

“United in Community”

The beauty about being a disciple of Jesus Christ in this world is that God uses everyday experiences to remind us about Truth. I had such an experience on July 2. The place was floor ten (cancer level) of the Gonda Building of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. Why Mayo? Karen has been invited to participate in a clinical trial for the immunotherapy drug Keytruda. As we were waiting to receive the first treatment, I had this incredibly warm sense of community come over me. As I looked over the vast room, there were at least 50 cancer patients waiting for appointments. I felt so safe. You could give eye contact to those battling the dreadful disease to say, “I don’t know you, but I understand your journey.” We were all there collectively with a unified purpose in seeking our own miracle. It was powerful. I wanted to hand out hugs and say, “It’s going to be ok. We are all in this together.”

As I travel among the churches within our region, nothing is more difficult to see than Christians who do not appreciate the sense of Community God has given. In our churches, I continue to emphasize the need to stay on task with Mission. Our biblical mandate is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We must see lost souls come to new faith and seize the opportunity to plant missional churches. We must build God’s people into Christ-like maturity. We must equip each believer in the church with the skills to serve Him for the sake of the kingdom. Our mission is to recruit, develop, and multiply godly leaders in the church, starting with the Elders or Deacons. Finally, we must empower believers to go out into the surrounding world to serve and live out their faith for all to see. I was doing some leadership training in a church one Saturday evening when someone shouted out, “We may be lacking in a lot of things here at church, but what we do have is a strong sense of community.” Friends, we absolutely cannot accomplish the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ without the community of the local church.



In today’s society, the Community has taken on the pervasive attitude that “church is no big deal”. You already know this, but the church has to be something more than a place to get married, bring the kids on Sunday or make better business contacts. While living in an age of high stake politics, deep moral dilemmas, great international concerns, mind-boggling discoveries, space explorations, and the amazing advancements of technology, how can the Community be that significant? It can and it must.

In Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus made an amazing unconditional promise to the Apostle Peter, *“Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”* The church is not some sloppy fly-by-night “.com” business that fades with the passing of time. This powerful institution is built upon the ROCK of Christ and it is perpetually invincible. Because of what He has done and who we are in Christ, the church can transform the culture of the world.

Some years ago, Dr. Jay Kesler gave a message at a family camp Conference Center entitled, “Why I Believe in the Local Church.” He beautifully answered the question that I often hear, “How can the church really make that much of a difference in our world?” Jay offered five wonderful answers.

1. *The church is the only institution dealing with the ultimate issues.* They would be matters of life and death, purpose, identity, relationships, lasting priorities, heaven and hell.
2. *The church provides perspective that gives dignity to mankind.* We live in a day in which the purpose of man has become over glorified, which creates a desperate sense of inner worthlessness.

3. *The church provides a moral and ethical compass in the midst of relativism.* Like a swamp of murky, slimy water, our society has resisted or completely rejected absolutes. The church is to stand on the timeless bedrock of Scripture.
4. *The church is the only place to find true community, healing, compassion, and love.* It is here people care. Really care. Not because of status or money, but because the Spirit of God is at work, weaving together the lives within the Body.
5. *The church (like no other institution) has provided motivation for the most lasting, unselfish, essential, courageous ministries on earth.* It is parachurch ministries like schools, hospitals, halfway houses, orphanages, mission groups and so much more.

The idea of Community comes from the sense of responsibility we have for each other. Paul encourages us to take care of our brethren while living and obeying the Word of God. Let us remember that it is our firm and certain faith in Christ within our Christian Community that holds us together.

“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” I Corinthians 1:10

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