; that's part of facing grace. Our greatest wounds come from relationships, but so does our deepest healing. The risk is worth it. — John Mark Comer, *On Suffering Lovingly**

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DISCUSSION

- Thinking back over our “Why Church?” series, what are some highlights that stood out to you?
- How have you seen God work in your own life by participating in a local church?
- When you think of church as a community of very different people, how might we easily offend or get offended by others?
- While we can easily become disillusioned with a church, why might that actually be good for us?
- How does interacting with others in a church community help us learn to love more like Jesus?
- What are some practical ways we can live out 1 Corinthians 12:26 where it says, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”
- How could isolation from other believers seriously set us back in our own spiritual growth?
- Hebrews 3:13 says, “But encourage one another daily, ... so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” What does that mean to you? How do you apply it in your own life?
- What can churches do to help people of all ethnicities feel equally valued and loved?
- Why do you think it is so crucial to be in some sort of small group — in close affinity with other believers?
- How can close spiritual friendships make all the difference, especially when life gets hard?
- As you think about the future, what are some steps you could take to connect, love, serve, give or forgive within our church community?