

Sermon Study Guide

Pastor: Dr. Henry Schorr

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THE MAIN THING God intended that His CHURCH be a community where all are loved and accepted, cared for and supported, needed and valued. In the church, all are members of a spiritual FAMILY, connected to a spiritual BUILDING and important parts of Christ's BODY.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. If you had to choose a body part that you had to get rid of, which one would you pick!?
2. What kind of relationships do you find satisfying?
3. Research tells us that each person has a need for acceptance, a need to belong, and a need for significance. What does this mean to you?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Read Matthew 22:37-39.
How does service for the church (i.e. Children's ministry; in the Cafe; with Special Needs; involvement with a community of Christ-followers...) help a person live Christ's directive?
2. Robert Putman** notes that the key to happiness is having deeply satisfying relationships which meet our needs for acceptance, belonging, and significance. God's vision for the Church is to provide a means to meet these needs. Pastor Henry noted three metaphors (word pictures) to help us understand this.

Read John 1:12-13; Romans 12:4-8; Eph 2:19 – 22; Heb 10:24-25
Explain each metaphor. Which need(s) does each meet? How?

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling.'*

1. Of the three metaphors Pastor Henry describes for the Church, which is most meaningful to you? Why?
2. How are you contributing now in the Family, the Building and the Body? What is an action step you need to take this week to fulfill your role in the Church?

**<http://bowlingalone.com/>

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 22:37-39

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.

John 1:12-13

¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Romans 12:4-8

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Sermon Study Summary

Research by Professor Putman shows that people think the key to a happy, satisfied life is deep, satisfying relationships. Jesus taught that nothing in life is as important as loving God and loving people; building healthy relationships, rather than achievement, should be our primary focus. (Mt 22:37-39). Yet people today live at a hectic pace with 9-hour workdays, many activities and fears for their safety. They feel exhausted, isolated and alone with few close friends. George Gallup Jr's research says that North Americans are among the loneliest in the world.

God did not intend us to live this way. He created a paradise for Adam and Eve, and relationships of acceptance, love, support, value and encouragement. Due to their rebellion, that perfect community was fractured causing fear, insecurity, criticism, competition and loneliness. (Gen 3) But God did not quit. He chose to re-establish a loving, healthy community by sending Jesus to be the WAY to restore people's relationships with Himself and with others. That community is the church. Scholars say our greatest needs are 1) to be loved and accepted 2) to be cared for and supported 3) to feel needed and valued—all found in relationships with others. God envisioned His Church as the community that meets those needs.

The Scriptures give us metaphors (word pictures) to understand God's vision.

THE CHURCH IS...

1. A spiritual FAMILY where we are loved and accepted. (Jn 1:12) When we put our faith in Jesus Christ (are 'born again'), God becomes our Father and we become His children. (Eph 2:19) God wants the church FAMILY to reflect Jesus' character—His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and faithfulness. The more we reflect Jesus, the more loving, accepting and beautiful His church FAMILY will be. We love sincerely, are humble and transparent, share at a deep level, see the good in others, are considerate of others' quirks, serve humbly, build bridges, challenge, encourage and listen to others. (Rom 12:9-11, Heb 10:24-25) We are members of God's FAMILY, loved and accepted.

2. A spiritual BUILDING where we are connected and supported. (Eph 2:19-22) Imagine a construction site with building supplies that need a craftsman to connect the right parts at the right places so that each serves its purpose. Without those connections and supports the building would not exist. God did not intend the church to be a collection of individuals but to be a BUILDING. The church will only be the church Christ intended when we are connected to each other and support each other. Who will support you when a child threatens suicide, or a spouse is hospitalized in critical condition or other major crises arise? To whom are you connected who will help you? The church is that BUILDING where we belong, are cared for and supported.

3. A spiritual BODY where we are needed and valued. (Rom 12:4-5) Just as every part of the physical body is important, so each of us is unique and important with a special role as part of Christ's church—His BODY. Just as each part of the body is needed for the body function, so each of us is important and necessary for the spiritual BODY to have the full impact that God intended. If we do not exercise our God-given gifts and talents, then His BODY will not be all He wants it to be. The little things we do for the Lord may not seem important, but our faithfulness does matter to God and to those we minister to. In the church BODY, we are needed and valued.

As Christ-followers, we are members of a spiritual FAMILY, connected to a spiritual BUILDING and important parts of Christ's BODY—the CHURCH.

Too often temporary, earthly things crowd out the time needed to build healthy relationships. We cannot hurry to cultivate friendships, to listen, to have fun or to rejoice with those who rejoice, or mourn with those who mourn. The quest for achievement (though not wrong) may distract us from investing in deep relationships so we go it alone, miss God's best for us and endanger our lives. Research shows that strong relationships result in a healthier, longer life. Joining a small group reduces your odds of dying this year. (Dr. Putman)

Do you regularly meet with a small group of people who keep Christ at the centre of their life? Who serves as your refuge, is open and transparent so it is easy for you to be honest? Who affirms, encourages and listens to you? Who holds you accountable with humility and courtesy? If you are isolated or lonely, you need to decide: Am I going to trust in God or in myself? Am I going to trust the WORD or the WORLD? Paul made a clear choice; he was passionate about giving his life to serve one Master. (Phil 1:21) What am I giving my life to?