

## What's so important About the Church?

### Ephesians 4:11-16

***"11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.***

***14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."*** NLT

### INTRODUCTION:

A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on and on.

Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "**Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?**"

I'm sure that's probably how some people feel about most preachers and the church. "All they want is money!"

The preacher was wired for sound with a lapel mic, and as he preached, he moved around the platform, jerking the mike cord as he moved around.

Then he moved to one side, getting wound up in the cord and nearly tripping before jerking it again.

After several circles and jerks, a little girl in the third pew leaned toward her mother and whispered, "If he gets loose, will he hurt us?"

No, he won't hurt you.

Although when I was kid I thought preachers were strange and didn't have much to do with them.

And they are still strange!

## What's so important about the church?

What's the big deal about having a church like our church and going to church anyway?

3

That's probably what many people outside the church think.

In a door-to-door survey conducted by one church in a city the question was asked: if you don't go to church, why?

**The five biggest reasons:**

- 1) Boring,
- 2) Irrelevant,
- 3) Asking for money all the time,
- 4) I'm too busy already,
- 5) I feel awkward at church.

**Money.**

Some churches may be asking for money too much of the time.

I don't like that and don't believe we should.

I believe that if people believe in the Lord and in the church they will support the church and the mission of the church with their tithes and offerings without having to be bugged about it all the time.

**Boring.**

Yes, most people can't stand boring whether it's a TV show, ball game or church.

I don't believe the church has to put on some kind of carnival act, but I do think she has to be faithful to God and His Word.

4

Since praise and worship and strong preaching will make a difference.

The Praise Team here just doesn't get up and start singing, they practice what they're going to sing, and the choir practices every time before they sing.

**Irrelevant.**

That depends on your viewpoint.

I think that what the church presents and preaches is most relevant thing there is.

We present the truth about life and death.

You can't get any more relevant than that.

I'm too busy.

That's true for most.

People are busier than ever, but they won't be too busy to get sick, to have a surgery or to die.

When illness or death strikes a family then perhaps they won't be too busy to seek the Lord.

**I feel awkward at church.**

I do too, but I'm here anyway.

How do we make people feel less awkward?

We exhibit friendliness and kindness.

Perhaps you've been to a church or two that exhibit little of these.

People won't come back and stay long in an unfriendly or unkind church.

### **Boring. Asking for money. Irrelevant, etc.**

These things are what some think about the church, but hopefully, we look at the church from a different perspective.

Hopefully, we see the good and the best about the church, because there is so very much good with the church and in the church!

### **PROPOSITION:**

**In our text, I see what's important about the church.**

- 1- The church is a serving body**
- 2- The church is a fortified body**
- 3- The church is a growing body**

### **I. THE CHURCH IS A SERVING BODY**

***"11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12to***

***prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."***

***To prepare God's people for works of service.***

**We're here to serve anyway we can.**

### **ILL.-**

A Baptist minister rushed down to the train station every single day to watch the Sunset Limited go by.

There was no chore he wouldn't interrupt to carry out this ritual.

Members of his church considered his ritual very juvenile and worthless and asked him to stop.

"No," said the minister, "I won't give it up. I preach your sermons, teach in Sunday School, bury your dead, marry your young people, run your charities, chair every drive that pleases you to conduct. I won't give up meeting that Southern Pacific train every day. I love it! It's the only thing in this town that I don't have to push!"

We should not have to be pushed, paddled, prodded, or persuaded to serve.

After all it makes both of us feel uncomfortable.

## 1. WE SHOULD BE WILLING TO SERVE.

The Lord needs willing workers and servers.

One day when Henry Ward Beecher was going for a drive the liveryman brought a fine-looking horse to the door.

Beecher said, "That's a fine looking animal you have there. Is he as good as he looks?"

The liveryman said, "Yes, this horse is the best in our stables. He will work any place you put him and can do anything."

Beecher smiled and said, "I wish to goodness he was a member of my church."

I just became aware of this, but weathermen have what they call a "**Horse Latitude: Where nothing moves.**"

When I served on staff with John Maxwell when he was the Senior Pastor at Faith Memorial in Lancaster and I was the Worship Leader and Youth Pastor, John always talked about Momentum, which he called, "**Big Mo!**"

Momentum is important in the church just like the weather is.

Let me explain it like this, When nothing moves, life and ministry becomes unpleasant.

When the church slows down or loses its momentum, the **Horse latitudes** become a way of life which eventually results in the death of a church.

The **Horse Latitudes** are the regions of the world where the wind doesn't blow.

Sailing ships find themselves dead in the water.

Inertia takes over; stalemates are the customary state of affairs; doldrums become the order of the day.

## **I believe every church goes through the danger of plateauing and becoming comfortable.**

There is no doubt in my mind that all the staff here at PCN and most of our church family have a genuine concern about reaching the lost for Christ.

I sincerely appreciate and welcome every family that has come to become a part of the PCN family.

You are important to us! We love you!

But there is one thing we need from you and all the rest of the Church family and that is getting involved in serving Christ and His Church.

**Gal. 5:13** *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."*

## **2. Serve one another in love.**

It seems to me that if we get the love part right then the service part will also be there.

True love comes from God.

The more we grow in our relationship to the Lord, the more love we'll have and ultimately, the more we'll serve.

**Matt. 20:27-28** *"Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**Jesus is our ultimate example of service. We need to learn from Him.**

**One very wise man said, "Elders should be servants of servants in a serving brotherhood of love."**

There it is.

That's the right attitude, the right spirit, the serving spirit.

And if the leaders of any church have it, then more than likely the members will have it as well.

But if they don't.....

How do we get the spirit of service in our hearts?

We just start serving and the Lord will take care of the rest.

The more you serve, the more you'll want to serve.

And God wants us to be loving servants of one another.

## **II. THE CHURCH IS A FORTIFIED BODY**

***"14Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."***

To fortify is to protect or strengthen against attack.

And those who lead in the church must strengthen the church for the onslaught of deceitful teaching in the world, the false ideas, the false doctrines, etc.

And they are everywhere: on TV, in the movies, the news media, etc.

11

We are constantly being confronted with false ideas and teaching and we must be able to stand against them.

**Here's a blatant example.**

Many of you remember the young actor Heath Ledger who passed away last January at the age of only 28 from an overdose of prescription drugs.

Very sad.

Do you know what movie that Heath Ledger is famous for besides the last Batman movie (The Dark Knight) where he played the part of the Joker?

He played in the 2005 movie "Brokeback Mountain."

And do you know anything about that movie?

It's about a couple of gay cowboys.

And basically it presents that lifestyle as being A-OK.

**AND ALL WE KNOW BETTER!**

Now that's just one of the false ideas and philosophies that we are confronted with in this world.

12

How are we going to war against these and remain strong in the faith?

How is the church going to be fortified against these crazy, sinful ideas?

**I've had many people ask me, "Dan, have you had your flu shot?"**

And I could answer this way: Yes, I did. I got my flu shot in 1972 when they had that big swine flu scare.

And that shot is good enough isn't it?

I mean isn't it still working?

Isn't it protecting me now?

We know the answer to that question.

Most people require a flu shot every year to protect from possibility getting the flu.

Perhaps I need one then.

**Or perhaps we could look at it this way.**

I have decided to join the US Army.

Depending on whether or not I could pass the physical.... Well, let's assume I did.

In that case, I figure it should only take me about one week of training and I'll be ready to go to Iraq or Afghanistan.

OH COME ON NOW!

We all know better than that.

One week of training would never prepare anyone for going to war, not even Superman.

When I took Basic training in preparation for being an Army Soldier I had to pass 8 weeks of intense training, and then 8 more weeks of Advanced Individual Training.

What makes us think a minimal amount of church attendance will get the job done in the Lord's army, fighting against Satan and the world of evil?

It should be obvious that it will take a lot more training once a month church attendance or even once a week!

If anything in this New Year, every believer should commit themselves to weekly Sunday morning worship, a Small Support Group, and a Ministry they do during the week.

A woman approached the minister after the sermon, and thanked him for his message.

"I found it so helpful," she said.

The minister replied: "I hope it will not prove as helpful as the last sermon you heard me preach."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the astonished woman.

"Well," said the minister, "that sermon lasted you three months."

Brothers and sisters, we won't get strengthened and equipped for life's battles on one church service a week!

We all need to get as much of the Word of God as we can!

Sunday School, Small Groups, worship services, and home Bible studies.

**The Psalmist David said, "*Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.*"**

And that I might not give in to the false teachings and ideas of the world!

**Friend, I want you to know that the devil is out to get you and the Word of God is your strong defense against Him!**

**How would I know this – because he is certainly out to get me.**

**And the only way this Church here is going to be fortified is through faithful commitment of its members, prayer – intense intercessory prayer – and Serving the Lord.**

### **III. THE CHURCH IS A GROWING BODY**

***“15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”***

#### **1. Grow up into Him, that is, Christ.**

**There should be two kinds of growth in the church:**

**spiritual growth and  
numerical growth.**

**We should be growing in our personal faith and the church should be growing because of leading people to Christ.**

**If we are growing in Christ then our concern for others will grow.**

**ILL.-**

The little church in the suburbs suddenly stopped buying from its regular office supply dealer.

So, the dealer telephoned Deacon Brown to ask why.

"I'll tell you why," said Deacon Brown, "Our church ordered some pencils from you to be used in the pews for visitors to register."

"Well, interrupted the dealer, "didn't you receive them yet?"

"Oh, we received them all right," replied Deacon Brown.

"However, you sent us some golf pencils...each stamped with the words, `Play Golf Next Sunday.'"

**Obviously, the church doesn't need to advertise for the world.**

After the service a young couple talked to a church member about joining the church.

He hadn't met the husband before, and he asked what church he was transferring from.

After a short hesitation, he replied,"I am transferring from the Municipal Golf Course."

17

I don't have anything against anybody playing golf, but it's a poor substitute for a relationship with God!

Likewise, there are many things in this world that people chose over God when in reality they need Christ as their Savior.

And when people truly get converted they may well leave some things behind.

**Some people don't want to become Christians because they know it will mean a certain amount of surrender, commitment and sacrifice.**

**ILL.-**

**Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when he arrived in a small town to preach a sermon.**

**Wanting to mail a letter, he asked a young boy where the post office was.**

**When the boy had told him, Dr. Graham thanked him and said, "If you'll come to the Church this evening, you can hear me telling everyone how to get to Heaven."**

**"I don't think I'll be there," the boy said. "You don't even know your way to the post office."**

18

Could it be that we don't know how to point people to heaven?

We don't know the plan?

We don't know how to share Christ with others?

Or maybe we have another problem.

In just a couple or three weeks we are going to offer classes on How to Witness to your friends and family member, or anyone else about Jesus Christ.

**ILL.-**

**A small church in the hills of Tennessee struck oil on its property.**

**It was a real gusher and brought in lots of money to the church to the point where they didn't know what to do with all of it.**

**The board called the congregation of forty members together and asked them what they thought should be done with the money.**

**One deacon said, "I move that we divide all the money among the forty members and I further move that we don't take in any more new members."**

Let's just think about ourselves and ourselves alone.

Some people don't want to share the good stuff they have.

Of course, I'm talking about the best of the best, the gift of eternal life.

We sometimes act like we don't care whether others come to Christ or not.

Brothers and sisters, times are tough and in many ways.

Our only hope of anything better is in Christ.

And our only hope of eternal life is in Christ!

**WE NEED TO WORK HARDER AT POINTING PEOPLE TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH!**

**We should not be so interested in seeing the church grow as much as in seeing people surrender to Christ and be saved.**

**The church WILL grow if we point people to Christ.**

**Our goal, however, is to get people saved in Christ!**

**CONCLUSION**

**Someone said, "The church is not made up of people who are better than others, but of people who want to become better than they are."**

**The church is a God thing.**

**It's not a man-made organization but rather a living organism, created by God where people can come to know Him and experience true family fellowship.**

**The church is not perfect but she's made up of imperfect people who have found the perfect Savior!**

**That's what is so important about the church!**