



10 Reasons Why You NEED the Local Church...A Review ☺ Dr. Carlton McLeod

Text: Matthew 16: 13-18...A Review

- Back in 2006, I asked my church a series of questions:
 1. Why should you care about the church?
 2. Why should you connect in covenant to the local church?
 3. Why should you devote so much of your time, talent and treasure to the church?
 4. Can't you just listen to sermons online, sing a few songs at home, and call it a day?
- The answer: **Because “Kingdom” flows through the church! Yes through family as well, but the church is made up of families, and God calls us to come together for His glory!**
- This may sound extreme to some, but here is what we believe:
 1. Biblically, there is only one organization more significant in the life of a believer than the local church and one only: your **family**.
 2. Every believer is part of the “universal” or “invisible” church, but based on the New Testament, Christ never meant for that truth to birth a generation of uncovered, uncommitted Christians!
 - a. In Scripture there are 109 references to the local church and less than 10 about the “universal” church.
 - b. The local church is the expression or manifestation of Christ’s flock.
 - c. The belief that a Christian “can just worship at home” without being connected to a local church is baloney! We don’t see a shred of this mindset in the New (or Old for that matter) Testament!
 3. Most people have NO IDEA how significant the local church is, and many pastors are afraid to tell them because of how it might sound. That's why it's so easy for them to "forsake the assembling," or be loosely connected to the Church of Christ. (Heb 10:25)

Review Thoughts on the Text:

1. Jesus is the Rock or Cornerstone of the church.
 - ***Eph 2:19-20 ESV** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.*
 - The church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, who preached the “Rock” of Christ!
 - So it’s not the pastor, buildings, vision statements, etc.; it’s Christ! How can you be committed to Christ and not His Body?
2. Jesus builds and is still building the church!
 - What is Christ building? The Church! He is building His CHURCH! Please think through the connection between church and family!
 - Fathers and mothers disciple their children and godly singles walk in righteousness...as we all steward our money, preach the **Gospel**, make disciples, use our gifts, etc...the Church is built...and she is built POWERFULLY!
 - Friends, when we connect with the church, we connect with **what** Christ said He’d build. There is no way to miss this!
3. Since He is building it, Jesus **protects** and **advances** His church against the kingdom of darkness!
 - Sheep are vulnerable without a shepherd. There are wolves out there!

- *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Act 20:28-30 ESV)*
 - He didn't **say**, "the gates of hell won't prevail against your job, or even you as an individual. He said it won't stand against the "ekklesia," the church....the "called out ones."
4. By extension then, Jesus anchors, gives purpose to, grows, and prospers us through the church!
- This mindset smacks hard against American individualism, but it is still true. **God made us to be interdependent...self-governors to be sure, but also a part of a Body of Believers.**
 - Again, in the New Testament, you were either a baptized part of a local body or you were not a Christian. The two went together.
 - In fact, as we'll soon see, to be removed from a local body was to be excommunicated and "delivered to Satan." (1 Corinthians 5)

10 Reasons Why You Need the Local Church...again a Review!

1. **You need the local church because the local church is God's plan!**
 - a. Remember, Christ "gave Himself" for the church! (Eph 5:25)
 - b. He wants each member of His Body to be a part of the local expression of the church. He didn't die so we could "take or leave" the Body of Christ!
 - c. This first reason is enough. God commands us to gather together (Heb 10:24-25) with other believers under the authority of pastors/elders (Eph 4:11-12).
2. **You need the local church to come under the protection and authority of godly elders.**
 - a. *Heb 13:17 ESV- Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*
 - b. EVERYBODY NEEDS A PASTOR! ☺ Remember, this structure is God's design.
 - c. We all know about abusive pastors. What we don't talk much about people's abuse of the church. In the New Testament, there was no church shopping/hopping. You could not just change churches based on carpet color, programs, our building newness!
3. **You need the local church to grow as a disciple of Jesus.**
 - a. God places godly teachers in His church to instruct and equip His people: "*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...*" (Eph 4:11-12 ESV)
 - b. And btw, church attendance is a key to discipleship. As a matter of fact, in the first century, it would have been unheard of for a true follower of Christ to be disconnected from the church. It was a priority! They were willing to die to go to church!
 - c. In his book, *Stop Dating the Church, Fall in Love with the Family of God*, Joshua Harris writes: "We build our lives around our priorities. Building your life around the church means making it the kind of priority that secondary concerns flow around, not over."
4. **You need the local church to participate in the corporate worship of God and the sacraments.**
 - a. In both Old and New Testaments, we see God's desire that His people would come together for worship:
 - b. *Psa 107:32 ESV Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

- c. *Act 2:46-47 ESV* And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
 - d. The context of communion and baptism was also corporate. (1 Cor 11:20-34; Acts 2:38-41)
- 5. You need the local church because through it, you take part in God's eternal plan to rescue fallen humanity! (Matt 28:18-20)**
- a. Through the church "context" is where most of us disciple others!
 - b. Don't believe me? Imagine you are discipling a friend in your home or on a break at work (I pray you are!). What is your recommendation for him or her on a Sunday morning? What about their gifts? Where are they being used? What about authority and accountability to elders? How do you have any credibility whatsoever if you read Scripture with them but you yourself aren't committed to a local body?
 - c. As you are taught, you teach others. This was God's idea.
- 6. You need the local church to discover and use your spiritual gifts.**
- a. To the local church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Cor 12:7)
 - b. Peter says to the local churches, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Pet 4:10)
 - c. This is why everyone must serve. EVERYONE MUST SERVE. Hey...it's in our triangle! LOL. The less you serve the more likely you are to become self-centered. Here is statement based on 16 years of experience: *Those who serve the least (or serve with improper motives), criticize the most.*
- 7. You need the local church to learn to love one another.**
- a. Note that this point says "learn to love." Given our total depravity at birth, love isn't natural. It is first given by the Spirit (Rom 5:5), and then must be practiced.
 - b. The apostle John wrote: "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1Jn 3:17-18 ESV)
 - c. Pastor Mark Dever says, "Do you want to know that your new life (in Christ) is real? Commit yourself to a local group of saved sinners. Try to love them. Don't just do it for three weeks. Don't just do it for six months. Do it for years. You'll find out whether you love God."
- 8. You need the local church for the loving accountability it provides.**
- a. A healthy church is where we have the Gospel "clarified" for us, and where our Christianity is tested as fake or authentic and our sin challenged. (1 Cor 4-6)
 - b. *Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove (correct or tell a fault), rebuke (censure; charge), and exhort (lift up; comfort), with complete patience and teaching. (2Ti 4:2 ESV)*
 - c. I would say the greatest CRCC weakness as a church is in the area of church-discipline. Sadly, my own past fears of people leaving caused this I think. Stand by for some learning in this area from 1 Corinthians. May the Lord help me! ☺
- 9. You need the local church to consistently learn the grace of giving.**
- a. Many people use very spiritual sounding reasons for not joining a local church, but if you peel back enough layers, you'll many times find a dollar! "Joining" to so many means "now I'm expected to give."
 - b. And that is true! The local church is indeed where you learn to the grace of giving outside your own home. We should give out of love (Jn 3:16), cheerfully (2 Co 9:7), regularly (1 Co

16:2), according to our **ability** (1 Co 16:2), at times sacrificially (2 Co 8:3), and in faith (Phil 4:19) that we may “reap bountifully” (2 Co 9:6).

- c. At CRCC, tithing is a **model** rather than a **mandate**....a good budgetary mark with historical precedent, not a New Testament command.

10. You need to the local church to experience the encouragement of Christian **fellowship.**

- a. Dear friends, isolation is so destructive and runs counter to apostolic teaching.
- b. Satan loves to get Christians in a corner alone and beat on them. One of the most common tricks is this...mark it well!

A Christian has a tough time: falls into sin, has a marriage or child issue, a financial issue, or a straight up rebellion issue...you get the point. The church, if it is healthy, tries to help. The help is either unsuccessful or the done wrongly (churches make mistakes!). The Christian withdraws. This almost never works out for the good of either the Christian or his/her church! Don't isolate yourself!!!!!!

- c. Paul said it best when he writes to the local church at Thessalonica:

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (12) We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, (13) and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. (14) And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. (15) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (16) Rejoice always, (17) pray without ceasing, (18) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1Th 5:11-18 ESV)

May these things mark CRCC as we go forward together. In Jesus' Name, Amen.