

## Why Is The Church Necessary

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 29, 2017

Good Morning. This is my second week in Canada, and my second Sunday as your Pastor, and I would say that things are going well so far! My family is here. Katie and the boys arrived safely last night. They flew in from Pennsylvania, and went through Customs and Immigration and all of that. Katie's mom is also with us to help us get settled in. So please say hello to her, her name is "Laura." We have also got our stuff in the house. It's in boxes everywhere, but it's all in there. So, things are coming together for us and we really appreciate your help and support in making that happen. We look forward to settling in even more and getting acclimated to Canada. But with that said, this morning I want to build on something that we talked about last week, and let me get started this way.

I think it is pretty common for people to have a bad experience in church. Would you agree? It is pretty common for people to get beat up and attacked and mistreated in the church. It is unfortunate but it is common.

According to the Hartford Institute for Christian Research, only twenty percent of Americans attend church on a given Sunday. Which means that eighty percent don't. Eighty percent don't come to a house of worship. Eighty percent don't listen to preaching. Eighty percent don't take the Lord's Supper and submit to baptism. Eighty percent don't hear the Scriptures read and hold each other accountable for their sins.

And, when you look at the numbers in Canada, the story is the same. According to an article from the Globe and Mail Website from 2012:

Before 1971, less than one percent of Canadians ticked the "no religion" box on national surveys. Two generations later, nearly a quarter of the population, or twenty-two percent, say they aren't religious...What we've seen is a huge change in the last forty years, in Canada, a march toward secularization that mirrors what has happened in Europe...A look at the youngest Canadians suggests that the transformation is gathering pace. In 2002, thirty-four percent of fifteen to twenty nine year olds said that religion was highly important to them. Data from Canada's 2009 General Social Survey shows that number tumbling to twenty-two percent...Only the persistence of religious traditions among immigrants has slowed the rapid march away from the church...

Why is that? Why are Canadians becoming less and less religious? Why is the country marching towards secularization? Why are immigrants the only ones who persist in their religious traditions? Because, people have had bad experiences in church. Because people have gotten beat up and attacked and mistreated in the church. Let's face it, the church is a tough place to be. It can be rough on Christians. Stay in it long enough and it will give you a black eye and a bloody lip and we've all got stories of this.

I grew up in the Bible Belt in a land full of churches. My hometown had ten thousand people in it and forty churches. Church Street literally ran through the center of town and on it you had the

Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church. You had the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church. You had Pentecostal churches and Catholic churches. It had Lutheran churches and Independent churches. You had churches everywhere and all of them had given someone a bloody lip. Some of them gave multiple bloody lips.

By the time I graduated College, I had seen seven friends fired from churches in the denomination I grew up in. That denomination gave bloody lips by the handful. Just as an example of this, one of the men who was fired was reading his Resignation Letter on a Sunday Evening. He was moving back to Texas so his wife could finish school. He was leaving peacefully. He wasn't kicking up a fuss. And, when he had finished reading it, one of the Elders said, "I move that we make this letter effective immediately." A second stood up and said, "I second that." and they fired him on the spot, with no prior warning - with no explanation or heads up. And, as a result, people left. In droves. The people went to another church of the same denomination where it was later found out that the pastor was under investigation for poisoning his wife. And some of the others started their own church where it was discovered that their senior pastor was having an affair. It was a total mess. A complete disaster.

But, I mention that to say that we all have had some bad experiences in church. We have all gotten a bloody nose or two. In fact, when someone tells me that they have had a bad experience in church, I want to tell them to "join the club." We've all had a bad experience in church. It's happened to all of us.

Read the Bible and you will see that the Apostles had bad experiences in church. They were beat up and attacked and mistreated by the church.

Read Church History and you can see the same thing happening with the Christians in the past. Martin Luther was persecuted by the church. John Calvin was persecuted by the church. William Tyndale was burnt at the stake by the church. Jonathan Edwards was fired and run out of town by the church.

Because it happens to all of us! We have all had a bad experience in the church. And it brings us all to the question: is the church necessary? Is the church even necessary? Do we even need to come to church? Should we even bother? With all the pain and misery and heartache, is it really worth it? Or, should we worship God some other way? Let's talk about that this morning.

If you are joining us for the first time today, we are starting a new series today called "The Foundations of the Church," where we will look at some basic doctrines, or basic teachings on the church.

I mentioned to you last time, that you have started a church. You have begun a new work of God here in Chilliwack. and in doing so, you have created a constitution and bylaws. You have chosen a name and started new ministries that didn't exist before. You have set up rules to determine how this thing is to function and what it is to look like. But, the question is, what do you do with all of that now? Once we get the ball rolling, what do we do with the ball?

That's the purpose of this Series, to talk about what to do with the ball. I talked about that a little

bit last week, but I want to build on it this week and in the weeks to come. You have already laid a foundation here. You have already gotten this thing started and I just want to take it and keep the ball rolling. Keep it going in the right direction, if you will. And let's start it off by talking about the necessity of the church.

We have all had bad experiences in the church. We have all been roughed up a little bit by it. So, is it all worth it? Is it necessary? I would say that it is and here are four reasons why. Here are four reasons why the church is necessary. And the first reason is this: the church is necessary because...you are a member of the church whether you realize it or not. The church is necessary because you are a member of the church whether you realize it or not.

Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. We will be turning to several passages this morning. The church is mentioned all over the pages of the Bible. But, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is talking about the church and in verses 12-13 he says this:

- 12 For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.
- 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

To be "baptized" is to be immersed into something, to be dunked into it, like you would dunk a cookie in milk. When someone is baptized, it symbolically shows that they have gone down into the grave to die and that they have come up out of it to live again! They die to their old way of life as they go down into the water and they rise to a new way of life as they come up out of it.

That doesn't save you...it just represents the salvation that has already taken place in your heart. Paul says that this is what happens when someone is saved. The Holy Spirit baptizes them. He dunks them - immerses them. Into what? Verse 13: "into one body," "into one group."

We call this the Universal Church, the church that meets everywhere. There is the local church which meets in certain locations every week. We have local churches here in Chilliwack and local churches in Abbotsford. We have local churches in Vancouver, and in Langley, and Hope. We have local churches in Surrey, in Cloverdale, and in Aldergrove. But, verse 13 talks about the Universal Church, the one that meets everywhere. This is the church that meets in Africa and this is the church that meets in Asia. This is the church that meets in Nigeria and this is the church that meets in Nepal. This is the church that meets in the United State and this is the church that meets in France, and England, and Mexico, and Canada. This is the church that meets everywhere. And Paul says this as strongly as he can in verse 13:

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

"Jews or Greeks...slave or free" is a reference to the biggest barriers that anyone knew of in the First Century. In the First Century, the Jews hated the Greeks, or the Gentiles, because they thought they were dirty. They thought they were unclean. And, the Gentiles hated the Jews because they thought they were proud. They thought they were haughty and arrogant. And, you see the same problem with masters and slaves. Slaves resented their masters, and masters, their slaves, as you can imagine. But, Paul says that when you become a Christian, all of that changes.

Because there are no more barriers anymore in the church. There are no more dividing lines. All of this gets broken down. "Red and yellow, black and white...All are precious in His sight" (Clare Herbert Woolston).

Race doesn't mean anything in the church. Colour doesn't mean anything. And the same thing goes for class. There is no "high class" and "low class" in the church. There is no "rich" and "poor." "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling" (Thomas Hastings). Which means that when you get saved, you don't need to step down on your social ladder. You need to step off it. You need to throw it away. It has no place anymore. You don't need to say, "I will love you even though I am better than you." You need to say, "I will love you because I am not better than you. I am not better than anybody. In fact, I am the most worthless sinner on the planet, but I have been saved by grace, like you. And I have been forgiven, like you. And I have been baptized into the church, like you." And, that is one reason why the Church is necessary. Because you belong to this thing whether you realize it or not. If you are saved, you are part of the Universal Church. You are part of this Family of God. It's schizophrenic to call yourself a Christian and not attend a church. That's like calling yourself a Canadian and never playing hockey or calling yourself a B.C.'er and never drinking coffee. It's not natural. It's weird.

Several years ago, when I was on vacation, I was talking with a family member who said, "I don't need to go to church. I will just worship at home. I will just read the Bible myself." And another family who was present said, "Can you be a soldier and never join the army? Can you be a sailor and never join the navy?" No. You join the army because you are a soldier. You join the navy because you are a sailor. And, you go to church because you are part of the church. It is where you belong. This is your church home.

By the way, you have seen this here at Grace Fellowship Church. Many of you are closer to people in here than you are to people in your own family. Why is that? Because this is your home now. This is your spiritual family. You have more in common with them and you need to express that by joining the church.

So, that is the first reason why the church is necessary. The church is necessary because you are a member of the Church whether you realize it or not. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (Verse 13). And that leads to the second reason why the church is necessary.

A second reason why the church is necessary and worth all the pain and heartache and misery is that...you are not supposed to go through the Christian life alone. You are not supposed to go through the Christian life alone.

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Galatians. Galatians is three books to the right of 1 Corinthians. One of the duties of a Christian is to help other Christians and, here in Galatians Paul says that we do that in the church. He says in Galatians 6:1-3:

- 1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
- 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

I don't know how many former athletes we have in the room today, but, how many of you have played a sport where you had to be carried off a field? Anybody? You played a contact sport where you got banged up. You hurt your knee. You tweaked your back. And, you had to literally be carried off to the sidelines? I played tennis so I didn't know what that was like. Tennis was too manly to be a contact sport. But, some of you have experienced that. Now imagine that you got banged up and you twisted your knee and you didn't have any teammates. You had to crawl off to the sidelines alone. I mention that because some Christians go through life like that. They don't have anyone to help them. They don't have anyone to carry them off to the sidelines. So, when they fall into sin, they fall alone. So, when they stumble into temptation, they stumble alone. They never experience what the Apostle Paul is talking about here.

Some of you know this, but I work on a website called [justthesimpletruth.com](http://justthesimpletruth.com). And, occasionally it gets emails. Now before you are impressed by that, I think we have gotten eleven emails in eleven years. So, this year, we're hoping to make it twelve. Twelve emails in twelve years. Maybe one of you will feel generous and go online and send us an email. But, several years ago, I received an email from a reader that says this:

At last! I could not believe my eyes when I clicked on the site. All I have ever wanted was "just the simple truth."

The churches in my area do not offer the basic tenets of the faith or reformation theology. No one wants to dig into Scripture, make us think like the great theologians (Spurgeon, Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther, John Piper, John MacArthur, etc.).

Because of pop Christianity and liberal theology, I haven't been to church in years. I've continued reading the Bible, praying, and I often write about my faith, though. Thank you again for your ministry.

Did you catch that? "Because the churches in my area don't teach the truth...I haven't been to church in years. Because of pop Christianity...I've continued reading the Bible, praying, and I often write about my faith." But I do it alone. I do it all by myself.

This is what I would call a Maverick Christian. A Solo Christian. A *numero uno* Christian. That is the attitude that says, "I don't need your help. I don't want anybody around me. I can do it all by myself." And, while it makes for a good John Wayne movie, that does not honor God. We were not saved to go through the Christian life alone. We were not changed into new creatures so we could enjoy the benefit of salvation all by ourselves. We were not given spiritual gifts to use them on ourselves. We were given gifts for others. We were given new life for others. We were given salvation to help others. So, we need to be with others. We need to be with the church.

If you go through the Christian life alone, I promise you that you are going to get banged up and twist your knee and there will be no one there to carry you off to the sidelines. It will happen. I guarantee it. I promise you, that you are going to get caught in a trespass and there will be no one there to restore you. You are going to struggle with sin and there will be no one there to confront you. You are going to doubt your salvation and there will be no one there to assure you. You are

going to fall into heresy and there will be no one there to rebuke you. And, it will be your fault because you did it all alone.

And, you can add to this, that there are numerous commands in Scripture that can only be obeyed when you are around other people. When you are in the church. Romans 12:15 says: "Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn." You can't do that if you don't have anybody to rejoice with. Right? Does that make sense? You can't do that if you don't have anybody to mourn with. Hebrew 13:17 says: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." You can't do that if you don't have any leaders. You can only do that if you have someone to submit to. Matthew 18:15 says: "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." You can't do that if you don't have a brother. You can't live the Christian life all by yourself. You can't do it alone. It is impossible. You can't do it. The idea that you can please God by going up on a mountain and living in a hut like a hermit is found nowhere in the Bible. The idea that you can please Him by living in a monastery or a nunnery, shut off from the world is found nowhere in the Bible. You are not to go through the Christian life alone.

Just as a side note here, the Devil works best when you are alone. I don't know if you have ever thought about that, but John Owen said that Satan is a coward and he loves to attack you when you are lonely. He loves to go after you when there is no one else around.

I don't know if you have ever seen one of those videos of a lion hunting an elephant? But, lions can't kill an elephant if it's in a herd. They can't kill them if they are in a pack. So, what the lions do is they find an elephant on the edge of the herd and they claw at him and they swipe at him and they annoy him to the point that he leaves and he goes off all by himself. And, when he does, they kill him. When he does that, they jump on his back and they bring him down. Satan operates that way with Christians. He wants to get you away from the herd so he can tempt you and kill you. Don't let him do that. Stay with other believers. There is strength in numbers. There is strength when you are not all alone. And that is another reason why the church is necessary.

And, that leads us to a third reason why the church is necessary. It is necessary because Jesus died to save a multitude, not just you. It is necessary because Jesus died to save a multitude, not just you.

Turn with me back to 1 Corinthians 10. And, as you are turning there, I might say something offensive here, but I want you to know that I simply mean it to be Biblical. But, some of you have heard it said that, "If you were the only person in the world, you are so special that Jesus would have died just for you." Ever heard that before? "If you were the only person in the world, you are so wonderful that Jesus would have been crucified just for you. Jesus would have shed His blood just for you and you alone." I am here to tell you that that idea is wrong. It is found nowhere on the pages of Scripture. You are special...that's true. You have been created in the image of God. You have been made a little lower than the angels. But, the idea that Jesus came to save you, and you alone, is wrong. He came to save many people. He came to save a multitude. If you read through the Bible, you can see that the majority of the time, when it speaks of salvation, it uses plural language. What I mean is that, Jesus died for the world. And, Jesus died for the sheep plural, not one sheep, but many sheep - an entire flock of sheep.

Jesus died for His bride that, according to Revelation 19, is "a vast multitude" that is so big that when it sings, it shakes the very ground. It sounds like rushing water, and lightning and thunder. The church is His vine and a kingdom and a family. It is a chosen race, and a holy nation, and a people for God's own possession. But, nowhere does it say that Jesus came to save only you. Nowhere does it say that He died just for you, that He was crucified just for you. And, you need to own that, and live like it, and join the church.

Just to balance this out, Jesus did come to save individual people. He did come to save us on a personal basis. But, don't ever buy the lie that the whole world revolves around you because it doesn't! It revolves around others. And, 1 Corinthians 10:11-13 says, when it says,

- 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
- 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.
- 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Now you may not see the connection here with what we were just talking about but, let me explain it to you. As Paul is reminding the Corinthians of Israel's history, he says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man." In other words, "Corinthians, don't be proud of your achievements because, if it happened to Israel, it can happen to you...Don't be proud of your miracles and your speaking in tongues and your healings because if they did bad stuff, you can too. If they fall, you can fall too."

And, then he gives them some encouragement. He says, "And God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation, He will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." As God was faithful in the past, He will be faithful today. As God gave Israel a way out of their sin, He will give you a way out of yours.

And this applies to us today because, whatever trials you are going through, I guarantee you, they are not that unique to mankind. They are not that special. Whatever you are going through, you can bet that somebody has gone through it before you and God has brought them out of it. God has given them victory, and He will give you victory too. He will bring you out of it.

To look at it from another way, just as Jesus died for more than just you, Jesus gives victory to more than just you. He gives victory to other people too. And you need to be encouraged by that, and take it to heart.

Through the years, I have had people come into my office and say, looking sad and dejected, they say to me, "No one knows what I'm going through. No one has it as bad as me." And I have to take them back to this passage and say, "Are you telling me that in the entire history of the world, no one has ever struggled with alcohol the way that you do? Seriously? Do you believe that?" "Do you really believe that in the entire history of mankind, no one has ever had this bad of a marriage? No one? You are the first one?" "Do you really think that from Adam and Eve until today, no one has ever had kids who were as mean and nasty and bad as your kids were?"

"Do you really think that in all of human history, no one has struggled with impurity and pride the way you do?" That puts it into perspective...doesn't it?

We all know what it's like to wrestle with sin. We all know what it's like to stumble and fall. We all know what it's like to blow it in the eyes of God. But, here is the good news. Just as God has been faithful to us, God will be faithful to you. Here is the hope that you have. Just as God has brought us out of our trials, God will bring you out of your trials. "God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able to bear." And Jesus came to save a multitude, not just you. And you need to own that and draw strength from it. Get your mind off yourself for a minute and put it on others. Put it on the church.

And, that brings us to a final reason why the church is necessary. The church is necessary because:

- You are a member of the church whether you realize it or not
- You are not to go through the Christian life alone
- Jesus came to save a multitude, not just you

And, fourth and finally, the church is necessary because ministry happens in the church and you want to be part of that. Ministry happens in the church and you want to be part of that.

The New Testament says that ministry happens in the church. You go to church to minister to others. You don't go simply to attend. Attendance is not a spiritual gift. Let me say it again: Attendance is not a spiritual gift. Let me say it one more time: Attendance is not a spiritual gift! You get no brownie points with God simply by showing up and folding your arms and saying, "Alright Pastor Jeremy, give me another one." "Alright Preacher, give me another sermon. But, make it quick, because I want to beat the Methodists to lunch." That gets you nowhere with God.

And, you see this in Romans 12, if you want to turn there...Paul talks about the importance of service and he says this in verses 3-8:

- 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.
- 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,
- 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;
- 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;
- 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Again, we are part of one body. We have all been baptized into one body when we were saved and we were all baptized to do what? Paul says that we were baptized to serve the church. Paul says that we were baptized to use our gifts. God has given us spiritual gifts for the purpose of using them in the church. And, as Romans 12 says, "If you have the gift to teach, then teach and

if you have the gift to encourage, then encourage and if you have the gift to lead, then lead but do something with what you've been given." But, get involved. Don't just fold your arms and say, "Alright Preacher, give me another one."

This is the whole idea behind Jesus' words in Matthew 22:

But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

The Pharisees had lots of laws. They literally had hundreds of them. They had laws for what you ate and laws for what you drank. They had laws for what you wear and laws for how you did business. They had laws for your marriage and laws for your home and laws for your kids. They had laws for everything. But Jesus says that when it all comes down to it, there are only two laws, two great Commandments. "Love God and love your neighbor." That's it. And, if you notice, "love yourself" is not the third one. "Love yourself" is not mentioned in the list.

Jesus assumes that you do that enough already. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love your neighbor along with yourself. Love your neighbor with as much care as you already give to yourself. Love them with as much passion and devotion and concern as you already present to yourself. But, don't "love yourself." You do that enough already. And this is another reason why the church is necessary. The church is necessary because you don't need to love yourself. You need to love others.

Ministry happens in the church and you want be part of that. The two greatest commandments are obeyed in the church. Spiritual gifts are practiced in the church. You can do all of that in parachurch ministry and home Bible studies for sure. And, you can love others at your office, and your shop, and the school, and the gym. You can serve and teach and exhort and give and show mercy anywhere at any time, but the primary place to do that is the church. The church is the place where ministry happens and you want to be a part of that.

So, is the church necessary? I would say that it is. Is it worth all the pain and heartache and misery? I would say that it is. The church has always been a messy place. It has always been full of black eyes and bloody lips but the church is still necessary. It is still the place where God wants us to be.

And, if you want to see a great example of this, you can just look in the New Testament. We often think that the churches in the New Testament were perfect, but, they were far from it. They were a train wreck. Just look at the church in Corinth. They fought over sexual immorality, and fought over lawsuits. They were suing each other. They were taking each other to court. They fought over the Lord's Supper. They fought over marriage. They fought over everything. You could say the same thing about the church in Galatia. They fought over the Law. They thought they could be saved by the Law, by doing good works. The same thing could be said of the

church in Philippi. They fought over false teachers or they wrestled with them. The same thing with the church in Colossae. They fought over the deity of Christ. The same thing could be said of the church in Thessalonica. They fought over the return of Jesus. They had to be told that Jesus had not returned yet. And, then you have the churches in Revelation. Boy, were they a mess! They were like a train wreck on steroids. The church in Ephesus forgot its first love. The church in Smyrna was called a Synagogue of Satan. The church in Pergamum held to the teaching of Balaam. The church at Thyatira tolerated the false prophetess Jezebel. The church at Sardis had fallen asleep and yet Jesus still loved them. Yet Jesus still cared for them! Paul still loved them. He still cared about them. The church has always been a messy place and yet, the apostles didn't give up on it. Jesus didn't give up on it and neither should we.

The church is still necessary. It is still worth the trouble. It is still the people of God for this age and what that means is that if you want to be a part of the people of God for this age, for this very moment, you need to get involved with a local church and in the weeks to come. We are going to show you how you can do that and what that looks like.

For this week, let's pray and thank God for His church. Let's thank Him that with all the pain and heartache and black eyes. It is still worth it.