



10 Reasons Why You NEED the Local Church 2021!

“Men, church life is critical in the life of the family. Center your family life around the church. Families who neglect church life have issues with loving like Christ and extending grace. Children do not learn how to honor imperfect leaders.” --Elder Scott Brown, *Call to Battle* Conference

Text: Matthew 16: 13-18...A Review

- Back in 2006, I asked my church a series of questions:
 1. Why should you care about the church?
 2. Why should you connect in covenant to the local church?
 3. Why should you devote so much of your time, talent and treasure to the church?
 4. Can't you just listen to sermons online, sing a few songs at home, and call it a day?
- The answer: **Because “Kingdom” flows through the church! Yes through family as well, but the church is made up of families, and God calls us to come together for His glory!**
- This may sound extreme to some, but here is what we believe:
 1. Biblically, there is only one organization more significant in the life of a believer than the local church and one only: your **family**.
 2. Every believer is part of the “universal” or “invisible” church, but based on the New Testament, Christ never meant for that truth to birth a generation of uncovered, uncommitted Christians!
 - a. In Scripture there are 109 references to the local church and less than 10 about the “universal” church.
 - b. The local church is the expression or manifestation of Christ's flock.
 - c. The belief that a Christian “can just worship at home” without being connected to a local church is baloney! We don't see a shred of this mindset in the New (or Old for that matter) Testament!
 3. Most people have NO IDEA how significant the local church is, and many pastors are afraid to tell them because of how it might sound. That's why it's so easy for them to “forsake the assembling,” or be loosely connected to the Church of Christ. (Heb 10:25)

First, what is the Church?

- In Matthew 16:18 we read the first use of the Greek word *ekklēsia* in the NT, which is translated *church*. It literally means “a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church.” (Strong's)
- **In our Text, we see both the nature of the church (called out, which includes separate, holy living apart from the world) and mission of the church (to advance on and push back the kingdom of darkness), which includes preaching the Gospel, making disciples, battling devils, and upholding and making great the Name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God!**

Upon this Rock?

1. Verse 18 has been subject to lots of controversy for centuries.
2. Some say that Peter (Petros) is the rock (petra); others (including me) believe that Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built.

- **1Co 10:4** *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*
 - **1Co 3:11** *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
3. Recently, I read of another view. Geographically, Christ was in Caesarea Philippi, which stood at the foot of Mount Hermon in the region of Bashan. To make a very long story short, this region was a center of the pagan worship of Baal (and later Pan), associated with the realm of the dead (hades), and according to Scripture and Jewish tradition, was the place where fallen angels descended in their rebellion against God, took human wives, and produced the Nephilim (giants, Gen 6:1-4, Josh 12:4-5).
 4. In this view, the first century Jewish mind would understand that Christ was, in effect, declaring open war on “the gates of hell” right on the devil’s doorstep! It would be like saying, “On this “rock” where Satan now rules, I’ll build my church!”
 5. Admittedly, my normal view is “safer,” but the implications here are staggering.

“Church thoughts” from the Text:

1. Jesus is the Rock or Cornerstone of the church.
 - **Eph 2:19-20 (KJV)** *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*
 - The church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, who preached the “Rock” of Christ!
 - So it’s not the pastor, buildings, vision statements, etc.; it’s Christ! How can you be committed to Christ and not His Body?
2. Jesus builds and is still building the church!
 - What is Christ building? The Church! He is building His CHURCH! Please think through the connection between church and family!
 - Fathers and mothers disciple their children and godly singles walk in righteousness...as we all steward our money, preach the gospel, make disciples, use our gifts, etc...the Church is built...and she is built POWERFULLY!
 - Friends, when we connect with the church, we connect with that Christ said He’d build. There is no way to miss this!
3. Since He is building it, Jesus **protects** and **advances** His church against the kingdom of darkness!
 - Sheep are vulnerable without a shepherd. There are wolves out there!
 - *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” **Act 20:28-30 (KJV)***
 - He didn’t say “the gates of hell won’t prevail against your job, or even you as an individual. He said it won’t stand against the “ekklesia,” the church....the “called out ones.”
4. By extension then, Jesus anchors, gives purpose to, grows, and prospers us through the church!
 - This mindset smacks hard against American individualism, but it is still true. **God made us to be interdependent...self-governors to be sure, but also a part of a Body of Believers.**

- Again, in the New Testament, you were either a baptized part of a local body or you were not a Christian. The two went together.
- In the New Testament, to be removed from a local body was to be excommunicated and “delivered to Satan.” (1 Corinthians 5)

10 Reasons Why You Need the Local Church...again a Review!

1. You need the local church because the local church is God's **plan!**

- a. Remember, Christ “gave Himself” for the church! (Eph 5:25)
- b. He wants each member of His Body to be a part of the local expression of the church. He didn't die so we could “take or leave” the Body of Christ!
- c. This first reason is enough. God commands us to gather together (Heb 10:24-25) with other believers under the authority of pastors/elders (Eph 4:11-12).

2. You need the local church to come under the protection and authority of godly **elders.**

- a. *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."* **Heb 13:17 (KJV)**
- b. EVERYBODY NEEDS A PASTOR! ☺ Remember, this structure is God's design.
- c. We all know about abusive pastors. What we don't talk much about people's abuse of the church. In the New Testament, there was no church shopping/hopping. You could not just change churches based on carpet color, programs, our building newness!

3. You need the local church to grow as a **disciple of Jesus.**

- a. God places godly teachers in His church to instruct and equip His people: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"* **Eph 4:11-12 (KJV)**
- b. And btw, church attendance is a key to discipleship. As a matter of fact, in the first century, it would have been unheard of for a true follower of Christ to be disconnected from the church. It was a priority!
- c. This is much harder in our day. Is the local church a priority for you?

4. You need the local church to participate in the corporate worship of God and the **sacraments.**

- a. In both Old and New Testaments, we see God's desire that His people would come together for worship:
- b. *Psa 107:32 ESV* *Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*
- c. *Act 2:46-47 ESV* *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*
- d. The context of communion and baptism was also corporate. (1 Cor 11:17-34; Acts 2:38-41)

5. You need the local church because through it, you take part in God's eternal plan to rescue fallen **humanity! (Matt 28:18-20)**

- a. Through the church “context” is where most of us disciple others!
- b. Don't believe me? Imagine you are discipling a friend in your home or on a break at work (I pray you are!). What is your recommendation for him or her on a Sunday morning? What about their gifts? Where are they being used? What about authority and accountability to elders? How do you have any credibility whatsoever if you read

- Scripture with them but you yourself aren't committed to a local body?
- c. As you are taught, you teach others. This was God's idea.
6. **You need the local church to discover and use your spiritual gifts.**
 - a. To the local church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*" (1 Cor 12:7)
 - b. Peter says to the local churches, "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.*" (1 Pet 4:10)
 - c. This is why everyone must serve. EVERYONE MUST SERVE. (See the third leg of our discipleship triangle)
 - d. Serving and Sanctification are proportional. The less you serve the less you grow.
 7. **You need the local church to learn to love one another.**
 - a. Note that this point says "learn to love." Given our total depravity at birth, love isn't natural. It is first given by the Spirit (Rom 5:5), and then must be practiced.
 - b. The apostle John wrote: "*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*" **1Jn 3:17-18 (KJV)**
 - c. Pastor Mark Dever says, "Do you want to know that your new life (in Christ) is real? Commit yourself to a local group of saved sinners. Try to love them. Don't just do it for three weeks. Don't just do it for six months. Do it for years. You'll find out whether you love God."
 8. **You need the local church for the loving accountability it provides.**
 - a. A healthy church is where we have the Gospel "clarified" for us, and where our Christianity is tested as fake or authentic and our sin challenged. (1 Cor 4-6)
 - b. *Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove (correct or tell a fault), rebuke (censure; charge), and exhort (lift up; comfort), with complete patience and teaching.* (2Ti 4:2 ESV)
 - c. Most churches are either weak in church discipline/accountability or have taken this wonderful aspects of church ministry too far. May the LORD give us balance!
 9. **You need the local church to consistently learn the grace of giving.**
 - a. Many people use very spiritual sounding reasons for not joining a local church, but if you peel back enough layers, you'll many times find a dollar! "Joining" to so many means "now I'm expected to give."
 - b. And that is true! The local church is indeed where you learn to the grace of giving outside your own home. We should give out of **love** (Jn 3:16), **cheerfully** (2 Co 9:7), **regularly** (1 Co 16:2), according to our **ability** (1 Co 16:2), at times sacrificially (2 Co 8:3), and in faith (Phil 4:19) that we may "reap bountifully" (2 Co 9:6).
 - c. At CRCC, tithing is a **model** rather than a **mandate**. ...a good budgetary mark with historical precedent, not a New Testament command.
 10. **You need to the local church to experience the encouragement of Christian fellowship.**
 - a. Dear friends, isolation is so destructive and runs counter to apostolic teaching.
 - b. Satan loves to get Christians in a corner alone and beat on them. One of the most common tricks is this...mark it well!
 - c. Consider when a Christian begins to struggle: falls into sin, has a marriage or child issue, a financial issue, or simple begins to rebel. The church, if it is healthy, tries to help. If the help offered is either unsuccessful or the done wrongly (churches make mistakes!), the Christian withdraws. This almost never works out for the good of either the Christian or his/her church! Don't isolate yourself!

- d. Paul said it best when he writes to the local church at Thessalonica:

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1Th 5:11-18 (KJV)

May this sort of commitment to the LORD's local church mark CRCC as we go forward together. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Applications for Edification (Building Up) and Encouragement (Rom 14:19; Eph 4:9; 1 Thes 5:11; Jude 1:20)

1. Spend some time in family worship talking about what your local church means to you.
2. Have you truly built your family life around the church and the things of God? Be honest!
3. Jesus said "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" His Church. How does that make you feel?
4. What are you actively doing to build up the local church?
5. What other adjustments can you make to be a better church member?