

Life Is Lived in the Local Church

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The life of the church is basically this: the things that you are robbed of if you're not involved in a church is for one all the one another text from the New Testament. think about the things that are said, that we are supposed to do one with another in the context of the church, you have those that have the leadership over you.

Why is that important? Well, because God raises up men of such pastoral abilities and teaching and preaching abilities, that you are in a church, and you're able to sit in that type of, what Ephesians 4 says, these different gifts are given to the church in order to equip the saints for the ministry. And so one of the things you find, in becoming a part of a church is your actually being equipped. I really believe, think about it, where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in the midst of them.

What are you talking about? What He is talking about is this, though He be everywhere, there are places He manifests His presence in a more peculiar fashion on a more regular basis that's not to say you can't have private experiences with the Lord that are wonderful and just tremendous. As a rule, Christ is saying that where my people collectively meet together, I am going to manifest Myself to them in a way that typically is not done outside of that.

What I am wanting to emphasize there, brethren, you can listen to Paul Washer at home. Some of you ever done this? I've been in situations like this before where I've listened to a message. I can remember one that I listened to there at Piper's church and being there in person being with the people of God, having been where there is prayer, having been where your in the midst of these people, and where you have been encouraging one another and you've been able to discuss one another and talk about Christ with one another. And then the man steps up and preached. I was blown away, I felt this was one of the best messages I have ever heard in my life. Come home and off quiet somewhere I stick the audio CD in and what happened? It doesn't even sound like the same message. Well, it's because where two or three are gathered in His name something was unleashed there was a manifestation of Christ in a way that a lot of times we cannot imitate.

And I'm not saying that privately at home you can't listen to a message and be saved and you can't have some experience. But I'm saying as a rule, Christ tends to visit with that gathered church in a way that many times are very unique, very special.

The other thing you find is our spiritual gifts, our spiritual gifts we find very plainly in 1 Corinthians. You can read chapters 12, 13, & 14 the Spiritual gifts are not given to exalt ourselves, they're given to be used collectively to help one another. In fact even if you go back to Ephesians 4, listen to this "the apostles, prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, the teachers" they have been given these gifts to in turn use those gifts to equip the saints.

For what reason? For the sake of the ministry. And what does that make the ministry do? Brethren you get down to about verse sixteen in that chapter the body builds itself up in love. Brethren we, the body builds itself, you are given men in the church to equip you for ministries that help you build each other and by so doing, build the collective body up together. And that is what happens, we use our gifts, are gifts are not to be simply private, put in a napkin, held in the

closet, just enjoyed by ourselves. One of the things that we are called to do in the Christian life is by Christ giving the example to wash one another's feet. We're to serve one another. We're to love one another. We're to rebuke one another. We're to love one another fervently.

Brethren, I'll tell you this we need to bear one another's burdens. You got all these one another texts that you simply cannot live detached from the church. The Bible also says don't forsake the assembling together of yourselves. Why? Because in doing so we help stir one another up to love and good works.

Brethren, I'll tell you this, sin likes to be alone. It does. And in the church there is great accountability. When is it that you don't want to come to church? Well you it's typicality when you don't want to be confronted by people You don't want people to talk to you. You don't want people to pry. You don't want people to find out about your sin. When living together in the church there is a certain dynamic that takes place where we build up one another, we use our gifts to edify one another. We are serving on another, we are loving one another. We are able to encourage one another. We are basically able to look around, and we've got a diversity of gifts. That's one thing about being solo. Being solo you have your gift. But in the church there is a whole gambit of gifts. There is a whole collection of gifts and when we're in the church, we have access to all of them. Where when I'm just by myself, I'm just me. Or when I'm in my family, it's me and my wife, and we've got that. But when I come into this collective body, then I have this collective group of gifts.

You know, God has just added all these different people and all these different gifts. There is a uniqueness and we bear one another's burdens. We come together and we pray together. and brethren, you just can't get around this. The very ordinance of the Lord supper is meant to show us that Jesus Christ did not die for a single person. He died for a collective body and that's communion. And the very ordinance itself is set up around not despising the church. In fact those in 1 Corinthians 11 that were said, that were gathered together to take the Lord's supper, but what they were doing was actually not the Lord's supper. The reason it wasn't the Lord's supper is because they were despising the church. If you get to a place where you are despising the church, the Lord's supper becomes not what it was intended to be. Which is this, it's meant to be, "as often as you do this we're to remember Him." It's to proclaim His death until He comes, there's a remembrance there, there's a proclamation. And it is a remembrance of what Christ has done for us collectively.

So in regards to church life, in bearing one another's burdens we don't just pray for one another. I try to put our deacons on high alert to the needs of the brethren. We help brethren where we see needs. How often do we give clothes to one another and give household items to one another, and we help one another when projects come up? I mean we try to be there to love one another and to be a support for one another. and typically when someone comes along and they say, "Well, I kind of want to enjoy some of the benefits of the church, but I don't really want to join." I mean typically what I find personally when people come along like that, is they're people who want to take, but they don't want to give. And yet the life in the church is giving, giving, giving, giving. I use my spiritual gifts to give. I use my financial resources to give. Even in my prayers they are not all selfish. I'm bearing one another's burdens. I'm giving.

We have these gifts given to certain men and they give of them so that other brethren can then be equipped to then give and build up others. Brethren as we seek to love one

another, the very essence of love is God so loved the world that He did what? He gave! You can't get around it; there's no expression of true love where there is not giving. So often what happens today is we live in a world where lots of people don't like marriage, they don't like commitment and so we get people that come around and they want to take the Lord's supper, they want to hear the preaching. They want to enjoy the things, they want to receive the benefits, they want to eat the food, but they don't want to serve the food, they don't want to clean the floors, they don't want to set up the tables, they don't want to wash the brethren's feet. They don't want to be in a place where anything is expected of them.

But that isn't New Testament Christianity. And that isn't the way to lots of fruit, like John talked about. Fruit brethren! What matters? Faith working through love. That's really the issue. You want a fruitful life? Live a life with your eyes set on Christ. Just going around loving everybody. Loving in ways that are according to truth. Not in the bent and distorted ways of this world. But in ways that God really says are actually loving. That's the way to a fruitful life. And separated from the church people become isolated. People aren't accountable. That's a lot of it too, people want to receive the benefits, but they don't want to be accountable. As a member of the church, they put themselves under the scrutiny, in the eye of people. There's an accountability. They subject themselves to the discipline of the church. They submit to those who have the leadership over them.

I mean if somebody doesn't attach themselves to a church like the writer of Hebrews says, "submit yourselves to those who have the rule over you", You can't do that outside the church. In other words, to be outside the church is really to be in a place of disobedience. If you're not submitting yourself to the leadership of that church, you're in disobedience to the word of God. You can't get away from it. As Christ said to His disciples, "Follow Me". and you go off into the book of Acts and what happens? They evangelized, as soon as people were saved, instantly they planted churches. Going to write letters? Who's Paul writing to? Church at Corinth, Church at Philippi, Church at Rome, Church at Thessalonica. Or to those who are in leadership positions in a church. Timothy who was at Ephesus in the first letter. Titus who had gone to Crete. To the churches there and he was going to appoint elders there. In some letters you see it said to send greetings to the church in your house or whatever. You see throughout the whole framework of the New Testament there's an assumption: life is lived in the local church.