

Why Is the Church Important to Me?

1 Thessalonians 1: 1 – 3

October 4, 2009

Every week, dozens of folks are involved in tasks great and small connected to this church. Not just on Sunday, either. And every so often, the leaders of the church will appeal to you to consider enlisting in this ministry or that. And you may think, “What’s the big deal about all this activity?” And the underlying question actually is, “What is so important about church?” I say that is likely a question you might ask, because I have asked that same question many times! And truth be told, it was a question for which I had to find a satisfactory answer before I could give my complete, sincere commitment to a local church.

First, let me say the answer is not very complicated. The short answer is that as a church we believe it is our responsibility to meet the needs of people. The most important need people have is to be introduced to Jesus Christ. We never forget that fact. But people come with many different other needs. And it is our mission to reach out to people by attempting to meet their needs.

That ought not be a surprise to you; after all, it was a need that most likely brought you here the first time. And while you may have been searching for answers, the compelling factor that kept you here was probably the fact your need – spiritual, emotional, relational – was being met in some way.

Yet I hear people ask quite often, “Why do you preachers make such a big deal about going to church? Why is it important for me to be active in a particular church?” Allow me to direct your attention to 1 Thessalonians Chapter One, Verses One through Three. Here the Apostle Paul gives a short treatise on why being involved in a church should be an important part of your life. Basically, he says the church will satisfy some needs you won’t get anywhere else. (Read) First, he says...

1. When life’s problems are bigger than I can handle alone, I need the prayer support of a church family (1 Thessalonians 1: 2).

A. The church at Thessalonika was under heavy pressure from a pagan world and the oppressive Roman government. Persecution was trying to beat them into submission.

1. They needed the prayer support of the Paul and others to stay the course.

B. When I am in the midst of the storms of life, the prayer support of my church family makes me realize I am not alone. I know with certainty that when I reach out to my fellow Christians, I have someone interceding on my behalf with the Father.

1. **Galatians 6: 2** – *“Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*

C. Now, for this need I have to be met by the church requires two things:

1. I must be honest, and let people know my life is not perfect (something most of us spend a great deal of energy and time pretending it is!).

2. I need a church that is not going to throw stones of judgement, or point out how spiritual they are and how unspiritual I am.

D. I need a spiritual family who will gather around me and support me in prayer no matter what my life's problem is.

2. I grow in faith by the Word I hear taught and preached at church – I need faith to hang on when life's unexpected turns occur (v. 3a).

A. Has your life not turned out exactly as you planned?

1. The crucial question is, what do you do in response when life takes an unexpected turn?

B. Allow me to give you a principle here: you can stand up to any unexpected development in life if you know God is preparing ahead of time the road you are about to travel.

1. To believe that requires faith, and you acquire that faith by hearing the Word of God. **Romans 10: 7** – *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of God.”*

2. Where are you going to receive the biggest dose of the Word of God if not at church?

C. God designed the church so you can be exposed to the Word of God, and therefore build your faith.

3. I need a place where I can be loved without conditions – that should be the church (v. 3b).

A. Some people go through life thinking the only kind of love existing in this world is the kind you earn. The message we often receive is, “Do this for me and I will love you.”

1. And many of us have attempted with all our might to earn that type of love.

B. And then there are some folks who say they don't need love. “What's love, but a second hand emotion?” Tina Turner plaintively asked in her hit song “What's Love Got to Do with It?”

1. “I've been there, done that; and I don't care to be hurt or taken advantage of.” So you've put up walls to keep anyone from getting too close so they won't hurt you.

C. Let me tell you what kind of love I need because I think it is also the type of love you really need: I need a place where people will love me unconditionally; and that ought to be the church.

1. You see, Christ is the head of the church, and He loves me unconditionally; and His body of believers (the church) ought to love me unconditionally.

2. **Romans 5: 6 – 8**

This world talks doom and gloom, so...

4. I need a place where people talk about hope – that ought to be the church (v. 3c).

A. Turn on the Orlando news program, and the first question we have is, “Were there any murders today?” The financial news channel has a field day reporting on the roller coaster ride on Wall Street and Main Street, and the status of the recession

(usually pessimistic).

1. You go to work, and listen to the rumors of layoffs looming, and jobs flying overseas. The most trying part of the recession is the psychological and emotional stress bearing down on each of us.

B. That is why I need a place where people speak of hope, and that place should be the church!

1. Look around this room; many here have serious, significant health issues – they ought to hear a hopeful word here.

2. Many have crises within their families – but here they ought to hear words of hope.

C. I need a place in my life where people are hopeful; that place ought to be the church.

The church is unique in this world. It is the only place where we can be surrounded by supportive, praying people who will love us, who will provide the word of God to build our faith, and speak hope into our lives. The church deserves our loyalty and support, in order that others may have the same opportunities to experience the blessings of God's family.

Let's pray!