

Be the Church (Eph 3:10) pt 7 Why Local Churches Matter

Intro: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor

Church-Wide Prayer: Life on Mission: Love, serve & disciple people to Jesus

- Praise God - last year 2487 ppl helped! 1800 food hamper & 500 Bibles!!
- Praise God - the opportunities He's given to Be the Church in our community!
- PRAY - For each person who got F&C to experience Jesus' love through the Church
- PRAY - For rest for our WONDERFUL volunteer ministers who organized and pulled off
- PRAY - More opportunities for small groups, ppl, to serve and witness in our region
- PRAY - for upcoming BAPTISM & SET FREE - Ppl to know God ! For the Lord to call those who haven't been baptized, and/or need to go to Set Free - courage, increased faith

INTRO: what's your favorite restaurant? Why?

Was it the food? Was it the service? The atmosphere? Experience?

Example: me and Lou LOVE the Keg! Through years of trial and error – we found the right balance of cost, food, service, atmosphere and experience!

MY POINT –I think may people treat the LOCAL CHURCH like a restaurant.

We are looking for a good atmosphere. Good service. Did I get what I want? Timely? Cost? Expectations?

AND if those expectations aren't met. Or worse, if we have an actual bad experience. We simply leave and find another restaurant/church

Is it bad to have expectations? NO! in fact, you should have them! BUT – how you form those expectations MATTER. Are they formed by your own PERSONAL preference? Or by SCRIPTURE?

COMMITMENT: Church is not a restaurant. It is not a country club. It is not a sports team. It is not a service industry. The Church is GOD's FAMILY – the Bride of Christ & Jesus' Body – when we say, "YES" to Jesus – we are COMMITTING BOTH TO JESUS & HIS CHURCH.

We have established that CHURCH is important. We all need others. We can't do this alone. Jesus loves the church. YES.

But – what about the local church? CAVEAT: *Southland is not Stefan's church. Or, the boards. Or, the staffs. Or, the members! It is JESUS' Church.*

SERMON TITLE: WHY LOCAL CHURCHES MATTER

A. Individualism is incompatible with Jesus & His Church

Barna reports that 66% of churchgoing Christians report that "enjoying yourself is the highest goal of life". The number for all Americans being 84%.

Individualism: *"Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little*

society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself.” – Alexis de Tocqueville (Democracy in America)

- You can see this in our churches! The Church in the West has become less missional.

Expressive Individualism: *That term suggests not only a desire to pursue one’s own path but also a yearning for fulfillment through the definition and articulation of one’s own identity. It is a drive both to be more like whatever you already are and also to live in society by fully asserting who you are. The capacity of individuals to define the terms of their own existence by defining their personal identities is increasingly equated with liberty and with the meaning of some of our basic rights, and it is given pride of place in our self-understanding. -Yuval Levin (Fractured Republic)*

- **This WORLDVIEW’s Truth Claims:** 1. You be you! 2. Follow your heart! 3. Be true to yourself! 4. What’s true for you! 5. What’s right for you!
- **Fruits:** loneliness (increases mortality 39%!) & rising numbers in mental health

When personal happiness replaces “seek first the Kingdom of God & his righteousness” we are NO LONGER serving Jesus but a NEW Master – Individualism.

How do we combat this?

STEP 1: COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO JESUS & HIS CHURCH.

STEP 2: COMMIT YOURSELF TO A LOCAL CHURCH – A LOCAL FAMILY GATHERING

“Stop INDIVIDUALISM dead in it’s tracks” COMMIT to Jesus & the LOCAL Church

B. We NEED Local Churches

1. Protection from deception

- Scriptures teaches that our engagement is ONE KEY way to combat deception!
- **Ephesians 4:14–15 (BSB)** *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed about by the waves and carried around by every wind of teaching and by the clever cunning of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ Himself, who is the head.*

2. To experience the presence of God

- **Ephesians 2:19–22 (BSB)** *Therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In Him the whole building (universal church) is fitted together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in Him you too (local church) are being built together into a dwelling place for God in His Spirit.*
- There are aspects of KNOWING GOD that you will NOT experience UNLESS YOU ARE PART OF A LOCAL CHURCH.
- **Matthew 18:20 (BSB)** *For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them.”*
- **2 Corinthians 6:16 (BSB)** *... For we (the church) are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”*
- **We are deceived if we think we can cut ourselves off from the Church and it does not affect our relationship with God.**

3. Spiritual growth and maturity

- **You need MORE than a good PREACHER - the whole church is needed for spiritual maturity**
 - I can watch my favorite Church online! Listen to a Podcast! TRUE you can!
 - But apart from the ministry of the whole church they severely limit GROWTH!
 - **1 Corinthians 12:21 (BSB)** *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you." Nor can the head say to the feet, "I do not need you."*
 - **Example:** NFL – ALL I need is a QB! NO! or, I just like MY people – like saying, "I want an entire team of LINEBACKERS!! It would NOT work!"
 1. **This is precisely what believers encounter when they resist the LOCAL CHURCH**
 - We need EVERY gift that Jesus gave to HIS Church operating TOGETHER for the Church to be BUILT UP & for us to GROW & MATURE.
 - **1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT)** *A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.*
 - **You need MORE than your BIBLE- the whole church is needed for spiritual maturity**
 - Some people say, "All I need is the Bible and I can get all I need to direct my life and build myself up" True you can get SOME. But not ALL you need.
 - If you could get it all yourself, why would God gift some to be teachers?!
 - **Ephesians 4:11 (BSB)** *And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers*
 - We're deceived if we think that we can build up ourselves alone.
 - **Ephesians 4:15–16 (BSB)** *... From Him the whole body, fitted and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love through the work of each individual part.*
 - **Brief sample of "one another" commands:** Love one another, welcome one another, instruct one another, comfort one another, etc.
 1. **Jn 13:14, Rom 15:7, Rom 15:4, Eph 4:11, 2 Cor 13:11**
 - **MEANING:** MUCH of the grace Jesus wants to give you comes from OTHERS in the Church
 - **As you increase the number of committed and active members in the church,** the amount of ministry that can be accomplished both inside and outside the church grows exponentially!
 - **Example** Years ago, I (Stefan) walked into to my Dad's office and said: "Do you know why Four Winds Ministry is so successful?" I said, "Because I only have to do ONE thing – participants go the Hearing God, Set Free, Empower, Personal Ministry that are already running in the church – I only have to focus on my ONE area – Helping them overcome life controlling behaviors!"
 - We deceive ourselves if we think we can do it alone. Or, "me & Jesus."
- 4. Answered Prayer**
- **2 Corinthians 1:11 (BSB)** *as you HELP us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the favor shown us in answer to their prayers.*
 - **OF COURSE:** Jesus answers MANY of our prayers offered in solitude! But MANY others He waits for us to PRAY TOGETHER!
 - **Example:** Church-Wide Prayer – Prayer Summits – small groups – after service prayer – prayer ministry!
- 5. Strength to Persevere**
- **In the same way that being in community with the world will bring you DOWN to their level, so to, being in community with the church will bring you UP to their level!**
 - Jesus says bring your burdens to ME & BEAR EACH OTHERS BURDENS. To Jesus – relationship with HIM is synonymous with relationship to ONE ANOTHER. (mt 11:28-30; Gal 6:2)
 - **Galatians 6:2 (BSB)** *Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
 - **Example:** take a coal out of a fire and watch it cool. Put it back in the fire and it lights up again!

- **Martin Luther**; “At home in my house there is no warmth or vigor in one, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.”

6. Protection for Satan

- Being in the church and under authority brings spiritual protection.
- **1 Corinthians 5:1–5 (BSB)** *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is intolerable even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been stricken with grief and have removed from your fellowship the man who did this? ³ ...When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, along with the power of the Lord Jesus, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord.*
- We see that Paul had practiced this same thing himself
- **1 Timothy 1:20 (BSB)** *Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*
- **1 John 5:19 (BSB)** *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world is under the power of the evil one.*
- **How did the Corinthian church hand this man over to Satan?** Simply by putting him out of their fellowship! Those outside the church are in Satan’s realm
- Satan can still attack those IN a local church – but NOT to the same extent as those OUTSIDE the church!

7. Healthy Local Churches BENEFIT everyone

- A healthy, vibrant and growing local church directly benefits the community, which benefits us.
- *In 2017, Dr. John Longhurst wrote an article entitled, “Places of Worship and the Halo Effect” (Faith Matters column, Carillon News) In it he said that Steinbach’s places of worship are worth \$134,000,000 to the city; Winnipeg’s churches are worth \$1.5 billion! He calls this the “Halo Effect,” the value of the social, spiritual, and communal capital that places of worship contribute to their communities through various kinds of service, events and activities. The calculations come from the Halo Project Calculator, made available for cities across Canada by Cardus, a think tank based in Ontario. The study found that for every dollar spent by the congregation, about \$4.77 of common good was generated (halo effect) in areas such as open space, educational programs, magnet effect (drawing people into a community for weddings, funerals, concerts, conferences, and other events), individual impact (better employers and employees and citizens; volunteerism; etc.), and community development.*
- **Across Canada, Cardus estimates that places of worship in 19 major cities produce an economic benefit of \$19.9 billion!**
- Hillary Clinton once said, “It takes a village to raise a child.”
- Dr. Marva Mitchell countered with her book entitled, “It Takes a Church to Raise a Village!”
- **Religious service attendance is associated with greater longevity, less depression, less suicide, less smoking, less substance abuse, better cancer and cardiovascular disease survival, less divorce, greater social support, greater meaning in life, greater life satisfaction, more volunteering, and greater civic engagement.** Compared to those who never attend religious service, they have found that regular attenders have a 29% reduced risk of depression, 33% reduced risk of death, 50% reduced risk of divorce, and 84% reduced risk of suicide. I find that last statistic to be staggering due to the massive increase in suicide in recent decades. Incredibly, they have found that declining religious service attendance accounts for about 40 percent of the rise in suicide over the last 15 years. Johnny Conway – Broken yet Beautiful

C. We are called to build the Local Church

1 Corinthians 3:9 (BSB) For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 3:10–11 (BSB) By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert BUILDER, and someone else is BUILDING on it. But each one must be careful how he BUILDS. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- **ORDER:** Jesus is building, Paul is building, ALL of us our supposed to be BUILDING.

1 Corinthians 3:12–13 (BSB) If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, his workmanship will be evident, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will prove the quality of each man's work.

- **This applies to ALL members:** 1) church leadership – e.g. pastor says OT is no longer applicable because it is offensive, or makes promises in "Jesus' Name" to grow the church (prosperity & peace) 2) Church member – e.g. I don't need a church – refuse to engage and just attend, taking without giving, etc.

If we build the church properly, using authorized "materials," we will be rewarded. But if we build it using illegitimate materials we will suffer loss!

1 Corinthians 3:14–15 (BSB) If what he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as if through the flames.

(KEYS START PLAYING) If the BIBLE IS TRUE: EVERY believer is called to BUILD THE LOCAL CHURCH – AND – do so in AUTHORIZED ways!

50+ "one another" commands describe HOW we build the church.

Our communities can't be healthy unless our churches are healthy; and our church can't be healthy UNLESS each of us loves, commits, and contributes to it! IT TAKES EVERYONE IN HERE.

Will you help the Church?

SING: Who will help the Church?

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

Care@mysouthland.com

SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024

Cruise ship → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission** (Mt 28:18-20, Mt 22:37-40): Love, serve & disciple people to Jesus
2. **Next Gen** (Ps 78:7-8): Encounters with Jesus, strong mental health, boldness & belonging
3. **Israel & Persecuted Church** (Lk 21:13): Faith, fortitude & wisdom "to not waste the opportunity to share the Gospel"
4. **Heart of Prayer** (Ps 27:4): Every generation to find Jesus & learn to bring their needs to Him in prayer
5. **Church Renewal:** Directors for India and other new countries & many global disciple makers