

Getting Connected

Taking the steps that are needed to become connected to the body can at first seem to be a hard and difficult task. Stepping out in faith to embrace the changes in our walk with God can bring us to a point where we are stepping out of our comfort zone to meet new people. In truth it's often that our redemptive end will come at the expense of our own satisfaction and comfort.

When seeking God's will in our life we look for a map that will show us in advance every step we are to take. God would like to show us that map, but the reality of the situation is it wouldn't go well for us. Because if God was to show us the whole map, our own (human) insecurity would hinder us from moving forward. So God is patient with us and simply ask us to take one step at a time.

During this time of transformation I want to encourage you to narrow your view just to the first few steps.

You can start with small steps like volunteering for activities that are announced during your local church announcements. If you believe you are being called to do more, then you may want to take a bit of a bigger step. You can ask to join the church within it's small life groups or ask to serve in a different way that may be needed at your church.

What is the next step for you? Do you believe God may be directing that step? If so why?



Going Forward

When seeking away to be more spiritually involved within Christ's body (the church) it will take us getting off the couch and stepping out among the fellowship of other believers.

God is looking for us to worship in spirit and truth. We should be worshipers who will worship in more places than the altar of the television. Like anything living; the life of our faith requires the right atmosphere to grow, mature, and to bear fruit.

Let us not hesitate to step out in faith among other believers. Connection to the foundation of our belief Jesus, will also bring us in connection with his body the church.

God's will in our life may not always show itself as an open door. Stepping out of our own comfort may be the door that we need to close before God will open another door in it's place. God had done this for Paul in Acts. (Acts 16:6-9)

God will instruct us in the way we should go.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with the bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trust in the LORD, mercy shall surround him."

Psalms 32:8-10

God has given us a lamp (his word) to help us righteously determine our next step. He has given us His spirit to guide us. Through His sacrifice Jesus; He has given us an example how to live our life and has given us Christ's body (the church) to draw near as we embrace His loving warmth.



The Least of These Ministries
"A Works of Mercy Ministry"

ATTENDING CHURCH

In Short:

- The church is a gathering of believers
- Being connected to the church is being connected to the body of Christ

The Christian Assembly

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching."

Hebrews 10: 23-25

Christians assembled as churches for fellowship, instruction, worship, and to carry out the Great Commission

(Great Commission: Bringing the gospel message to others.)

Attending church is not about residing in a building, but residing within an assembly of other believers. Assembling with other believers we often experience the overwhelming power of God's spirit in the church assembly itself. When attending church we can find comfort, refuge, sanctuary, solace, purpose, and a welcoming since of friends and family.

What kind of experience do you have when attending church? When has attending church helped you spiritually?



The Church

When someone thinks about what a church is they may think its just a place to experience worship, prayer and fellowship with other believers. But for a lot of believers attending church has a much deeper meaning.

The word church is translated out of the word *ekklesia*, [ek-klay-seé-ah] which is a compound word of *klesis* 'a calling' (*kaleo*, 'to call') and the word *ek* 'out of'. The word stresses a group of people called out for a special purpose. *Ekklesia* was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens "gathered" to discuss the affairs of state.

In the New Testament it usually refers to a local group of Christians. In this sense a church is an assembly of believers under the discipline of the Word of God. They are organized to carry out the Great Commission, the administration of New Testament ordinances, and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

When a group of Christians today follows this example, it is a church in the biblical sense of the word.

What service could you help provide for others through the church? Is there anything preventing you from doing that?



Over the next 10 sessions you will be asked to make journal entries. Begin with starting a letter to yourself from God. Write about what God is saying on your heart about His church and what he may be asking you to do. DO NOT END THE LETTER! You will be asked to continue your letter for each session.

Visit us at www.theleastoftheseministries.com

References:

"Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible," by James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Strong's* (2010) by Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Importance Of The Church

Our Lord has told us how important the church role for fellow believers is.

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16: 18-19

The Lord promises to Peter the keys of the kingdom. Having the keys Peter has the right to enter the kingdom himself and with his sermon on the day of Pentecost he was able to share the kingdom with others.

The expressions bind and loose were common in Jewish legal phraseology, meaning to declare forbidden or to declare allowed. These expressions are also used in Matthew chapter 18.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 18:15-18

The setting of these verses fits into the context of church discipline. The responsibility of action is threefold: (1) personal, **go and tell him**; (2) private, **two or three witnesses**; and (3) corporate, **tell it unto the church**.

Have you shared the gospel with others? If so how did it go? If not why haven't you?



God Without The Church

Having a personal relationship with God we are able to witness God's always presence spirit. Yes, it is possible for a believer to have a relationship with God without attending the church. But in the same sense, it's also possible for a man to be married without ever going home to his bride. Refusing to be joined to Christ with the church is attempting to be joined to the groom while at the same time dismissing his union with his bride.

In other words; having a relationship with God without the Church is having a relationship that is not well nurtured.

As believers our faith comes by hearing and how can someone hear without a message being sent? Because of that, the church has an important role in our walk with Christ. Being connected joins us to His body of believers and being joined to his body helps us receive and carry out the Great Commission.

Do you attend church often? If so what sense of purpose do you receive as you join the church?



Faith Comes By Hearing

“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Romans 10:13-17

Notice it's not having faith *in* what is heard, but having faith that *comes about* by what is heard. The word “heard” being used here in Greek is *akōē, ak-o-ay*. The word being used here is describing the way the message or teaching of “the word” is being received. This is a combination of verb and noun because the receiving of the message is something more than the mere sense of “hearing.” You can compare this concept to a courtroom hearing. Because this “hearing” is an interaction with the Word and a decision is being made.

When your having a hard time “hearing” the message. You can improve your listening habits by using these three easy steps.

- 1) Study the Bible: Studying the bible itself is a good way to be prepared in advance to receive the message.
- 2) Take notes: Taking notes as the speaker is delivering the message is good for a attention-directing strategy.
- 3) Don't get hung up on delivery: Ask yourself “What was the speakers main point? Do I agree with it?”

These “hearing” strategies will help you become a better listener.

Do you ever have a hard time hearing the message being delivered? In what other ways can a receiver hear the message better?



Being Joined To The Church

After Peters sermon at Pentecost the new Christians got involved with the church.

“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. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:41-47

Oh what a beautiful message about receiving blessing's from God by being joined to the church! Every Christian should follow the example of New Testament believers by identifying with a local church, and getting involved in its ministry.

What role of the church have you experienced? How has that effected your walk with God?

