

# The Local Church 5 - Part 4

by William MacDonald

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*Commitment to God and his local assembly is essential for our spiritual growth and well-being.*

**Duration:** 9:16

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 5:11

**Topics:** "Church Fellowship", "Personal Holiness"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of commitment to God and the assembly of believers. It highlights the sanctifying influence of gathering with fellow Christians, the impact of prayer meetings on our prayer life, and the significance of worship, giving, and developing relationships within the church. The message underscores the value of personal holiness, mutual help, love, and prayer for one another, as well as the ministry of hospitality in fostering a strong local fellowship.

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## Transcript

priorities and get them straight. When we go away on vacation, are we careful to be somewhere where we can meet with the Lord and with his people? Or when we're being transferred, does the presence of a scriptural fellowship weigh in our decision? Or do we go anywhere and then regret that there isn't any scriptural assembly there? And in weighing all of these responsibilities, we always have to remember that what we do is more for our good. Commitment is more for our good than it is for his.

I mean, what does it matter to the great sovereign of the universe? Relatively speaking, but it matters a lot to me. We're the poorer when we're uncommitted. I remember he said to the disciples, you are those who have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint to you a kingdom.

He takes note of our commitment to him, and he has appointed for us commitment. And just let me say this, too, that I think that the meetings of the assembly have a sanctifying influence on our lives. For instance, every time we come and remember the Lord in his death, we're reminded of what our sins cost him.

It increases our hatred for sin, and our desire to do that which is pleasing in his sight. In going to a prayer meeting, we learn how to pray. The best way to learn how to pray is to be with Christians when they're praying.

I listen to the prayers of people. I think, well, that's wonderful. I never thought of that, you know.

Make a mental note of it. It helps you along the way. We learn to worship.

We learn to give, and we learn to develop rapport with our fellow believers. And so the golden text, as I said, is not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another. And so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

I have some friends down in Nashville, Tennessee, named John and Mary Lou Phelan. John was in the Second World War, and he was down in Southern California, and he ran into a man named Harold Kessler. Some of you may know Harold Kessler.

And Harold Kessler led him to the Lord, and did a great job in discipling him, including the truth of the New Testament Church. After the war, Johnny and Mary Lou were back there in Nashville, Tennessee. The local Methodist Church asked him to come as assistant pastor.

It would have been a prestigious position. John was sold on the principles of New Testament Christianity and the New Testament Church, and he and his wife remembered the Lord for one year in the living room of their home, just the two of them. That is commitment.

At the end of one year, some brothers went down there with a tent. They pitched the tent at 65th in Louisiana, and they started preaching the gospel, and souls started getting saved. Today there's a large assembly in Nashville, and there's a hive off in an adjacent town, and there's a camp just as big as this one, Horton Haven, and they're all the result of that couple being faithful to the Lord, being committed to him, and meeting for one whole year, just the two of them, to remember the Lord.

I want to tell you something, friends. That's commitment. And God honors it.

Them that honor me, I will honor. Jim McCarthy and I were at a conference up in Upper Minnesota recently, and there was a couple that came there, Jack and Charlotte Mostert. Jack and Charlotte were for many years in fellowship in the Laughlin Street Assembly there in Chicago, and of course then there was the flight to the suburbs.

All the people fled out to the suburbs, and in a way Laughlin Street, it became something like a ghetto, you know, that whole area. And the whole complexion of the assembly, the people in the assembly, all changed. Jack and Charlotte stayed with it down through the years.

A few months ago, Charlotte and another lady were walking out of the Laughlin Street Chapel, and there was a gang fight going on in the neighborhood, and a random bullet came and hit the other lady in the leg. Jack and Charlotte are still there carrying on for Jesus. Didn't drive them away at all.

I'm going to tell you, that's commitment. And God prizes it very, very highly. Other responsibilities.

Share in the fellowship of the assembly, expenses of the assembly, and in sending funds out to missionaries. You know, what the local assembly is largely determines what the missionaries are going to be on the field. They're an expression of the local assembly.

We have a responsibility to pursue personal holiness. Very important. Pursue personal holiness.

That's before we come to the Lord's Supper, we should examine ourselves before the Lord, confess, and put away all known sin. I know that when there's an ulcer in my body, it affects the whole body, doesn't it? Not a private matter. An ulcer isn't private.

It affects my whole body. That's true in the local fellowship, too. When there's sin there, an assembly not far from here, and the young people's work wasn't going well.

It wasn't going well. And the other elders, they thought, what's going on here? We just can't understand what's the trouble here. And finally it came out, one of the men carrying on an immoral liaison with a woman in the assembly.

But that was the ulcer. And when that was taken care of, the work among the young people became very vigorous and very helpful. We should practice mutual help, exhortation, and edification.

Edifying one another, not criticizing one another, but edifying one another. We should love one another fervently. And we should pray for one another.

And I think one of the great things we can do is share in the ministry of hospitality. The longer I live, the more I realize how important hospitality is in connection with a local fellowship. I can just go back to that visit that Jim and I had in northern Minnesota.

At the end of one of the meetings, a sister came to me and she said, I want to tell you a story. I said, tell me. She said, well, she said, we had been in a church and she said, we were hurt something terrible.

She said, we were really offended and really hurt. And we decided that we were never going to allow ourselves to get into that corner again. We were going to maintain our distance from people.

We were going to maintain our distance from a local fellowship. She said, but one time, she said, my husband and I and the children, we decided to go to the local Bible Chapel. And I've been to that Bible Chapel.

I want to tell you, there's nothing to appeal to the flesh in there, but God is there. The Lord is there. And they went there and they went in.

And one of the brothers met her and he said, you know, when I left home, the Lord laid it on my heart to bring this book to give to somebody. And he said, you must be the one to give it to somebody. And I just want to give you this book.

And she said to me, the Lord laid it on my heart. She said, I never heard of anybody talk like that before. The Lord laid it on my heart.

But anyway, they sat through the meeting and they looked around and they saw.

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