

WHY YOU NEED CHURCH

Romans 1:8-15

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Many Christians are unchurched. That statement should shock you. You would expect me to say that many nonbelievers don't go to church, but it should shock you to hear that many Christians don't go to church. But it's true.
2. Many Christians either don't go to church at all, or they attend once or twice a year. Other Christians attend more often, maybe once a month, but that's the entirety of their church involvement – they don't volunteer, or tithe, or get involved in a small group.
3. And then there's the alarming statistic about our young adults. Studies show that between 60-80% of young adults drop out of church after high school. That's a big problem.
4. Today I want to help you develop a conviction that you need to be actively involved in church.
5. I don't want to fuss at you or condemn you, I want to help you see why you need church.
6. There are people here today who are very involved in church. They show up every Sunday, rain or shine. They tithe, giving a full ten percent of their income or more to the church. They serve in some capacity – usually in several ways. They go to Home Group. When we have a prayer meeting, they show up and pray. Why are those people so active in church? It's not because they don't have anything else to do with their time. It's not because they aren't as busy as other people. It's not because they are richer and have the money to spare. And it's not because they think going to church is the most fun and enjoyable thing they could do. The reason they are so committed to the church is because they have a conviction – a deeply held belief – that they need church, and that God wants them to be involved in church. And they're right for having that conviction. And that's what I want to help you develop today.

II. TEXT: Romans 1:8-15

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because the news of your faith is being reported in all the world. 9 God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son—that I constantly mention you, 10 always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God’s will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, 12 that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

13 Now I don’t want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians,, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

III. EXPLANATION

1. Romans is a letter from Paul to the church in Rome. This is part of the introduction of his letter. In this section Paul expressed his strong desire to visit the church in Rome.
 - i. In verse 10 he said that it was his constant prayer that God would allow him to visit the church in Rome.
 - ii. In verse 11 he said that he very much wanted to see them.
 - iii. In verse 13 he said that not only did he have a strong desire to visit the church in Rome, but he often planned to visit, but it didn’t work out. Paul strongly desired to go to the church in Rome. He strongly desired to connect with them.
2. In the same way, you should strongly desire to go to church. You should have such a strong desire to go to church that you will prioritize it; you will go consistently; you won’t let other things interfere with it; you will go rain or shine; you will go even if you don’t feel great; even if you didn’t sleep well; even if there’s something fun that’s going on at the same time.
3. You should have a strong desire to go to church that you don’t just attend consistently, but you get involved. You sign your name on the dotted line and become a member. You find a place to serve. You bring your tithe. You get involved in a small group where you can build

relationships. In other words, you don't just go to church, you become a part of the church.

4. Why should church be that important to you? In this passage, Paul gives four reasons that he strongly desired to go to the church in Rome. These are the same reasons that you should want to go to church.

IV. FOUR REASONS YOU NEED CHURCH

1. To use your spiritual gifts.

- i. **Romans 1:11** For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you
- ii. Paul said that he wanted to impart to them some spiritual gift. In other words, Paul wanted to visit the church in Rome so that he could use his spiritual gifts.
- iii. What is a spiritual gift? A spiritual gift is an empowerment for service given to every Christian for use in the church.
- iv. The moment you become a Christian the Holy Spirit gives you a spiritual gift.
 1. **1 Peter 4:10** Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
 2. What are the spiritual gifts? The Bible has five lists of spiritual gifts (Rm 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pt 4:10-11). Let's read one of those lists.
 3. **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.
 4. This is a list of seven gifts: prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, generosity, leading, and mercy. The Bible mentions many more gifts, and most theologians agree that the lists aren't comprehensive, so there are probably many more gifts.
 5. And the moment you got saved, God gave you.
- v. It is an empowerment for service.

1. **1 Peter 4:10** Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
 2. "Use it to serve others."
 3. A spiritual gift is an ability that God has given you to help others.
- vi. You are commanded to use your spiritual gift.
1. **1 Peter 4:10** Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
 2. **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
 3. God gave you a spiritual gift so that you would use it.
- vii. God wants you to use your spiritual gift in the church.
1. **1 Corinthians 12:7** A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good
 2. God has given you a spiritual gift "for the common good." He is not talking about the common good of your soccer team, of your company, of your household, of your neighborhood, of your city. He's writing to the church in Corinth and telling them that God gave each person a spiritual gift – a manifestation of the Spirit – for the common good of the church.
- viii. By the way, how do you discover your spiritual gift? The Bible doesn't give us an objective way to discover our spiritual gifts, so here's my advice. Your spiritual gift is probably going to be a role of service in the church that both benefits the church and fulfills you. If you can find a way to serve that helps the church and that you enjoy, you've probably found your gift.
- ix. And God doesn't give anyone all the gifts. He gives us different gifts.
- x. **Romans 12:6** According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts
- xi. There are things that you can do that other people aren't good at. There are things that you enjoy that other people don't. And that means that if you don't use your gift, then you will be missed. The

church will be worse off. Somebody's going to be singing who probably shouldn't be. Somebody's going to be cooking who should probably stick to doing the dishes.

- xii. You have a spiritual gift that God wants you to use. You have an impact to make. You have a role to play. You have contribution to make. And the only way you can properly use your spiritual gift is to get involved in church.

2. To strengthen the church.

- i. **Romans 1:11** For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you
- ii. Paul strongly wanted to visit the church in Rome to make it stronger. In the same way, you should want to go to church so that you can make it stronger. You should want the church to be healthy, and fruitful, and vibrant, and growing, and flourishing. That should be your deep desire.
- iii. Why? Why should you care about the church?
 - 1. The church is very important to Jesus.
 - a. The church is the body of Christ (Col 1:18).
 - b. The church is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27).
 - c. Christ is the head of the church (Eph 5:23), the Savior of the church (Eph 5:23), loves the church (Eph 5:25), died for the church (Eph 5:25), is building the church (Mt 16:18), and provides and cares for the church (Eph 5:29).
 - d. To be a Christian is to imitate Jesus. He is passionate about the church, so you should be too.
 - 2. The church is the only institution that will last forever.
 - a. One day Jesus is going to come back, and He will create a new heaven and earth where we will live with God for all eternity. And when that happens, there won't be marriage or family; we'll be one big family. There won't be schools or universities. There won't be governments. There won't be business and non-profit organizations. All institutions will pass

away but one. The church. The church will last for all eternity.

3. The church is your family.
 - a. You should care about the church because it is a family. God wants it to be your family.
 - b. **Romans 1:13** “Now I don’t want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you”
 - c. Notice that Paul calls the church “brothers and sisters.” The church is family.
 - d. **Romans 12:10** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters.
 - e. The church is not just another organization. It is a family, and you are a part of it.
 - f. The other members are not strangers, or acquaintances, or colleagues; they are your brothers and sisters. You should care about the church because it’s your family.
4. The church is central to God’s mission on earth.
 - a. God is on a mission to save as many people as possible. And his primary method is the church.
 - b. The Bible calls the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). A pillar holds something up, and a foundation holds something secure. God uses the church to hold up the gospel for all to see so they can get in on if they want to. And He uses the church to make sure that the gospel message doesn’t get lost or diluted.
- iv. So, like Paul, you should absolutely want to strengthen the church. And you can’t do that without getting actively involved.
- v. By the way, how can you make the church stronger?
 1. Stick with it for the long term. Churches are made strong by committed members, not church-hoppers. I understand that sometimes there are good reasons to leave a church.

But if you want to make the church stronger, find a good church a stick with it.

2. Find a place to serve. Typically, 20% do 80% of the church. Typically pastors are overworked and burned out. Don't sit on the sidelines. Employ your spiritual gifts. Use your gifts, talents, knowledge, experience in the church.
3. Be a bringer. Invite people to church who need Christ, or who need a church home.
4. Bring your tithe. Believe it or not, most Christians don't tithe, even though it is a direct command in Scripture. And the church suffers for it. There are things that God wants to do through the church, but they don't get done because the church is underfunded.
5. Live a holy life. Your example of holiness is both an encouragement to others and an example. People learn more from a good example than from a sermon.
6. Don't gossip. Be a raving fan in public, and an honest critic in private – of anyone in the church. Don't triangulate. If you have an issue with someone, go to them alone, in person, in private.
7. Be quick to forgive. If you leave the church every time someone hurts you, you will never stay at a church for very long. The church is filled with sinners who are trying to become more like Jesus. But nobody has arrived. You will be offended, or hurt, or lied to, or overlooked, or treated unfairly. Decisions will be made that you don't like, and sometimes you'll be right, but you won't always get your way. The only way a church with imperfect people can stick together and get things done is if they are committed to quick and ongoing forgiveness.
8. Pray. Pray regularly for the health and growth of the church. Pray for God's protection over the leadership.
9. Be flexible. The only people who like change are babies with dirty diapers. Unhealthy churches don't handle change well. They either change and split, or they refuse to

change and die. The reason is simple: They confuse mission with method. The mission and the doctrine of the church must never change. But the methods we use to carry out the mission and the doctrine can change. Different methods would be things like hymns or praise songs; choir or praise team; piano and organ or drums and electric guitars; meeting at 10 am or 11 am; meeting in a hotel or a movie theater; having a youth group or being family integrated; having a nursery or not having a nursery; having stained glass or clear windows. Those are all examples of methodology; they are not mandated by Scripture; the church is free to experiment to find the most effective methods for its context. To make the church stronger, be flexible with methodology. Be flexible with change. Don't be stiff and rigid. For the church to survive and thrive, it has to be willing to discard what isn't working, and to try new things to reach more people. Marry the mission and doctrine, but date the methodology.

10. Accept those who are different than you.

- a. **Romans 15:7 (NIV)** Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.
- b. There are two kinds of acceptance that are needed for a church to strong.
- c. First, you need to accept nonbelievers who live sinful lifestyles. Going to church is like taking a shower. You don't clean yourself off before you take a shower, you take a shower to get clean. We don't want unbelievers to feel like they need to clean up their lives before they go to church. We want to make them feel loved, and wanted, and welcome. We don't approve of their sin. We don't water down the gospel. But we don't want to do or say anything that makes them feel unloved and unwanted, and unwelcome.

d. Second, you need to accept believers who are different. The church is made up of all kinds of people who have many differences. The only we have in common is our salvation and a few core doctrines. We dress differently. We have dog lovers, cat lovers, and people who don't want pets. We have people who are rich, and those of a lower income. We cheer for different teams, and we have people who don't like sports. Some kids are homeschooled, some go to private school, and some go to public school. Some of the wives work outside the home, and some are homemakers. We have people who are old, and people who are young. We have big people and skinny people, tall people and short people, attractive people and interesting-looking people, smart people and funny people. We even have doctrinal and political differences on tertiary issues. In a strong, healthy church, everyone is accepted. Everyone is treated with equal love and importance. There are no cliques. The rich hang out with the poor. The educated fellowship with uneducated. The old fellowship with the young.

3. For mutual encouragement.

- i. **Romans 1:11-12** 11 For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, 12 that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.
- ii. A third reason Paul wanted to go to the church in Rome is for mutual encouragement. He wanted to encourage them, and to be encouraged them. This is why you should want to go to church too. To both give and receive encouragement.
- iii. What is encouragement? The Greek word comes from the term *parakaleo*. It means to come alongside someone to give them strength and courage so they can cope with their affliction.
- iv. There is something very interesting about this term.

- v. First, the Bible says that God is an encourager. The Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete (Jn 14:26). That's a term that means comforter, encourager, counselor, helper, supporter, advisor, advocate, ally, senior friend. Those are ways that the indwelling Holy Spirit ministers to the believers. The Bible calls God the God of all comfort (*parklesis*; encouragement) who comforts us in all our affliction (2 Cor 1:3-4). So, God is an encourager. He wants to encourage us.
- vi. Second, the Bible commands church members to encourage each other.
 - 1. **Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)** And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.
 - 2. In other words, don't skip church. Get involved so you can encourage each other.
- vii. Question: If God is an encourager who encourages us in all our affliction, then why does the Bible command believers to go to church to encourage each other? Why do we need church? Why can't God just encourage us?
- viii. The answer is obvious, and there are two parts.
 - 1. First, if the Bible commands you to go to church to encourage each other, that means you need a regular dose of encouragement. We all need encouragement. Life is hard; the Christian life is hard. Every day is a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Every day we have struggles – emotional struggles, relational struggles, financial struggles, physical struggles. It's easy to get discouraged, and when you get discouraged, it's easy to stop trying; to stop fighting. You need encouragement. You need people around you who are encouraging you to not give up, to keep going, to assure you that you can do it; you can make it.
 - 2. Second, the church is the place to get the encouragement you need. God's desire and plan is to encourage you

through the church. He wants to encourage you, but His plan is to encourage you through your church family.

- ix. By the way, this tells you what the church is supposed to be like. The church is supposed to be a place of encouragement. I'm not talking about the Joel Osteen-kind of encouragement. He thinks encouragement means you never talk about sin or hell or doctrine. No! Encouragement is coming alongside others and giving them the strength and courage to cope with their affliction. At any given time, everyone in here is going through some kind of struggle. God wants to use you to encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ. Keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities of encouragement. It could be a listening ear; it could be a kind word; it could be some helpful advice; it could be a compliment; it could be a gift; a note in the mail; taking them out for coffee, etc.

4. To be fruitful.

- i. **Romans 1:13** Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles.
- ii. A final reason that Paul strongly wanted to connect with the church in Rome was to have a fruitful ministry among them. That's why you should want to go to church to.
- iii. God wants you to be a fruitful Christian.
 - 1. **John 15:8** "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples."
- iv. In the Bible, being fruitful means three things:
 - 1. Growing more like Christ (Gal 5:22-23).
 - 2. Helping other people grow (Phil 1:22-25).
 - 3. Making new converts (Col 1:5-6).
- v. The best place way to produce fruit is to get involved in church. Going to church is going to help you grow in Christ. And if you get involved and serve in church, you will find opportunities to help others grow, and even to help reach more people for Christ.
- vi. You should want to go to church so that you can be a fruitful Christian.

V. ADDRESSING THE EXCUSES

1. With all of this in mind, why don't some Christians go to church? I think there are six main reasons.

i. Too busy.

1. It's possible to be too busy.
2. If you are a college student and you are too busy to go to class, or do your homework, or study for tests, I would say you're too busy and you need to cut back.
3. If you're a Christian and you're too busy to obey God's command to be actively involved in church, then you're too busy. You need to cut back. You need some pruning.
4. However, usually you make time for what's important to you. So if you're too busy for church, that just means that church isn't important enough to you to fit it into your schedule, and that needs to change.

ii. There are no good churches.

1. There are no perfect churches, but there are plenty of good churches.
2. If you find the perfect church, don't go there, because then it won't be perfect anymore.
3. Saying there are no churches is essentially saying that you are too good for all the churches in town, and you're not.
4. You won't find a church that has absolutely everything you're looking for and checks all your boxes, but you will find plenty of churches that are plenty-good enough for you to plug in. Most importantly, if you can find a church that aligns with your essential beliefs (not necessarily tertiary issues), then plug in.

iii. I have been hurt by the church.

1. If you haven't been hurt by the church, then you haven't attended for very long, or you haven't gotten very involved. Churches are filled with imperfect people, and just like families, when you rub shoulders with imperfect people you're bound to sin against each other inevitably. But that doesn't mean you should stop going to church.

2. If you go to a restaurant and are treated badly, do you give up on all restaurants? Of course not!
 3. What should you do if you get hurt in the church? The Bible says you should forgive. Unless the sin is extreme, if the other person is willing to repent and be reconciled, then most of the time the best thing for you, them, and the church is to forgive.
- iv. I don't need it.
1. "I can be a healthy Christian without church. All I need is me and Jesus."
 2. But that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that you need church. You don't need to go to church to go to heaven, but you need church to be a healthy Christian.
 3. Christianity is a team sport. It's not golf or bowling; it's more like football. As good as he is, imagine if Patrick Mahomes tried to face off against another team all by himself. He would get killed.
 4. In the same way, God did not make you to go solo. He made you to do life in community with other Christ-followers. Let me be frank. I've never met a mature, doctrinally sound, healthy, fulfilled Christian that is unchurched. Healthy Christians are connected to the body of Christ.
- v. I don't have to.
1. Some Christians don't think that church involvement is a command. They think it's optional. But it's not optional; it's a command.
 2. Go back to Hebrews 10:25, where it says not to neglect meeting together.
 3. Or consider how passionate Christ is about the church – he builds the church, loves the church, feeds and cares for the church – and as a Christian you are called to imitate Him.
 4. Or consider the fact the many commands in Scripture that are impossible to obey if you aren't involved in church. You are commanded to pursue the unity of the church (1 Cor

1:10). You are commanded to follow the leadership in the church (Heb 13:17). You are commanded to practice church discipline (Mt 18:15-20). Those can't be done without being involved in church.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. In Romans 1:8-15 Paul displays a strong desire to connect with the church in Rome. You should have the same desire to connect. To be a church member. To be a part of a church family. To discover and fulfill your role in the body of Christ.
2. Because not only do you need church, but the church needs you.
3. So, here's my challenge to you. Take your commitment to the church to the next level.
 - i. If you attend sporadically, once a month, maybe your next step is to attend every week.
 - ii. If you attend every week, maybe your next step is to join the church and become a member.
 - iii. If you already attend weekly and are a member, maybe your next step is to connect with a Home Group.
 - iv. Or maybe your next step start tithing.
 - v. Or maybe your next step is start serving.