

BODY BUILDING
By Andy Manning
Ephesians 4:16

INTRODUCTION

The title of this sermon is “Body Building.” This is week two of our sermon series on the importance of the church.

Unfortunately the church isn’t very important to most Christians today.

A common expression these days is, “I love Jesus But I don’t like church.”

And so we’re taking just a few weeks to talk about the importance of the church.

Is the church important? If so, how important? Do Christians have to go to church? If so, how involved does a Christian need to be? What kind of relationship should Christians have with the church?

Because we all know that life is busy.

And we all know that the church isn’t perfect.

The church is filled with imperfect people who can get on your nerves, and hurt your feelings, and let you down.

So is church really worth it? Do we really need the church?

BODYBUILDERS

I have always been fascinated with body builders – Arnold Schwarzenegger, Dwayne Johnson, Sylvester Stallone. These men eat around 4,000 calories a day; they have a very carefully planned diet; they take tons of supplements and even steroids; and they spend hours each week in the gym, building and sculpting their

bodies so that their muscles are huge, but also cut and defined. They want huge muscles, but very little body fat. Their bodies are so impressive that they can become celebrities and movie stars.

Believe it or not, every Christian should be a body builder.

Every Christian should be devoted to building and sculpting their body.

But I'm not talking about their physical body. I'm talking about the church, which is the body of Christ.

Every Christian is called to build the church – the body of Christ.

Every Christian is called to be a body builder.

And that's one of the reasons that the church is so important.

God has called every Christian to build the church.

So you cannot be an obedient Christian without going to church.

But going to church is not enough.

God has not commanded Christians to merely attend, but to tend to the health of the church.

Not to merely show up, but to help the church grow up.

If you want to be an obedient, successful Christian, then you must get involved with building the church.

SCRIPTURE

Let's take a look at a verse this morning that teaches this principle. **Ephesians 4:16** "From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting

ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

5 REASONS YOU SHOULD JOIN IN BUILDING THE CHURCH

1. As a member of the body, you have an important function to fulfill.

First, notice that Paul refers to the church as the body.

The New Testament describes the church in several different ways.

It is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27),

the family / household of God (Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 3:15);

it is the temple of God (Eph 2:19-22);

it is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15);

it is the church of the living God (1 Tim 3:15);

and it is the body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23 “22 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.”

Ephesians 5:23 says that Christ is the head of the church.

That means that He is in charge.

And 1 Corinthians 12:27 says that every Christian is a member of the body of Christ.

That means you are a member of body of Christ.

Whether you like it or not, whether you meant to be or not, whether you choose to be or not, if you are a Christian, then you are a member of the body of Christ.

Think about what body parts do.

All the parts of the body work together so that the body can function at the highest level.

So if the church is like a body, and you are a body part, then that means you have an important job to do. As a member of the body of Christ, you have an important role to play. You are a body part with an essential function.

There are no vestigial parts in the body of Christ. Do you know what a vestigial is? It is a body part that serves no function; that is unnecessary – like male nipples; body hair, and wisdom teeth. Who needs ‘em, right?

The human body may have unnecessary parts, but not the body of Christ. Every member of the body of Christ has important role. An important job to do.

As well, all the parts of body are supposed to work together, in harmony.

This means that you cannot do the Christian life alone.

You are supposed to be working together with other Christians. You are not supposed to be isolated from other believers; off doing your own thing. You are supposed to be working together, in harmony with other believers.

Also, if the church is a body, and you are member of that body, then that means that you exist for something bigger than yourself.

The purpose of your life is not just to be happy and successful and prosperous. The purpose of life is not just to do what makes you feel good.
No.

You are a part of something bigger than yourself – the body of Christ;
and you are not in charge – Christ, the head, is in charge.

We do His work. He serve His purposes. We accomplish His mission. We are His hands and feet, and He does His work through us.

Romans 12:5 “In the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.”

As members of the body of Christ, we belong to each other.

If we are all a part of the same body, then your behavior affects me, and my behavior affects you.

I need you, and you need me.

I am not just responsible for me; I’m also responsible for you.

And you are not just responsible for yourself; you are responsible to the church.

So here’s the point. You are a member of the body of Christ by default; just by becoming a Christian. But are you acting like a member of the body of Christ?

Are you fulfilling your role in body of Christ? Are you doing your part? Are you working together with the other body parts?

Think about this.

What is a body with a missing finger? It is not as effective as it could be.

And that's true of the church. Without you doing your part, the church will survive, but it will not be as effective as it could be.

Now think about this. What is a finger without a body? It is dead. It is useless. It is lifeless.

The point is that the Christian life is meant to be lived in connection with the body of Christ, not isolated from the rest of the body.

And the church suffers when you aren't connected; and you suffer even more when you aren't connected.

So the first reason you should join in building the church is that the church is a body, and you have an important function to fulfill.

2. The church exists to build fully-devoted Christ-followers, and you are commanded to take part.

The church has several essential functions, purposes. Some people narrow them down to five.

Worship (prayer, praise, preaching, etc.). **Colossians 4:16** "Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."

Fellowship (doing life together; friendship; family). **Acts 2:42** "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer."

Ministry (carrying one another's burdens; meeting each other's needs). **Galatians 6:2** "Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." **Acts 2:44-45** "44 Now all the believers were together and

held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

Evangelism (reaching the lost). **Matthew 28:19** “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Discipleship (building mature believers). We see this one mentioned in Ephesians 4:16. “From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself....”

The whole body promotes the growth of the body for building up itself.

In other words, as each member does their part, the church gets better and better and building up itself.

The church gets better and better at building mature believers.

So the church exists to build mature, fully devoted Christ-followers. What does that have to do with you?

You are commanded to take part in that function. You are called to help the church get better and better at making mature disciples. Let me show you.

Ephesians 4:11-13 “11 And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”

Notice what this passage says. God calls some to be church leaders – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

What's their job? Their job is to equip the saints – the church members; the church body.

Equip them to do what? To build up the body of Christ until everyone is mature in Christ.

So the job of the church leader is to equip the members so that the members can do the job of discipleship, of edification, of building mature believers.

You are supposed to be a part of the discipleship process in the church.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.”

Here is very clearly commands all believers to build each other up, or to edify, or to help others in the church grow to maturity.

You should be involved in building the church because you are called to take part in the church's task of discipleship.

3. You are called to promote the church's growth.

Ephesians 4:16 “From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself....”

The whole body promotes the growth of the body.

I looked up the word “whole” in the original languages, in the Greek. Do you know what it means? Whole. Entire. All.

So God's will is for the whole body, every part, every member, including you, to promote the growth of the body.

Let me ask you something. What are you promoting? What are you working to build, to grow, to establish?

People promote all kinds of things. Their own well-being; their health; their finances; their children's education; their children's success. People promote their marriage; they promote their job, their company, their career. People often promote charitable organizations that they are passionate about, like Habitat for Humanity, or United Way, or the Salvation Army.

It's okay to promote those things. But the one thing you are called to promote, the one thing you are commanded to promote, is the church. You are called to promote the church's growth.

How can you promote the church's growth? Let me give you **nine ways** to promote the growth of the church.

First, by gathering regularly.

Just show up. Just be here. Just be present.

It's hard to do anything else to promote the church's growth if you're not present.

Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

Second, by encouraging other church members.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another."

Do you remember what it means to encourage? It's a rich word, full of meaning. It means to encourage; to give support; to give confidence; to give hope to someone. It means to admonish or warn. It means to exhort

or to strongly urge. It means to comfort or console. It means to instruct or teach. It means to help. It means to counsel or give advice.

Third, by discipling (edifying) others.

Remember, to edify means to build up someone. The idea is to build up others in Christ; help them to grow to maturity. That's discipleship.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing."

Fourth, by volunteering.

Romans 12:6-8 "6 According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; 7 if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; 8 if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness."

Fifth, by tithing.

Malachi 3:10 "Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure." Just like any organization, the church needs money.

Sixth, by getting along with others.

Ephesians 4:3 "making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Seventh, by praying.

1 Timothy 2:1 "First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone,"

Pray for the church as a whole; for our leaders; and for different church members, especially those who are going through a hard time.

Eighth, by doing good works for other members.

Galatians 6:10 “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.”

Be on the lookout for church members who need a helping hand; who are going through a difficult time; and jump in serve them.

Ninth, by growing to maturity.

Ephesians 4:15 “But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ.”

Think about it like this. The church is a body, with many parts. As each member grows, the church will grow. As each member gets healthier, the church will get healthier.

Anytime one church member grows, it benefits the whole church.

4. Building the church benefits you.

A fourth reason that you should build the church is that as the church grows healthier, it benefits you.

Why? Because you are a part of the body. You are a member of the body. So as you help the body, you help yourself.

It’s the same with marriage.

The Bible teaches that in marriage a husband and wife become one flesh.

So when you love your spouse, you are actually loving yourself.

When you care for your spouse, you are caring for yourself.

When you make your spouse happy, you are making yourself happier.

“Happy wife happy life.”

In other words, there is a self-serving reason to build the church.

God built the church for you, to help you be a healthy, growing, fruitful, productive Christian.

So the healthier the church is, the more it benefits you.

So when you help the church, when you build the church, you are helping yourself.

Jeremiah 29:7 “Pursue the well-being of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive.”

When God punished the Jews and sent them into exile in the city of Babylon, this is what He instructed them to do.

Pursue the well-being of the city. Be a good citizen. An active citizen. A concerned, informed citizen.

Why? Because that’s where you live. And as the city thrives, you will thrive.

The same goes with our church.

The church is your body.

It is the body that you belong to.

So build the church. Promote the growth of the church. Invest in the church. Be a good church member.

Why? Because as the church thrives, you will thrive.

5. The church functions best with the proper working of each individual part.

A final reason you should build the church is that it functions best with the proper working of each individual part.

In other words, for the church to function at the highest level, each member needs to do their part; they need to carry their load; they need fulfill their role.

Ephesians 4:16 “From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

You are important to our church.

Many Christians are not active in church because they think too highly of themselves. They think they can live an effective Christian life all alone. But you can't. You need the church.

On the other hand, many Christians are not active in church because they don't think of themselves highly enough.

They think they are replaceable.

They think they don't matter.

They think the church will be fine without them.

No! The church needs you.

You are an important part of the church.

The church will either benefit because of your involvement, or suffer because of your indifference.

Remember that the church is a body.

How would your body do without a finger? Not as good.

What about without two fingers?

What about without a hand?

Without an arm? Without a liver? Without any legs? Without a lung?
Without ears? Without eyes?

That's what it is like when Christians are not active in church. The church suffers.

Let me remind you of how important the church is to Jesus Christ.

Matthew 16:18 says that Jesus is building the church.

Ephesians 5:22 says that Jesus is the head of the church.

Ephesians 5:22 says that Jesus is the Savior of the church.

Ephesians 5:25 says that Jesus loves the church and gave Himself for her.

Ephesians 5:29 says that Jesus proves for the church.

Ephesians 5:29 says that Jesus cares for the church.

The church is supremely important to Christ, and for the church to function at the highest level, as it should, every member needs to do their part.

You might ask? “But what’s my part?”

It starts with those nine ways to promote the growth of the church.

If you plug in with both feet and start attending consistently, tithing, volunteering, praying, discipling, encouraging, etc., then very quickly you will find yourself filling a very important role in the church.

CONCLUSION

It’s very easy to get too busy for the church. To get frustrated with the church and give up on it.

But I want you to think about what’s at stake.

First, the church is God’s Plan A to reconcile the world to Himself. What is God’s plan for reaching the world? The church. His body. One of my favorite pastors says “the local church is the hope of the world.”

Second, the church is what you need to grow. You cannot be a healthy, fruitful, fully-devoted Christ-follower without the church. Church involvement and personal spiritual health go hand in hand.

Third, the church needs you to grow. For the church to function at the highest level, every member must do their part. If you are not here, and if you are not doing your part, the church will feel it. It will make a dent.

Fourth, the church is supremely important to God. How can we say that we love God, that we love Jesus, if we don’t value what is of supreme value to God?

In 2016 President Trump was elected because Christians all around the country decided to get involved and vote. As a result our country is booming economically; religious liberty is more secure; and we have a conservative

supreme court that will protect the rights of individuals against the tyranny of the state. And it's all because Christians got involved.

But there's something more important than politics. It's the work of the church. And imagine what can happen if all the Christians in America decided not only to attend church regularly, but to actually join in building the church.