

WHY MAKE TIME FOR CHURCH?

By Andy Manning

The title of this sermon is “Why Make Time for Church? Church involvement takes a lot of time. Sunday morning. Sunday evening. Home Group. Volunteering. Church involvement takes a lot of energy. Church involvement takes a lot of patience. The church is full of imperfect people. Eventually somebody is going to offend you. So why make time for church? Why not just do something else with your time and energy? This evening I want to remind you of why church involvement should be a priority in your life – in the life of every Christian.

Let’s start with a question. What is the church? The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*. It means assembly, or congregation, or gathered group. The church is a group of people who gather. It is not a building. That’s why we can have a church even though we don’t own our own building. Who are the people in the church? They are followers of Jesus Christ. Non-Christians are welcome to attend, but the actual church is only made up of Christians. And why do we gather? We’re not just a social club. The church is a group of people on mission. There are five purposes of the church. (1) Worship: This involves preaching, singing, the Lord’s Supper, and giving. (2) Fellowship: We do life together. We become like a family. We become close friends. (3) Discipleship: We help each other grow to maturity in Christ. (4) Ministry: We actually serve one another and meet each other’s needs. (5) Evangelism: We seek to reach unbelievers with the gospel and bring them into the church.

Here’s a good **definition** of the church for you: “The local church is a community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. In obedience to Scripture they organize under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship, observe the Biblical sacraments of baptism and communion, and are unified by the Spirit, are disciplined for holiness, and scattered to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great commission as missionaries to the world for God’s glory and their joy.” (*Doctrine*, By Mark Driscoll and Gary Brashears.)

So why should you make time for church? I know that our church isn’t perfect. There’s no such thing as a perfect church. The church is like a Snickers bar; eventually you’re going to run in to a nut. But the church is still worth your time. Let me give you four reasons.

Five Reasons to Prioritize Church Involvement

1. To be a part of God’s work on the earth.

God is on a mission. He is on a mission to help people far from God become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. And what is God's method for accomplishing this mission? The local church. If want to serve God with your life, then you need to get involved with the church. The church is God's Plan A for reaching the world.

There are **five terms** that the Bible uses **for the church**. These terms illustrate how central the church is to God.

a) The body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27 says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it." Why does it mean by the body of Christ? It is a metaphor. Christ is the head, the leader. And the church is His body – each member is a hand, or a foot, or an arm. And Christ accomplishes His work through the church. The church is the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

b) The bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:22-25 says, "22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her." The Bible describes the church as the bride of Christ. What does that say about how important the church is to God? And just as God created Eve to be a helper or a helpmate to Adam, God created the church to be His helper – to help God with His mission of saving the world.

c) The pillar and foundation of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15 says, "But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." A pillar holds the building up. And a foundation make it secure. That's the purpose of the church. The church is God's way of holding up, or proclaiming His truth to the world; and the church is God's way of protecting the truth from being polluted or watered down.

d) The temple of God.

Ephesians 2:19-22 says, “19 So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you are also being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.” What does it mean that the church is the temple of God? It is God’s dwelling place. That means that God shows up in a special way and does great things when the church gathers. If you want to find God, to experience God, to be near God, then you need to go to church.

e) The family of God.

1 Timothy 3:15 says, “But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” The word household means “family.” The church is God’s family. God is the father, and the church is His family. Think about what a father does for his family. He provides for his family. He protects his family. He love his family. The church is God’s family. He provides for us, protects us, loves us.

When you put these five terms together, it is obvious that the church is the center of God’s activity on earth. This is what God loves; what God is passionate about. If you want to serve God, and to be a part of what God is doing in the world, then you need to be involved in the church.

2. To be obedient.

The second reason to make time for the church is to be obedient. The Christian life is all about reading your Bible and doing what it says. There are a number of commands in the Bible that cannot be fulfilled unless you get involved in the church.

a) Submit to pastors.

Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” How can you submit to the pastors of a church if you are not involved in the church?

b) Don’t forsake the gathering.

Hebrews 10:25 says, “24 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.” It says don’t neglect to gather together. How can you obey that if you are not involved in church? Do you really think you are fulfilling that command if you only attend once a month, or a few times a year?

c) Do your part in the body.

Ephesians 4:16 says, “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.” Notice that the church grows stronger and healthier “by the proper working of each individual part.” God has a special part for you to play in the church. How can you do your part to make the church healthier if you are not involved in the church?

d) Protect the unity of the church.

Ephesians 4:1-3 says, “1 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” This verse commands us to protect the unity of the church. How can you protect the unity of the church if you are not actively involved in it?

The only way that you can fulfill these commands and many others in the Bible is if you are actively involved in the church.

3. To imitate Christ.

To be a Christians is to imitate Christ. **Ephesians 5:1** says, “Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.” **1 John 2:6** says, “The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.” And when we think of what it means to imitate Christ, we usually think about imitating His attitude and character – being kind, gentle, courageous, loving, humble, servant-hearted. But what about imitating Christ’s attitude toward the church? Let’s look at **four ways that Jesus relates to the church.**

a) Christ loves the church.

Ephesians 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.”

b) Christ sacrificed for the church.

Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.”

c) Christ provides cares for the church.

Ephesians 5:29-30 says, “29 For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 since we are members of his body.”

d) Christ is building the church.

Matthew 16:18 says, “...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
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.”

If we are going to be imitators of Christ, then we need to imitate His attitude toward the church. We need to be passionate about what He is passionate about. We need to relate to the church the way that Jesus does.

There’s just no way that you can say that love Jesus, but you don’t have time for church. Or that you love Jesus, but you don’t love the church.

4. To be a healthy Christian.

A fourth reason to make time for church involvement is to be a healthy Christian. Can you really be a healthy Christian without active involvement in the church? The Bible says “No.”

Consider the “**one anothers.**” There are 59 “one another” scriptures in the New Testament. These are written to the church. “Bear one another’s burdens.” “Encourage one another.” “Be at peace with one another.” “Love one another.” “Serve one another.” Why does it have so many “one another” commands for us? Obviously it means that we need to be connected. We need to be in community with one another.

As well, consider Paul's command to Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus. **2 Timothy 4:1-2** says, "I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: 2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching." Paul solemnly charged Timothy before God to preach the word to His people. And to preach a lot. Rebuke; correct; encourage. Why? Apparently this is what the church needs; this is what you need. You need the church because you need to be under good Biblical preaching to be a healthy Christian.

Or consider Paul's words in **Ephesians 4:15-16**. "15 But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. 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." A Christians our goal is to grow to maturity in Christ, loving and God and others more and more. But according to this passage, growth happens as we are involved in church, where each member of the church is doing their individual part, including us. In other words, we cannot grow as a Christian without church involvement.

Think about it this way. If the church is God's family, then what do you call a Christian that is not involved in the church? An orphan. Just as every child needs a family to have a healthy upbringing, every Christian needs a spiritual family to be healthy.

If the church is the body of Christ, what do you call a Christian that is not involved in the church? Dead. The body can survive without one of its members, but an arm, or a leg, or a finger cannot survive without the body. We need to be connected to the church in order to be healthy.

I like to use sports analogies. A Christian who is not involved in church is like Drew Brees without any teammates. It's like playing 11 against 1. If he tried to do that, he would get killed; it would be the last game of his career; he wouldn't last the first minute of the game. That's what happens when a Christian tries to do life without the church. Your spiritual life gets killed.

5. To set an example for the next generation.

A 2014 study by Barna and the NCFIC shows that 61 percent of 20-somethings who had been churched at one point during their teen years are now spiritually disengaged. They do not attend church, pray, or read their Bible. Why do you think this is? I believe it is because of parents. Children usually adopt the values of their parents, and if parents don't think that

church is that important, the children won't either. In other words, if you raise your kids to think that church is something you do about once a month, when you feel like it, as long as nothing more fun comes up, then they aren't going to grow up thinking that church is very important.

Lydia used this analogy. My kids cheer for Duke in college basketball, and for the Golden State Warriors in the NBA. Why? Because I do. I cheer passionately for them. And so my kids have just naturally adopted my passion for Duke and Golden State. The same happens with church. If you are passionate about church, then your kids will adopt your passion. If you are active in church; then they will grow up to imitate you; if you are a tither, and a volunteer, then your kids will grow up to do the same. But if church is just something you do every once in awhile, on occasion, and you're not very passionate about it, and you're not very involved, then your kids will grow up to imitate you.

In other words, do you want your kids to be active in church when they grow up? Then you need to be active in church. You need to model for you kids the kind of Christian you want them to be.

That's why I love to see parents sitting with their kids at church, and at Home Group. I love see parents volunteering in church with their kids. Once a month Nathan Fleischaker meets me at church at 6:30 am to set up, and he has his two oldest daughters with him – first and second grade. Why? Because he is trying to model for them that church is important; and you don't just attend church; you serve at church. And because of his example, his kids are much more likely to adopt his attitude and passion for the church when they grow up.

Conclusion:

So the point today is the church is worth your time. You can't be a healthy, obedient Christian without active involvement in the church. And it's not just about you. It's about the next generation. And so I want to encourage you to make church a priority.

How do you make church a priority? Attend every week. Going to church should be the rule, the habit, the norm, not the exception. Volunteer. Find a way to contribute. Give. The church needs money just like any other organization – the government, businesses, schools, charities. And pray. Pray for the health and growth of our church. And pray for me, your pastor.