

Living Life on Purpose – To Belong | 2/3/19

- Introduction
 - Last week we looked at the importance and relation between belief, faith, and repentance for salvation.
 - This lesson is focused on what it means “To Belong” which is fellowship and interaction with other Christians specifically through the church.
 - We will look at the importance of this in the life of the believer and the benefits obtained.
- **As Christians, we are members of the household of God.**
 - Being a Christian does not limit our relationship to ONLY God.
 - **While we each have a unique “personal” relationship with Him, this is not the ONLY relationship we have.**
 - Being a Christian means that we are now members of the household of God and are part of His family.
 - **God did not intend for us to live our lives in a cave and to shun the world, but instead to come together with other believers for the purposes of God.**
 - Ephesians 2:19-21
 - “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, **but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the lord.”
 - We are no longer strangers, but we are all members of the same whole, we all belong to God’s Kingdom and have citizenship there.
 - Philippians 3:20
 - "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,"
 - Just as we are all citizens of the United States by being saved, we are also citizens of heaven.
 - Heaven is our real home, to live an eternity with other believers with Jesus.
 - **But while we are here on earth, before we are called home, God desires that we come together with other believers.**
 - The earliest church understood this truth, and they lived it out. The results of doing this was a massive outbreak of spiritual revival and thousands came to know Christ.
 - Acts 2:41-42
 - “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. **And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**
 - Acts 2:47b
 - “...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
 - **Being part of God’s household also means that we are part of God’s family**
 - Perhaps no greater proof that we are not called to go it alone is that Christians are all members of the family of God.
 - “Ephesians 4:4-7
 - “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law,

so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

- Romans 9:8
 - "This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring."
- 1 John 3:1a
 - "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we would be called children of God;
- **A family is there for one another, a family supports one another, and a family loves one another. This is how we are to treat our fellow brethren.**
 - John 13:35
 - "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - This was a specific commandment for Christians to show love to fellow Christians.
- God does not want us to go it alone. God wants us to enjoy and contribute to our Christian family. None of us are required to go through life alone. We are called to help and support one another.
- **Being part of God's household also means that we have unity.**
 - **This unity is vitally important, and Jesus even prayed that we would have it.**
 - John 17:11
 - "And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father keep them in your name, which you have given me, **that they may be one, even as we are one.**"
 - **This unity gives evidence and proof to the unbelievers in who Christ is.**
 - John 17:21
 - "that they **may all be one**, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**"
 - The early church had this unity
 - Acts 4:32
 - "Now the full number of those **who believed were of one heart and soul**, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common."
 - **This is a spiritual union, not a command for a single physical church or denomination.**
- Why do you think God intended for us to have relationships with fellow believers? Would it be "better" if we just sealed ourselves off in a cave to keep us out of the sinful world?
- If you took the path of being a monk or a nun, what part of the Christian life would you have missed?
- Do you think there are adverse effects on someone who always "goes it alone"?
- Christ established the church as a way for Christians to come together to do the work that God has called us too.
 - What then is the biblical meaning of the word "church"?

- **Today, if someone says, "Where, is your church?"** the common answer is the church name or physical location because people equate "church" to a building or place of worship.
- **In the Bible, the Greek word for the New Testament church is "ekklesia" which means "those called out" or an "assembly."**
 - **When applying this to Christians, it is those who are true believers that gather together. It is the people.**
- So "church" is not the physical building, but it is a group of true Christian believers who gather together for the purposes of God.
- **There is a Universal or Invisible church.**
 - **All Christians regardless of their denomination or the name on their church building are part of the universal or invisible church.**
 - It is invisible because only God knows its boundaries, only God knows who the actual members are.
 - 2 Timothy 2:19a
 - "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: **The Lord knows** those who are his,"
 - A true Christian can be a member of the universal church but not necessarily be associated with a specific local congregation.
 - We are saved by grace through faith, NOT our church membership.
- **There is a local church**
 - This local church is of course what we commonly think of as "our church," it is the place that we assemble with other believers to worship God.
 - The local church can be made up of true Christians (part of the universal church) and those who are lost.
 - The local church is, of course, biblical and was established by Christ.
 - It is essential for Christians to attend and participate.
 - A local church can be of any size, even one in the home.
 - Philemon 2
 - "and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house."
 - Colossians 4:15
 - "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house."
- **Can someone be a Christian and not be a regular participant or member of a church?**
- **Reasons to fellowship with other believers at a local church**
 - **To come together with fellow believers to worship and praise God.**
 - This is the primary and most important function of the church.
 - It is not purely a social club for us to hang out with friends (though social is an essential component), it is primarily for us to come together to worship Christ.
 - **To learn, to grow and become more spiritually mature through worship and sermon.**
 - We must all spend personal time in prayer and study of the Scriptures, but this does not replace the necessity for us to come together as a group to hear a message from the Word of God brought by our pastor.
 - **When we come to church to worship and praise God, there is no question that the Holy Spirit is present.**
 - He is here as we sing out praises, He is here when we hear from the Word of God.

- It is vital that we frequently make sure that worship and hearing from the Scriptures is a regular and frequent part of our lives.
- **This is one of the ways that we grow and become more spiritually mature.**
 - If we rarely do any personal study, if we rarely praise and worship, if we rarely attend church how can we possibly expect to grow?
 - To be a Christian is a lifelong process of learning and growing in our maturity.
- **What are other benefits for a Christian to regularly attend church to hear a sermon and to participate in praise and worship? What impact has this had on you?**
- **To learn, to grow and become more spiritually mature through a small group.**
 - Small groups are an essential way for us to get plugged into a church and learn more academically and also engage in social relationships.
 - Academically
 - There is only so much that can be covered in a once a week 35-minute sermon, Christians need MORE than this.
 - Both Sunday school and Wednesday night classes are designed so that we can learn more about the Bible through in-depth study and discussion.
 - Most classes will take **an in-depth look into the Scriptures** so we can have a better understanding of meaning, historical context and how the books of the Bible work together.
 - The Sunday morning sermon is designed for us to hear, listen and learn, but we cannot engage in discussion.
 - In small groups, these are **prime for discussion** so that we can learn from one another by hearing from the experiences and perspectives of others.
 - Socially
 - If we only come to the primary service on Sunday mornings and we run in and out, this leaves very little time to build relationships with other believers.
 - Small groups provide a more significant opportunity for us to get to know other believers and establish relationships.
 - These relationships are significant in our Christian lives.
 - **What impacts has attending a small group had upon you as opposed to a time where you never or rarely visited?**
 - **Do you think they are beneficial in one's spiritual growth and to build relationships?**
- To serve
 - Another significant reason why Christians are called to come together in a church is to serve.
 - Serving and loving others is vitally important to the Christian as it is one of our primary duties.
 - Christ uses His church as a method to show love and spread the Gospel to the world. He calls us together so that we can serve in the ways in which He has planned for us.
 - On our own, we find it more challenging to find ways to serve and help others, but the church gives us so many opportunities.

- At times we find it hard to put ourselves out there to serve, but when we have the help and support of other believers, this makes it much more comfortable.
- **Do you think the church has had a positive impact in providing you with opportunities to serve God?**
- **How has the influence of other believers attributed to this?**
- **What kind of impact has attending New Site (or church in general), had on you?**
- **What is your favorite thing about being a part of His church?**