

February 11, 2018 -

Ephesians 4:11-13

- “Faithfulness to the Local Church”

Introduction:

The Barna Research Group has been conducting and analyzing research to understand cultural trends related to beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors since 1984. Their latest report states, Americans are attending church less, and more people are experiencing and practicing their faith outside of its four walls. Millennials in particular are coming of age at a time of great skepticism and contempt toward institutions—particularly the church. Add to this the broader secularizing trend in American culture, and a growing antagonism toward faith claims, and these are uncertain times for the U.S. church. Charles Morrison once wrote, "The Christian church is a society of sinners "It is the only society in the world where membership is based upon the single qualification that the candidate shall be unworthy of membership." The church is made up of sinners.

Yet, the church is the most blessed institution on the earth, the only one built by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today I want to talk with you for a few minutes about “Faithfulness to the Local Church”. You see, in a little while we will have a congregational meeting and we will take some time to look together at the fiscal state of the church. Praise God the fiscal state of our church is good. But what is more important is the spiritual state of our church and the faithfulness of its member to participate and promote its welfare.

I like us to look at the church in Ephesus. It was a good church. They were a wonderful church. They were in process of maturing. It is so important for official members to take serious their commitment to this church...it is the Local Bible believing church for you and as we heard read we made a commitment...

We agree, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in spiritual knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spiritually. To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give it a sacred pre-eminence over all institution of human origin; by attending all the regular services of the church. Your present and commitment is vitally important. Here are some stats.

The largest group of American churchgoers attends services in a more intimate context. Almost half (46%) attend a church of 100 or fewer members. More than one-third (37%) attend a midsize church of over 100, but not larger than 499. One in 11 (9%) attends a church with between 500 and 999 attenders, and slightly fewer (8%) attend a very large church of 1,000 or more attendees. The percentages of mega churches are few and far between.

Today there is a real lack of faithfulness to the local church. It seems we understand how important it is to support local business, our local schools and even our local teams. Yet when it comes to the greatest institution in our community it is often treated with disdain. Therefore a brief review of the purpose needs attention.

I The Purpose define: Matt. 28:19-20

1. Why does the church exist? What is its ultimate purpose? Jesus Christ, before ascending to the Father, spoke directly to these questions. One day on a mountain in Galilee He spoke in clear and simple language in (Matt. 28:19-20). **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

Stating it still more simply the disciples of Christ heard Jesus say that day, “Go everywhere and win men to Christ [that is, make Christians], and then baptize them and teach them.

2. The Book of Acts demonstrates this beyond doubt... Luke's document is a precise record of the disciples' activities and accomplishments as they seriously and systematically carried out Jesus Christ's marching orders. The church therefore exists to carry out two foundational functions—evangelism (to make disciples) and edification (to teach them). By these two functions we can define the purpose of the church is to produce mature believers in Jesus Christ engaging them in local gathered community. So what is the local gathered community?

3. Look at Revelation 1:11. This is the local body of believers (Christians) in Jesus Christ. It is vitally important to come together to fulfill its purpose. It is designed to have leaders and teachers. It's amazing what some believe the purpose of the church really is. Because people are not interested in the Word and God's purpose but rather that the church puts on an entertainment spectacular.

4. The principle of the Local Church is mentioned in the Bible over one hundred times. The word "church" occurs 77 times in the singular form, and 37 times in the plural form in the Bible. All these verses are found in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, the word “church” comes from the Greek word “ecclesia”, which means “those called out.” It refers to a group of people who are brought together for some special reason. In the religious sense, the word refers to those people who have been brought together by God. In verse 11 of Ephesians we see Christ brings these individuals together.

The local church is a group of believers in Christ that meets at a specific location under the ministry of the church leadership who provide spiritual guidance in the things of the Lord. The assembly is local, visible, organized, and established. All believers are in the universal church. However they are also commanded to take part in the local Church, if not for themselves then the aid and edification of others. The church is absolutely essential to maintaining your walk of sanctification and for the edifications of others. You cannot fulfill Christ's will in this regard if you choose church attendance like a Golden Coral Smorgasbord. This leads to point # 2...

II The Perfecting of the Saints - Ephesians 4:12-13

1. The apostle Paul amplifies this truth in his letter to the Church at Ephesus. He stresses the perfecting of the saints in verse 12. The word “perfecting” comes from a Greek root word that means “fully grown”.

2. The gifted men (leaders) equipped the saints to do the work of the ministry. Again the work includes evangelism and edification. Edification can only be done one with another; the Greek

word is “koinonia” it means fellowship. Man was not created to be alone. God said, It is not good for man to be alone. People were made for fellowship therefore we need each other, and we need to faithfully come together to edify one another.

Many Christians do not join a local church because they think the institution is foolish and unnecessary. However, nothing of spiritual value will be added to your life outside the local church. Submitting to the leadership of a church activates the power of God for our individual destinies and purposes.

3. The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the importance of local assemblies. In fact, it was the pattern of Paul's ministry to establish local congregations in the cities where he preached the gospel. Individual Christians were part of local churches. These churches were viewed as distinct from one another and each church acted independently from the others. In the New Testament, the early believers: * Submitted under the protection and nurture of the leadership of the local church. * Devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.* Prayed...

III Observance of the New Testament Ordinances.

1. A very important part of worship and Bible study is encouraging one another to do acts of love and good works. Also, there is the New Testament Ordinances of water baptism and the Lords supper.

2. These things cannot be done apart from the assembly of believers in the confines and parameters of God's Word. He commanded us to come together for the Lord's Supper and to do this in remembrance of HIM. This observation is in direct obedience to our Lord and we gather now to fulfill this together.

3. Sometimes we have a tendency to waver in our faith; that's another reason why we need a local church. In this world we will be hurt, taken advantage of, and abused. As a result, unless we are very careful, our hearts will be filled with bitterness, resentment, and even hate. However, at church services we are to consider how to provoke each other unto love and to good works.

We should never be guilty of: **forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching Hebrews (10:25).** Desiring to become a spiritual recluse is a sure sign a person needs fellowship with other believers.

Conclusion:

You know the New Testament teaches us to possess a personal faith in Jesus Christ, it says nothing at all about a private faith. We need other believers, and other believers need us. Let's enjoy and contribute to the strength and fellowship of the unified body of Christ. An effective church will demonstrate the good sense of love, fellowship, cooperation, caring and unity in the Holy Spirit.

D. Robert Logan and Tom Clegg are quoted in - In Releasing Your Church's Potential, they said, "I believe that the enemy divides all people into two categories: those he can ignore and those he has to fight. I want to be one of those he has to fight." He went on to quote a WWII bomber pilot: "If you're taking flak, you're over the target."