

(Church Life) the Value of Church Membership - Part 2

by Mose Stoltzfus

The sermon emphasizes the importance of church membership and the value of normal church life, highlighting the benefits of fellowship, discipleship, evangelization, corporate prayer, and sending and developing gifts.

Duration: 1:07:08

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:11, Ephesians 4:14-15

Topics: "Corporate Prayer", "Church Membership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of corporate prayer and the power it holds. He shares stories of how praying together as a congregation can bring about incredible results and meet the needs of the community. The speaker also highlights the significance of evangelizing within our own families through the preaching of the Word of God. He emphasizes the need for genuine preaching that lifts up the Word of God, regardless of the preacher's tone or method. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the importance of rest and how it can lead to increased productivity and energy in our lives.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

This message is not copyrighted and is not to be bought or sold. You are welcome to make copies for your friends and neighbors. If you would like additional messages, please go to our website for a complete listing at www.charityministries.org. If you would like a catalog of other sermons, please call 1-800-227-7902 or write to Charity Ministries, 400 West Main Street, Suite 1, EFRA PA 17522.

These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Thank you, Dale, for that prayer and for the song.

You're an inspiring bunch. Amen. Well, this morning, let us turn our Bibles to Ephesians, Chapter 4. A very familiar passage of Scripture here that we often quote on subjects like this.

And yet, I'm afraid many times overlook some of the powerful phrases that are in there or the full impact of what our brother Paul wrote about. Chapter 4, verse 11, the book of Ephesians. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of

the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we henceforth, or from now on, be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Sometimes the part that I feel that we look at too lightly is the whole matter of how necessary it is that we be edified. Beyond edifying ourselves, we need to be edified.

And I'm sure most of you have had that kind of an experience in a corporate meeting like this. And that's very true. But it is something that should happen on a regular basis.

That we feed ourselves. We need not to be slothful there. Very important in our private life, our family life.

But to corporately come together and have the gifts manifest themselves in all the various ways given here and many more that are in other verses. And that that edifies or lifts up or builds the body of Christ. That is an experience every one of us cannot afford to be long without unless we are stuck in prison for the faith.

And then God overrules and takes care of us there with special grace, I believe. The title of my message this morning is just simply the value of normal church life. And when I say normal there, I believe that many of the things that I'll speak about here are not the occasional extension.

They are not the very special missions or reaching the uttermost parts of the earth necessarily in that way. But just simply in a local congregation, the things that should happen in a very normal and practical way. The first one I have is fellowship.

And I always like to give this. You've heard it from me before. It's two fellows going in the same ship in the same direction.

To the same place. Or maybe more than two or three or whatever. But that is fellowship.

That there is a loving intimacy of an exchange of a heart of love and brothers talking one to another sitting in this boat. And of course they have no other option, no other place to go. They can't walk on water normally unless Jesus comes along.

And they are going in a given direction to the same place. And on that journey they have fellowship. They understand each other.

They love each other. They just, I mean, it's almost, I have found in a good local church setting, it is almost like a husband and wife relationship. You just know, you can just look at each other across the room and you know what each other is thinking after years of dwelling together and having shared together in many ways and many times.

It's an amazing experience. But first of all, and the Bible talks about iron sharpening iron. But in that whole experience there is a beautiful experience taking place which edifies the whole body.

Love flows and you go home and it's just amazing. You know, at work we meet with some of our fellow brothers here that we work together with at our business. And we get together, you know, or meet each other on Monday morning or my secretary comes in at around 11 o'clock in the morning and she just goes, wow, what a weekend.

You know, you can just tell she is totally edified and overwhelmed by the whole day long. Now, I would like to just emphasize the necessity of setting a day aside for the Lord. I am not going to make a law out of this because I do not believe the Bible makes a Sabbath law in the New Testament.

However, I do believe it is the overarching principle of creation that a man works six days and rests the seventh. And I have applied that to my own life to a great reward. I would have to say both mentally, spiritually and physically.

I find on a Monday morning my mind is so rejuvenated and so edified and lifted and rested and what have you where we have concentrated on solving problems in work or in business. I have been a troubleshooter a certain part of my life and always fixing problems mechanically or electrically or in refrigeration or something. The occupations that I have been in most of my life.

You know, but to have that total rest from that and not take that package of work home with you for that day of the Lord is of utmost importance. I would like to give you this little story of a test that was once done in Winnipeg, Manitoba by the Hudson Bay Company. They decided once that every spring of the year after the spring fall and the rivers up there and the lakes, they would go way up north with men rowing boats up north.

I think they went out into the Hudson Bay and went up to gather the pelts for the trappers around a hundred years ago or more and together and bring them down for their European markets. I think it's what they would do. Buyers would collect the whole winter's pelts there from trapping, from the trappers.

And so they decided one year they were going to send their, the one group had a captain who was a Christian and he begged the Hudson Bay Company, their practice normally was they had to go all summer and be back before freeze up and the Hudson Bay Company said you have to do it seven days a week in order to get back in time. And the one man just begged and begged the Hudson Bay Company, let me try it six days a week and rest on the seventh. Oh no, they said, that's not going to work.

You're going to freeze up up there, you know, you're not going to make it back. Then he pled with him and finally the guy said, all right, I'm going to let you do it. So they had two companies and one company left, they left at the same time.

And they were going up through there and they were pretty much together but the Christian company was a little bit ahead. And on the first Sunday they used to camp at night and go back in their boats and row all day, camp by the side of the river or the lake there or the bay and then they would go again. And on the first Sunday they were ahead and they camped and they simply slept in that morning, on Sunday morning, and then they got up and they read their Bibles and had a bit of a devotion and here comes the other crew rowing on Sunday past them and laughing at them and mocking them, you know, for we're going to get way ahead of you today, you know, and all that.

And so they went on their way mocking them and they sat there and they read their Bibles, maybe had some prayer time, took a long nap in the afternoon, rested the rest of the day and just talked and what

have you, slept a good night again and on Monday morning they were ready to go. And it was just an amazing thing. I think in a matter of weeks, I'm not sure how many, they passed the other group.

They were tired, they were just kind of run down and because of one day in seven having that mental and physical refreshment and spiritual likewise, they just had an energy the others didn't have. And if you've ever been in a factory that works seven days a week and look at the men with their faces, you'll know what I'm talking about. But I think when the whole trip was over, I believe they came back up to about three weeks ahead of the other group.

The Hudson Bay Company bowed their heart to the plan. It's not imaginary. There is a rest that takes place and my plea is there's some cultures and backgrounds among us who do not have that principle in their lives.

And they want to go to Walmart Sunday afternoons and want to fix their cars in their garages and what have you or plan their construction jobs for the next week. And my plea is don't go that way. But set that day aside for the Lord.

And one of the habits that I have made myself or directed myself or I like to use the word train myself in as a young married man or probably I was brought up very strictly that way. We would prepare on Saturday for Sunday so we had a minimal amount of chores on Sunday morning and evening. And I appreciate that heritage and that upbringing very good.

But I trained myself not to pick up normally a secular book or magazine on the Lord's Day, but rather it's a spiritual book to go to church regularly religiously because I felt that I needed it. Not because I wanted anything special or whatever, but the soul needed it to hear and be blessed by the preaching of the Word. And the only time, and we would not even both stay home if one was sick.

If you can take care of yourself, the other would go to church, whether it was husband or wife and take the children along. We did not use the slightest excuse to stay home. And then in the afternoon maybe take a rest and then in the evening almost religiously visit in somebody's home on a religious discussion or on spiritual things or something of that nature rather than, you know, just playing games or heavy activity.

And I find that a great blessing and I really encourage that for everyone else. So, this matter of fellowship. I should spend 15 minutes on it, but I will not.

I just have to go on. I have a long list there. But it is of such importance.

I'd like to give the illustration yet of the silent witness where the minister went to visit his member also in colonial days with a fireplace and the hot coals on the fireplace. And he went in. The man was sad and he was backslidden and he wouldn't talk.

And the minister also didn't talk. So, he just went up there and sat beside him in the living room by the fireplace. On a Saturday, I think, he went to see him.

And he finally went up and took the tongs and took a hot coal, a red hot coal and just laid it out on the hearth. And you can guess what happened. He went home without a word, I think.

But the man got the message. That's what's happened to me. I was a hot coal as long as I was with the rest of the coals.

But when I set myself aside and stopped going to fellowship and church and worship the Lord, interacting with Christians, we get cold and dry. The next one I'd like to give is a blessing and benefit of discipleship. The value of the normal church life is in church life, real church life now.

Now, as we know it in the evangelical world, that's almost nonexistent, is discipleship. That the older teach the younger. The older women teach the younger, Titus 2. The older men teach the younger, Titus 2, again.

And that the young men are exhorted and admonished in a kind way and directed in family life, in finances, in all the areas of life and how to live victoriously for God, overcoming personal sin, purity and all kinds of things in discipleship. And finally, having a rewarding experience to grow and the knowledge of the Word of God to the point where you can yourself win another soul to Christ or disciple another one. And some have said we're weak on that.

And I accept that. I believe we need to see that more as a very pertinent doctrine. And I see it especially in light of young couples.

Now, I find that doesn't have to happen so much with young couples who are brought up in good homes where they've had lots of teaching. But a lot of married couples, young married couples struggle on some real issues of life. And oh, what a blessing to have an older couple just take them under their wing and be able to instruct them and guide them.

And they save themselves a multitude of difficulties and problems. Especially so in the financial world, but also in almost all other areas. Just in how to economize life and how the wife should love her husband and give herself freely to him and the husband love his wife and be gentle and kind.

Some men that come out of conversion experiences did not know that in the past. And they need to learn it. My next one is the evangelization of the family.

Maybe you are born again and you can feed yourself and you can read the Word of God. But I want to challenge you that your children need to sit under the preaching of the Word of God. You know, back in Romans chapter 10, we have that very clearly laid out to us in verse 14.

How then shall they call on Him whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him on whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? There is something unique about the gospel in the preaching of the Word of God that does not take place. Some of us in this room have been into various places where there was nothing like that happening about. You know, they were either playing church on Sunday morning and there wasn't a real preaching of the Word.

Or they were scattered families who just had a Bible study in the living room or something like that. I did that one time in a Midwestern state and I went in there for a weekend. And I preached on Saturday morning and on Sunday evening, I think it was, first.

I'm not sure anymore. And then on Sunday morning and on Sunday evening. And by the time I was finished, there were a number of people just crying and wanting to get converted.

The young people somewhere in the ages of 15 to 19 that had not sat under the preaching of the Word of God. Just responded and wanted to get saved. And there's some of you sitting in this room.

I know I've had that experience too in places where it was very dry. But we do our children a disfavor by not bringing them to sit under the preaching of the Word of God. Something happens in preaching that does not happen in Bible study.

There's a hurling forth of the message. The power of the Holy Spirit in a corporate way comes down and the conviction of God falls upon. And I am a real stickler for protracted meetings.

Because I find even many times that the hearts are so that it'll take a couple nights for them to break up. And you have protracted meetings two and three and four and five nights in a row. You find conversions that come out that have been sitting in church on just Sunday morning meetings and never responded.

Even though invitations are given. So it's important that we evangelize our own family by the preaching of the Word of God. And I would like to say real preaching.

I believe that the Word of God should be lifted up and preached. And we don't all have to have a certain tone of voice or a certain method. But I believe we ought to identify preaching to be real preaching.

The next one is very, very important. It's corporate prayer. The value of corporate prayer in the normal church life is also a very valuable and incredible thing.

We can pray by ourselves and that's a wonderful thing. We can pray at the table. We can pray on the living room floor.

We can pray in our prayer closet and pray in our bedroom. But something mysteriously happens when a group of men and a group of a church gets together and corporately focus on a given need and pours their heart out to God together for it. Things happen that don't happen otherwise.

And things happen in a dimension greater than happen otherwise. All the stories that could be given of the power of corporate prayer and the value of that. And you're not going to have that unless you join yourself in an assembly where men care for each other and make those kind of things happen.

And pick up the needs of the congregation on a Wednesday night and then have a three-quarter hour prayer or so to bring those needs before God. Men and women involved. Another one is in Romans 10 that says, And how shall they preach except they be sent? How many people come to us, young and old, boys and girls, that say, you know, I have such a desire to serve.

Do you have any idea how I could get involved with a mission group and just go to a mission field somewhere and just serve a couple or help along or even fix their vehicles or whatever for six months or a year? And there are gifts there and desires there. But you're not going to have those things if you're going to huddle around in a living room with one or two families. Mission work is not going to take place like that.

And you and many others will not have an opportunity to have their gifts developed if you have nothing like that for them to do. So it's very good. And the same is true for preaching.

You might actually have the gift of preaching and teaching of a deacon or an elder. But nobody's going to send you. Nobody's going to ordain you.

You sit in a situation where there's no authority and nothing ever happens. And here that gift lies asleep down in your breast. But it takes the church to bring it out.

And it really does. It really does. The self-styled preachers that try to just appoint themselves and go over the country preaching the gospel, few of them succeed.

But when they are sent and there's a church behind them and has proved them and has guided them until they have matured and then calls them to these offices, they blossom like a flower and find real, real meaning in life. And that is true with not only preaching, even just there is tremendous satisfaction I have found in my past in mowing the lawn for the church, in doing janitorial work. When you feel that you're part of the core group, you're in there making things happen so the church can function.

Same is true for our wives in kitchen help and many other things to put on something like this. There is great, deep, heartfelt rewards felt in the heart just to have the privilege to serve in that way. To aid in sickness and distress.

That is a major thing. Great value in normal church life and in areas, at least when there is a number of families, that there is aid and help given in sickness and distress. Now, the first one that we normally find is that another family might have a single daughter to come over and help us when we have difficulty in childbirth or pregnancy and the wife is laid up and there are five little children to keep after and diapers to change and the husband needs to go to work in order to keep the money coming and put bread on the table.

And that is the dilemma that many people face and is a real problem in the church. Not a big problem. Somehow, we can always take care of those things one way or another.

But let me also introduce to you to the office of deaconess that we hardly have. Of course, we, in our movement of 25 years, do not have 60-year-old women in the church that are widows. But according to 1 Timothy 5, verse 9, it says, Let not a woman be taken into the number below threescore years.

And so it shows that a woman who has been faithful, who has determined she will not marry again, and would dedicate herself to that, you just stop and think of the value. You're a family, a church of 20, 25 families, and you would have a 60-year-old widow that is called and recognized by the church to serve the church in that way. And you know it's a lot better to bring a 60-year-old woman into your home if your wife is laid up or dies than it is another young girl.

You know that? That is biblical and right to do something like this. And I believe that it is something that should be revived in due time. Maybe not an ordination, but somehow an appointing or a recognition.

And the lady is willing to consecrate herself for as long as she is physically and mentally able to do it. I think it would be of great value. Look at the matter of death.

Have you ever tried and do you know somebody that has struggled out in the middle of the far west or midwest sitting alone and somebody dies, the wife dies, and there's seven little children. My, and there's no church. Compared to that happening in a group with 20 families.

My, the difference is great. Or if a house burns down, right brother? And he comes home, burns down when he's away, the brother up front here, and the whole church nearly is gathered around there ready to help. On a Sunday.

And they put on their work clothes and clean the mess up and get ready to rebuild. And they're there through that also. The comparison of being alone waiting on the adjustment of the insurance company and

finally some help from somewhere to get the place cleaned up and back up and running.

There's no comparison. A church is a thousand miles ahead. These things are precious and they should be normal church life.

But we have to gather the solitude in the families. We have to gather together in bodies. We have to have local churches.

We have to submit one to another and love each other. We have to do those kind of things or we will not experience that. We'll be, live the lonely worldly life.

And trouble comes and it's one of the, these people are despairing out there when there's just nothing and nobody. And you go into the world where they don't have the Lord Jesus and it's much worse yet. Accidents, fire, death, sickness, distress.

And my next point is financial aid. Turning to Acts chapter 11, 27. And in these days came prophets.

Excuse me here. That's 29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.

If there's any old colony men left, I just want to remind you that collectively having one purse is not scriptural. I mean, I don't even believe that happened in Acts 2. That they had one purse. I believe they gave and sold all the extras they had and gave it at the apostles' feet and the apostles distributed to the people that had need.

But it is essential, the reason I bring this out is not attack colony men, but simply to say, or people that believe very heavily in community, but simply to show you that something happens in the human heart when they, out of their own volition, give money to a need. Or give of their material ownership to a neighbor or a brother or a sister in the church in time of need. And when you have all things common, that's impossible.

The boss does it or the preacher does it or something like that. And it doesn't engage the personal heart to give out of their own pocket. And so I recommend individual purses.

So you can fulfill these scriptures. And there are others too. On the first day of the week when you're gathered together as the Lord has prospered you, you're supposed to give personally to that need.

That's the biblical way. And you can't get around it, I don't think, by the word of God. There's something that really concerns me.

You know, I've worked with these kind of people for years and I've seen this for a long time. And there's something destructive to manhood and to the responsibility of manhood and fatherhood when you take that away, that personal responsibility of seeing and watching over your own finances and giving out of your own heart to those that need. You rob the man of some of his manhood, I believe, that God intended him to have.

Financially, I do not believe that... I believe we have to be careful with this. But consequently, you'll also believe that I don't believe in extreme poverty on everyone because if there is finances to be given, they have to be available from somebody. Either somebody has a little extra somewhere or else they're willing to go and loan it in order to give to you.

But one way or the other, if we are supposed to give when another church has need, it has to be somewhere. We can't all be living from hand to mouth and have nothing. And so, I think it is much better to live simply in a God-fearing way, being stewards of our possessions and not the fact that you can't have any.

I believe that is the biblical balance of that teaching. And then, I do believe the church should be able to help to those who are committed at first. And then they can reach out to the non-committed.

They can reach out to the poor in the world even. I know men who have... Brother Joe Tindall I know in Bolivia was won to Christ through the love shown to him when his house burned down, when he was simply a sinner, a drinker, a party man in the world. His house burned down and the neighbors got together and helped him.

And it drew him to respond to a revival meeting and give his heart to the Lord. And so, that's a beautiful thing. But first of all, having enough of equality that we will not sit and let a family suffer and not have enough to eat and not have enough to live and to heat their house and enough clothing to wear when we have an abundance.

That should never happen in the church of Jesus Christ. There ought to be an equality, a care one for another that we will not let the righteous suffer in that way. And so, I believe out of the abundance of those who have a business, those who have prospered and have a checking account are able to pull out of that in faith that God will continue to bless even though they could have well used it for some other things maybe and will give to the need.

I mean to sit in brother's meetings and watch that happen gives me a feeling that is just beyond words. And the brothers say, let's pay the rest of his hospital bill. Five thousand dollars, no problem.

It's paid. Let's take up a special offering. He's been out of work for six weeks and he's had tough going and winter's on him and oil's up to nearly three dollars a gallon.

Let's give him a hand here. And that's just distributed. And things like that happen.

That is beautiful. And it should be normal church life. Normal church life.

Another one that I believe in, in order for young men to get started or to get a little business going and they don't have much cash is interest free loans. I believe older men who have accumulated a bit or have prospered in their business, have their homes paid for ought to be able to give interest free loans to young men getting started. That they don't have to put themselves in great jeopardy with a bank and all that and try to get enough collateral and credit in order to make.

And you know, then let the older man who does that be a bit of a shepherd to the young man and show him how to do it. Oh, it's beautiful. Needs to be in our midst.

Interest free loans. Next one is a big one. Social needs of our family.

All of us have social needs. If not, we're going to dry up and blow away. And I believe church life basically provides all that, a lot of that.

But I think we finally need to look at social needs of our young people between the ages especially of 15 and 25. And I mean all the way to marriage. What is better that our young people are able to pick their

marriage partners out of similar believers who are going the similar direction and have similar convictions and don't have to wade through the great diversity of religion and what have you that the world has.

We know nothing of that. Catholics and Protestants marrying together and then fighting over where they take their children. The Catholic church is pulling for them and the Protestant one maybe is pulling for them likewise.

Those things should not be. We should provide in the household of faith for the social needs of our young men and our young women. And all the damage again that I've seen men sit there.

And you can do that when they're little. But if you wait until they are 20 and 25 and 27 and 28 until you finally get enough agumption in you to realize that maybe you ought to have some social fellowship for your children. You risk losing them to the world.

And a high percentage of them will split and walk into the world after they lose confidence that you care enough about their social needs. Oh, that's a painful one. And I'd just like to say it's good there that we marry with similar conviction and similar beliefs.

And I'd just like to say this way, you know, we've had the experience here and I'm sure you're well familiar how this thing goes. You know, we're widely known through the tape ministry and through meetings like this and Bible school and so forth. And sometimes you have a fellow show up, you know, out of the West with a cowboy hat on maybe and tight jeans on and has his thumb stuck in his pockets and he wants to come and get one of your girls and run.

And go out on a Montana ranch, you know, and live happily ever after. Sorry, our fathers don't take to that very well. Or crawling off of a motorcycle with a black coat on and wrap around sunglasses and want your lovely daughter.

You just don't hunt very good. Similar conviction and lifestyle and beliefs and values. And then the beauty of it all is amazing.

We just had one start here from 900 miles away or 1,000 miles away. One of our young men, one of the young daughter from there. But from very similar churches.

And those things normally work in an amazing and beautiful way and it doesn't matter where they decide to move here or there. That's the way it ought to be. But again, think about this, fathers, before you just sit and sit and sit without making the decision to have a local church reality in your life.

You'll weep over it someday if you wait too long. Missions, I won't speak much to that. Denny did a marvelous job on the whole concept of missions.

But I do want to add this way, add this. You can't have much, you can't go very far in mission work if you're just a very small group. You just can't get much accomplished.

When you really want to get into it and you go into foreign countries and cross the sea or the borders of other countries, you need some backing. And a lot of times that is not only a larger church experience, although it begins there, but also multiple churches experience. And that's what can make missions work to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And that is also a part in normal church life. I believe we should try to get a mission of some kind. I agree so much.

If we're ever going to get our young people out of carnality and just batting a ball back and forth over a net with their hands, why, we're going to have to get them involved in something whereby they get excited about the things of God. And a way to do that is to get active in both local and foreign missions and allow them to have terms of service and trips and things like that where they get involved and see how the rest of the world lives. Instead of the prosperity we have here.

Let them go out there and experience third world country life for a while and they come home with a different attitude concerning materialism. Work for our boys. I believe that is another very important thing.

You probably never have thought about that, but we do not believe in letting our boys sit until they're 18 years of age twiddling their thumbs or reading books. But we believe they should be active, learn a trade, do an apprenticeship or be hired out if we don't have a little business to one of the other brethren. And for the most part, all of our boys are employed by each other.

And that is something that is no small thing. You can send your 15-year-old boy and 16-year-old and entrust him to work for the summer or for the year if he's finished with school. Depending how far you're going to school, that's a variable, and I think should be and just take his GED and go to work at 16 and be able to be hired by a brother who has a business which will watch over his well-being.

And that gets harder and harder with all these laws that they can't operate a tow motor and they can't operate a handsaw, a power saw, and they can't drive a tractor. And I don't know where to start disobeying the government, but I'm not about to let my, wouldn't be about to let my son sit at home and twiddle his thumbs until he's 18. And I encourage the same for others.

But what a blessing, what a tremendous blessing to have these small businesses. We are so blessed with a private enterprise system in the United States. I mean, God is faithful in a communist country where that's not possible and can still raise up men under God, but I just say it's a blessing.

And we are very grateful for the private enterprise system, the Small Business Administration, which allows us to have these small businesses and operate a family business or a larger business and employ some of our other needy ones that need that. Wisdom for a thousand. In the multiplicity of brethren or in the multitude of counsel, the Bible would say, what's the rest of the verse? There is safety, yes.

But there is also wisdom, tremendous. And there again I find there is so much expertise and so much wisdom. I actually, it would be one of my convictions that we could, that our homeschoolers could band together and actually start little mechanical or the trades, the plumbing, heating, air conditioning, what have you, schools in our churches where we could send our young boys at 14, 15, and 16 a couple hours a day beside their books and actually learn a trade and learn it well.

I think that would be a very wise thing and I wish somebody would take the ball and run with it locally here, especially maybe it could be done among our three churches, that we could actually teach them real auto mechanics or plumbing trades or carpentry, cabinet making and those kind of things. Wisdom for a thousand. But better than that is the spiritual wisdom coming out of a brother's meeting.

Have you ever seen that? If you have about 20, 25 brothers together, the amount of wisdom that comes out on a given subject, on a given conviction, and you actually allow the freedom to share instead of

coming to the brother's meeting with everything already thought out as to how it has to go, and you just open it up and let brothers share and see what comes out of that. My, the wisdom of Solomon is approached. The care of the widow, the single mom, or the orphans.

In the value of normal church life, we'll make a place for the widow, not the widow that has relatives. She is to be taken care of the relatives, but a widow indeed, which is one who doesn't have any relatives in the church. She can come into the church of Jesus Christ or her husband can die and she may not have any children or her children have gone and left her or whatever.

You have those kind of situations. They should be rare, but we have them. And the church of Jesus Christ undergirds and supports a widow or a single mom who has made a bad mistake in life a time or two.

And weeps her way to the altar and cries out for help. A person like that can be brought into a corporate body, into a church of Jesus Christ, be led back to the Lord, be established, be watched over, be cared for. Her children even helped many times.

Or she has some help and counsel in raising her children. And my, what a blessed, prosperous life she has compared to the world. There's no comparison.

Where they take the children to the babysitter and then she tries to have a job and tries to make ends meet on a minimal wage or a low wage sometimes and there's nobody to help and she's running to the government for food stamps and for welfare and what have you. The church of Jesus Christ should rise up there. And many of you know the blessed testimony in Indiana of four orphans recently being taken in by a home, by one home, keeping them all together.

When husband and wife were killed in an accident, the church of Jesus Christ does those things and it is a marvelous and wonderful opportunity. We have many testimonies here local, both at Charity and here at Ephrata. Living hope of this work going on with individuals in need like this on a somewhat continual basis.

And it is very, very rewarding to see that single mom or that those children prosper and grow and just do well in so many ways and they have just been carried along and cared for and it's so rewarding to see them grow up like that in the church when they come from a very, very unfortunate background. Alright, in closing here I would just like to give you some points on what makes a church like that. I'm sure the question is raging in many minds saying, well brother, you speak from one maybe who has succeeded in that way as a church and you have that, but how do you get something like that going? What can we do? Where do we start? And those kind of things.

And I know that each individual situation is different depending on what brothers you have to work with. But what I would just like to emphasize here is the fact that there needs to be a core group of believers. And when I mean core group, I'm talking about some individual points that I would like to share with you that one of the brethren has made a study of and put together here in our congregation and we have discussed this in our men's retreats and our brother's meetings and looked at it.

And in our experience also in church planning, we are having failures. We are having failures. And there are some reasons for those failures out there.

And some of the main reason is that there is so much independence among people who have come out of the evangelical and other world, even traditional world some, but more so in the traditional setting, submission is pushed in a much greater way. And you can take people from a traditional setting and blend

them together better than you can from the evangelical or what we would call remnant background. Now, that's not the end of the world for you.

There is hope for you. Don't get discouraged in all that when we say that, but that is the reality. We actually find that the churches prosper best if we can mix up some traditional people who know church life and know how to submit with some who don't.

And help them to blend together a bit. But I just want to alert you to the independence that is out there. There are a lot of what we call stand-alone muscles that have been exercised to come out of the apostate situations in the evangelical world.

And we understand that needed to be to come out. But then you have to be able to lay some of them down in order to form a core group of believers. Or it will not work.

As soon as a family deviates a little bit from the way I have it in my children, in my home, and you do it a little different, bang! It crashes and everything goes. If that's the way you're going to be, then I can sit at home and read my Bible, you know. And you have this kind of attitude popping up and the assembly just stops like that.

And then all these things and all these blessings of normal church life that I preached yesterday and today are missing in your life. And you cannot humble yourself enough to have, without ecumenical compromise now, being able to lay down some of your pet doctrines or pet beliefs enough to be able to blend together with a few others. So the church needs to be founded with a core group of believers that are willing to submit one to another in the fear of God.

The first point I have, in that core group, they must agree with a general direction that you want to go. And the best way to do that is to establish a... either use somebody else's confession of faith as a springboard maybe to discuss or write your own and establish how you interpret the Word of God, what basic premise of doctrinal foundation you will lay to establish a core group on. Don't just say, oh, we all love each other and my children love their children.

That's not going to work. You have to have a biblical foundation of interpretation that you believe this is what we believe and this is the direction we want to go. We want a church similar to that.

And then don't hold to it in a very legalistic, law-like manner. Give some space and grace there as long as you're headed together and praying together and moving together and discussing the Scripture. It will be hard to make it work.

Agree with the general direction. The second point is to agree with the doctrine. Don't listen to the charismatic phrase that says doctrine divides and we need to get rid of it.

It doesn't matter anything. Doctrine does matter. And we must hold to sound doctrine, the Bible says, very clearly.

And there's a lot of false and strange doctrine floating around out there. You know, we're discussing here at the meetings, we have the prevalent one that was held here in the Shady Maple restaurant the other day that sin is not a work of the flesh. Sin is a being.

Sin is a being. And so you have a demon in you, a being behind the flesh that makes you lust after other women or makes you lie or steal or cheat. And so the problem really is you need hands laid on you to cast out the being.

That's not biblical. Yeah, we believe in demonic possession and oppression and occultic involvement and things like that where people mess with demons and get contaminated. And we deal with that accordingly.

But the works of the flesh are these. Galatians chapter 5. And you need to put them off. And put on the new man.

Put off the old man with his seeds. Put off the works of the flesh. Crucify him with the gospel, with truth, with prayer.

And die to them. But a man just comes along and says sin is a being. He's lying.

Sin is a work of the flesh. We were born with the tendency to go that way. And we all went that way.

And messed ourselves up with sin. And so we have to work our way out of that through sanctification. The new birth and sanctification.

And the Holy Spirit. And we are able to put off the old man with his seeds and the works of the flesh. That's promised to us in the Word of God.

And we make no apologies of that. That's very possible. But sound doctrine.

The practices that I have need to reflect the core group. Like the brother said from Living Hope the other day. We do expect that the ones coming in are going to walk with us.

Not in an opposite direction. You know there are some that do come around. They want the benefits of what's going on here.

But they want to retain their personal culture in a real strong way. And they want to keep their unique stuff, you know, that they brought along. Their trappings.

And they want what's going on. They want the love. And they want the benefits.

And they want the financial aid. But they don't want to submit themselves in a practical way. Willingly accountable to the brotherhood.

In a core group of believers there needs to be a willing accountability. In the evangelical world it's like almost a slap in your face. That's none of your business.

I see to my stuff and you see to yours. And that's as far as we go here. But that's not New Testament Christianity.

We are even called to not eat meat as long as the world stands if it offends our brother. You know that's a reality. We have lost sight of that many times.

And we boldly declare, I'm not going to submit myself to another man's conscience, you know, and all that. And I know there's a limit to it. And we can be brought in bondage by a conscience in the church that is too sensitive.

And we have to there balance all that out with counsel and carefulness. But it is right for you to deny yourself because your brother feels very uncomfortable about doing a certain thing. And submit ourselves one another.

I'll tell you that makes church life if we have that mindset. But if you don't have that, you put about six families together. I've never learned any of that.

At the first crossroads of things, and it's gone. Intimately concerned about decisions made, fasts and prays. They are so concerned about the direction of the church.

They are so concerned about the unity of the body. They are so concerned that they will actually fast and pray for difficulties that come into that body. That is a mark of real, you're in.

You know, you're part of that core group. And along with that I can say, you know, we can usually tell by your language. You come up to us, you know, and you might live in Kelowna, Iowa.

And you might tell me about some difficulties they're having and you say they decided. Oh, it's not us, it's them, huh? As long as it's them, you live there too and you go to church there. But as long as you call it them, we know you're not in with both feet.

But once you start saying we decided. And this is what happened to us in our church. And you are burdened about it.

And you're willing to pray and fast about the situation. And throw your shoulder to the wheel to make it go forward. Then you're in.

There's a difference. And it's in your attitude. It's not us, I mean it's not them, it's us and we.

And not I. I don't believe that way. You know, well, be careful with that. Sometimes that has to happen, but be very careful.

Feels at home and sees it as his church. And I mentioned the us and them, but you feel at home, it's your home. You love to visit other churches, you love to go places.

But like we hear many times when people come back, oh, it's so nice to be home. Where we're comfortable, we know what's going on. We know the people and love flows.

And love flows out there too, but you know what I mean. Where we know each other more intimately. Attends faithfully.

I'm troubled sometimes at how easy we can stay at home. I'm troubled by that. I just think we need to attend faithfully.

We just do not stay home unless we have sickness. And unless we have difficulty like that. But, I can get the tape.

No, it's not the same. It's not the same as being there and seeing the smiles of God in God's people's faces. And having interaction eye to eye with them.

Shaking their hands, giving them hugs. Real church life. If you want to be a member of a real church, that's what needs to happen.

Us preachers often wonder, you know, I just wonder what would happen if we would act. Us preachers would act like some of the people do. Well, I went to the mountains last weekend and two weeks we're going to go camping next weekend somewhere, you know.

I just wonder how you figure that there's going to be a fresh message from God on the pulpits. If we would act like that. That's just trouble to me.

We have always in our lives went camping. If we went camping or went on a vacation during the week or visit another church, consider it. And then especially, it wouldn't be so bad if it would be that one time.

Maybe in the summer, but when we see you do it three and four times. And you just, I thought you just did go. No backdoor open.

That's a good one. You know, sometimes we get into a church setting and you can tell people have the backdoor open. You know, they don't want to get too involved.

They don't want to get too settled in. They're so afraid the Lord might lead them out the backdoor real quick. Once they disagree or once they're admonished or disciplined a bit or something like that.

I remember in some of you brethren from my background, Brother Manny and different ones, you understand what I'm talking about. When you get into a situation that you step out of the church where you're a part of for many reasons or get excommunicated or something like that, you know, you don't have a lot of options. You want to go forward and find something that's real.

And it's like you don't have a backdoor. It's not there. And that's the way I like it to be.

I realize that there has to be some trust earned and all that when we move across the country. Like we have done here. People have come from California and Washington and what have you.

And, you know, we can't just throw ourselves in before we know what's going on and what they believe and all that. But it shouldn't take three years to do that. And so many just keep that backdoor open, you know, and as soon as something don't quite suit them, out they go.

And they're gone and we never see them again. And the last one I have there is you're eligible for office. And there's where your gifts will be drawn out and will be used and you will be blessed and you will stand in service to the church.

It doesn't mean you have to be the preacher or the elder or the deacon. But to be able to stand in service to the church is a beautiful sense of belonging that even if it's just some lowly task, but I'm a part. I'm in there.

I'm doing it. That is a wonderful experience. And that's what I long for you all.

Well, that's what I mean when we talk about being a member or part of a core group of a church. And that is what needs to happen. Now I have a question that I want to answer just in closing very briefly.

How is it that we can call a person, a born-again believer, a member of Christ's body, and thus our brother, yet not be able to be a member of our church because of differing doctrines? That has to do, of course, and your father says, can you address the difference between local church unity and the unity with the universal body of Christ and how that works? Well, I do believe that in the universal body of the true

church of Jesus Christ, there is a sense of connection that is made even though you're halfway around the world, you meet a black African or a Russian or a Romanian or something and you notice they're born again, you're born again, there is a connection there. However, in order to enter into a core group with them and really understand and function in a local body, there must be a closer agreement of doctrine than what is known in the universal church. Out there you can give the benefit of the doubt because you're not intimately involved, you're not in a communion basis with him, you don't have to go examine him and you can bless him and greet him as a brother and treat him as a brother, but it is impossible to know how to function with the universal body in an intimate way.

You have to separate a group of brethren that you can get intimate with and function with and there is where I believe that you can establish that membership where there is doctrinal unity and basically, I could say, can two walk together except to be agreed. There has to be some agreement to walk together in order to have that intimacy and when we reach that and conform little groups that way, we can still recognize the body of Christ on a wider scale and in other places that don't walk the same way we do and treat them kindly and let God be the judge. But on a local body, we must walk together and be agreed in order to function in a good way.

Shall we bow in prayer? Father in heaven, God, we come to you and thank you once again for your lovely word, for the great plan of the glorious church of Jesus Christ, how the body can be edified in every part. As the scripture teaches us, Lord, that till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we're not henceforth tossed through and fro by every wind of doctrine, but we know what we believe and we believe what we know and what you have taught us and we can stand solidly on that and not give ear to the false prophet or the strange doctrine that comes our way. Oh God, I pray help us to speak the truth in love that all of us together might grow up unto you in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16809.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mose-stoltzfus/church-life-the-value-of-church-membership-part-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net