

Cliff Notes 4 – Why You Need the Church
1 Corinthians 12:14-27; Colossians 1:18-20

- I. Introduction
 - A. We're halfway through our series of sermons called "Cliff Notes."
 - 1) We're trying to answer some of the basic questions that get asked.
 - 2) We've had some good discussions and today we turn our attention to another question.
 - B. St. Francis said, "He who does not have the church as his mother, does not have God as his Father."
 - 1) That's a strong statement, but it's a belief that many throughout church history have shared.
 - 2) The idea that you can be a Christian all by yourself is a relatively new phenomenon.
 - 3) And one that has led many Christians down a dangerous road.
 - C. You might still say, "I don't need the church."
 - 1) I believe the Bible teaches something far different.
 - 2) Throughout church history and in the Bible, the church, the community of faith is an absolutely essential commitment for a follower of Jesus.
 - 3) Let's look at two Scriptures together: 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 and Colossians 1:18-20.
- II. From these two passages, let me lift up some reasons that you need the church. First, the church provides a place to draw close to God.
 - A. The gathering of believers that we call the church was created to bring God glory.
 - 1) Revelation describes it as our sole occupation in glory, worshipping and praising God.
 - 2) In corporate worship, we have a unique encounter with God. God shows up.
 - 3) That's why Hebrews 10:25 says, "not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another."
 - B. Worship bears the most fruit when it happens in the middle of a group of people that you care about and who care about you.
 - 1) It happens best in community.
 - 2) You don't get to the depths of worship often in the company of strangers.
 - 3) When you worship surrounded by family, your family, you experience a breadth and depth to worship that is found no where else.
- III. The church also provides a place to belong.
 - A. 1 Corinthians says that we are all members of the body of Christ.
 - 1) That image is an important one, it shows us that we belong together, we were meant to be together. We need one another.
 - 2) Being part of a church is consciously choosing to become part of a family (with all the benefits and frustrations that implies).
 - 3) I belong to you and you to me.
 - B. The Bible also talks about the church as the bride of Christ.
 - 1) We see this in John 3 and it gets developed more in Revelation.
 - 2) The relationship between bridegroom (Jesus) and bride (the church) is an important one.
 - a) Jesus and the church are woven together in bonds that are meant to remind us of the permanent bonds of marriage.

- i. There is commitment in that relationship.
 - ii. There is fidelity in that relationship.
 - b) If you want a relationship with the bridegroom, your only option appears to be found in the church.
 - 3) Scripture is talking about this first in the sense of the universal church.
 - a) But to be part of the universal church implies that you are part of the earthly manifestation of that church.
 - b) You can't claim to be part of a team that you're not really on.
 - i. A Christian without a church is like a bride without a husband.
 - ii. Or a pitcher without a team.
- IV. The church is also a place to grow.
 - A. If you want to grow as a follower of Jesus then you must put yourself in position to learn and practice His ways.
 - 1) Ephesians 4:15-16 say, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."
 - 2) If you want to "grow up into him who is the head," then you probably ought to be a part of the body to which the head is attached.
 - B. To keep the flames of faith burning, to keep growth happening,
 - 1) A follower of Jesus must be part of a community that promotes spiritual growth.
 - 2) You can rationalize if you want, but the church is that important.
- V. The church is also a place to serve.
 - A. Again this picture of the church as a body resurfaces.
 - 1) Look again at verses 15-21.
 - 2) Paul is saying that we have been grafted into a body and cannot sever ourselves from it without harm to the whole body.
 - B. Earlier in this same chapter, Paul teaches that each member has been gifted for a specific purpose.
 - 1) Verse 7 – "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."
 - a) Paul lifts up many different gifts in this chapter but they all have one "common good."
 - b) That purpose is to be a blessing to the body.
 - 2) In Colossians we see that Christ is called the head of the body.
 - a) The head is in charge. The head gives guidance and direction.
 - b) The head promotes growth.
 - 3) As much as Christ died for each of us individually, Colossians says that Christ died for the church – the lot of us; the group of us.
- VI. Finally, the church is a place to share.
 - A. One of our privileges is the opportunity to share Christ with others who don't follow Him.
 - 1) When someone accepts Christ as Savior, Scripture says that they are "added to the body."
 - 2) Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."
 - B. Upon acceptance of the message of Christ, people were moved to be baptized and join the fellowship.

- 1) They weren't just hangers-on; they were committed to the community.
 - 2) All of this because God "added to their number."
 - C. It's not a question of whether or not we want the church to grow, it's designed to grow. That's the way God made it!
- VII. Let's try to tie this all together.
- A. Here are the reasons that you need the church.
 - 1) A place to draw close.
 - 2) A place to belong.
 - 3) A place to grow.
 - 4) A place to use your gifts.
 - 5) A place to share.
 - B. Can you do any *one* of those things elsewhere?
 - 1) Yes.
 - 2) Can you do *all five* together elsewhere? I would suggest no.
 - C. Looking at them closely there is:
 - 1) A place to draw close – which sounds a lot like worship.
 - 2) A place to belong – which sounds like fellowship.
 - 3) A place to grow – which sounds an awful lot like discipleship.
 - 4) A place to use your gifts – which sounds like service.
 - 5) A place to share – sounds like missions and evangelism.
- VIII. We've learned that God created each of us for five purposes. They are:
- A. Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Service, and Mission.
 - B. Because of God's love for us, God created a place (a community) where we could fulfill all five of these purposes together.
 - 1) This is just further evidence to me that God works uniquely in and through the church.
 - 2) I believe that God created the church so that we would be able to fulfill our purposes.
 - C. The word "church" in Greek is *ekklesia*.
 - 1) It literally means "the called out ones."
 - 2) The church has specifically and especially been called out for God's purposes.
 - 3) And through the church we fulfill our purposes.