

## Connecting Deeper into the Church

Eph 1:22

<sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The Message:

At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

The church is God's idea and God's plan for the salvation of the world. It is the gathering of God's people so that He can accomplish His will on earth.

We accomplish God's plan for our lives individually by staying connected to the church.

1 Cor 12:12

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

Dystonia is a movement disorder where muscles contract involuntarily. You cannot control your own body. The contractions are unpredictable and cause you to unintentionally hurt yourself, others, and it limits what you can accomplish.

The problem is not the brain or the muscle individually, the problem is the connection between the muscles and the brain.

Christ is the HEAD and we are the BODY. Staying connected to church is how we stay connected to Christ.

Col 1:18

<sup>18</sup> And He is the head of the body, the church

1 Cor 12:12, 14

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

We each play a unique role in the body of Christ. God's plan for your life is integrated with the church. That's not to say that outside of church, you don't do anything, in fact the opposite is true, God wants you to be doing more outside the church than inside the church, but you need to be connected to the church.

Without staying connected to the church, we can end up being busy and doing a lot, but still miss what God wants us to do.

If we are not connected to the church, we either end up hurting the body or we end up hurting those outside the body, or both. We can derail the plans that God has for the church.

The church is how Jesus connects with us, we cannot connect to Him alone and outside of meeting together. (Acts 2:44, 46; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:34; Hebrews 10:25)

Jesus instituted the church, Jesus is building the church, Jesus has a plan and a purpose for the church, and we each have a role to play in the church. It means that if we want to stay connected to Jesus, we need to stay connected to the church.

1 Cor 12:27

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

How do we stay connected to the church?

## 1. Deeper Community

Eph 2:10

<sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We are created to do good works, which God prepared in advance. In other words, when God created you, He already had a plan for you.

But how do I know what God has for me? How do I make sure that I do them? God planned them, but I don't know what they are!

Heb 10:24

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> 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.

It's within the church community that we discover God's plan for our lives. It's not by being separated from church, it's not 'I need to travel for 6 months to discover my calling', you'll discover your calling and your purpose when you meet together with other believers, encouraging one another.

**CONSIDER** how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. It's not just 'tell someone', but it's more of coming up with ways and ideas to help one another discover it. God gives us this responsibility to think of ways to, to consider it, to thoughtfully come up with ideas, to spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Jesus designed the church was so that we would simultaneously help others discover their callings and purpose, and to also discover our own calling and purpose.

**You don't need to know your purpose to help someone discover theirs.**

**BUT WHEN YOU HELP SOMEONE DISCOVER THEIR PURPOSE, YOU START TO DISCOVER YOURS.**

What this does is that it helps build your church community. As you encourage and build up someone, you'll feel more connected, you'll have a richer community around you, you'll find more of a purpose and you'll feel like you fit in.

Take a step of courage and boldness to encourage and build up someone in the things of God.

And the deeper you go with building your church community, the deeper your connections and relationship will be. The more we'll accomplish, the more we'll love one another, the more good we'll do together.

## 2. Deeper Commitment

Rom 12:4

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

2 Cor 8:7

<sup>7</sup> But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you<sup>[a]</sup>—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

Sometimes we downplay the significance of our part to play. We pull back, withdraw, and become less active.

God has given you a role to play and He doesn't want you to atrophy in your gift. When Paul writes to the Romans, he says that we have different gifts, and if you have that gift, then USE that gift.

The church **NEEDS** your gift, that's why God gave it to you – to build the church.

We all belong to one another, we're all here to serve one another, to use our gifts to benefit each other.

If you CAN volunteer for something, then do it. Volunteer. Give. Encourage. Speak into someone's life. Encourage them. Pray for them. Teach them. Use your gift, increase your commitment to the church so that you can build the church.

### 3. Deeper Conversations

James 4:11

<sup>11</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

We should not slander one another. Don't talk bad about other people. Our conversations need to steer away from slandering one another, from gossiping one another, from talking bad about one another.

We need to think the BEST of each other, not assume the worst. Rather than talk badly about others, let's declare the good over them, speak life into their situations and circumstances, talk about their good characteristics, talk about the positive that they've done.

If we want to stay connected to the church, then church needs to become a place where we feel safe, where we can make mistakes and not fear shame or gossip. Church needs to be a place where yes, there's rebuke and correction, but there's also mercy and grace, where there's support, help, comfort, encouragement, where we can come just as we are, with faults and all, and trust one another to build each other up.

John 13:34 (TPT)

<sup>34</sup> "So I give you now a new <sup>[1]</sup> commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. <sup>35</sup> For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you're my true followers."

Jesus doesn't just tell us to love one another. He tells us to love one another just as much as He loves us. In the NIV, it says "AS I have loved you." In other words, with the same kind of love that Jesus has

for you, that's how you're to love one another. He gives us a standard of love. He gives us a level of love.

**Speak TO one another and ABOUT one another the way Jesus would speak to you or about you.**

Think of the last not very nice comment that you made to or about someone. Imagine if Jesus took that same attitude and spoke to you like that.

We're so used to Jesus speaking to us with grace and compassion and mercy, full of love and acceptance, so when we go to Him with a fault or sin, He wraps His loving arms around us and reassures us that we're still His child.

But imagine if instead, He mocked you. He looked at you disapprovingly and shook His head. Imagine if He sees you and just thinks about how disappointed He is in you because you made that mistake or because you don't measure up.

That's not how Jesus treats us! And Jesus tells us to love others **AT THE SAME STANDARD** that He loves us.

Jesus has designed His church to be a coordinated, healthy, efficient, and effective body. And as we grow deeper in our connections, our commitments, and our conversations, we'll become more connected to the church body and ultimately, to Jesus, so that we can accomplish what He's called us to do.