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The Relationship between the Church and the Kingdom

The kingdom should be top priority in our lives.....Matthew 6:33

- Peter made repentance and baptism (born again) the keys to both the kingdom and the body of Christ Matthew 16:13-20, Acts 2:38 (Jn 3:5-8), 1 Cor 12:12-13
- The kingdom and body are one. The body is the church Ephesians 1:22-23

The Bible interchangeably refers to the church, the body and the kingdom. On earth, the church is the representation of the kingdom of heaven, so it is also top priority

The Body of Christ

Once again, the church is the body of Christ. As Christ's body on earth, the church is important in God's plan, because disciples are called to love each other deeply. As with our physical bodies, there are two important points to remember about church:

- We must *pick* the church with Jesus as the head. A body cannot survive without a head. *If Jesus is not the head, the body is dead*
- We must *stick* with the body to stay alive in Christ. The finger cannot survive separated from the body, but the body can survive without a finger

Pick the church with Jesus as the Head

- How can you tell if Jesus is the head?.....Ephesians 2:19-22
 - Examine the *family* and the *foundation*

The Foundation is the Bible

 (Ephesians 2:20-22)

- The Foundation is the Apostles and Prophets, and the Cornerstone is Christ
 - Apostles Writings = New Testament
 - Prophets Writings = Old Testament
- The church must accurately teach the Word of God..... (1 Timothy 4:16)
 - Remember salvation involves watching life and doctrine closely
- Review: How firmly do you believe God's plan is the only way to be saved?
 - Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess Jesus is Lord, Be Baptized
- Do you know any other churches outside of ours that teach God's plan of salvation?
- Do you know any other churches that expect people to live as devoted disciples?

If the church does not teach Gods' plan of salvation, Jesus is not the head

The Family is in the Fellowship

- Being members of God's household makes us God's family..... (Ephesians 2:19)
- This is why we call ourselves "brothers" and "sisters"
- Jesus called God's followers his family members..... Matthew 12:48-50
- Do you know any other churches trying to build close, spiritual family like this one?

If the church is not building spiritual, loving relationships, Jesus is not the head

The Focus is on One Body

- There should be only one body, one church.....Ephesians 4:3-6
 - Make every effort to be unified with one church
 - Why do over 450 denominations exist in the U.S., alone?
 - There should be no division(1 Corinthians 1:10-13)
 - But even in the first century, following personalities was a problem. Over time, following human teachings over the Word has caused the divisions we see today as denominations (See Baptism and False Doctrine study)
- We should not hop or shop churches or fellowships, especially based on personal tastes, unresolved disagreements or social agendas
- We must be united with one church with the one Lord, Jesus, as the head
 - Base your decision on the foundation and the family:
 - *Is salvation taught accurately?*
 - *Is the fellowship devoted to building family?*
- How devoted are you to staying with one church that makes Jesus the head?

Stick with the body to stay alive in Christ

.....Ephesians 4:1-3

- The call of Christ is to love one another. It takes a lot work to stay united
- Making every effort out of love is called *devotion*

Devoted to the Fellowship

- Staying in the habit of meeting together is very important.....Hebrews 10:23-25
 - The fellowship should be on our hearts as we think to spur each other on
 - Meetings of the body build family in the church, so be *more* than "on-time". *Come earlier and stay later* to encourage the fellowship
- God thinks habitually missing church is serious, deliberate sin...Hebrews 10:26-31
- Church Attendance: Do not miss the meetings of the body: Sunday and midweek services, devotionals, retreats, seminars, Bible jubilees, etc.
- ◆ Be supportive of church leadership and practicesHebrews 13:17, 13:7-8
 - Leaders are qualified by their faith and their accountability to God and people. Try to support their decisions and practices so far as they are in the Spirit of Christ

Devoted to Faith Partnerships and Discipling

- After we are baptized, we are to be taught to obey everything... (Matthew 28:18-20)
- In general, New Christians require much more training to mature spiritually and build spiritual partnerships.....(Hebrews 5:11-14)
- "See to it, brothers..." It is everyone's responsibilityHebrews 3:12-13
- Are you willing to have different people train you spiritually so you can mature into building spiritual partnerships? Explain faith partners and discipling partnerships
- **Every day:** Everyone must try to connect with each other at a heart-to-heart level
- *How eager are you to initiate building faith partnerships and discipling relationships?*

The Kingdom and the Church

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Devoted to Daily Encouragement

- See the good and encourage each other *every day*..... (Hebrews 3:12-13)
 - It takes no faith to see the sin in each other
- Love and devotion for each other: an investment of time Romans 12:9-10
- Use our time to honor one another, meaning we build each other up

Devoted to Small Group Membership

- Serving together in a small group, builds great family Romans 12:11-12
 - Share with each other who are in need..... Romans 12:13
 - Practice hospitality: Open our homes to reach out to others
- Small groups should create closeness and belonging Romans 12:3-5
 - When we belong to each other, our actions impact each other
 - We need each other (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Devoted to Using Your Gifts Romans 12:6-8

- All are gifted by God's grace. Everything we have is a gift from God
- We should be sober and humble about how God has blessed us..... (Romans 12:3)
 - When we withhold serving God with our gifts, we can lack humility in understanding that all the good we have comes from God
- God has given us a measure of almost every gift listed in this passage
- For example, God expects all of us to serve, meet needs, encourage, give and show mercy
- Where we are most gifted, we can inspire and train the fellowship

Prophesying and evangelism: Speaking God's Word with vision and faith

- Faithfully speaking God's Word impacts unbelievers..... (1 Corinthians 14:24-25)
- How can you inspire others to speak God's Word with vision and faith?

Serving: Everyone in the church finds a way to serve

- Ushers, Audio/Visual, Children's Ministry, Communications, Worship
- What ways to serve interest you?

Teaching

- We are all called to help each other spiritually..... (Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16)
- Are you willing to partner with others and care for others spiritually?

Encouraging: See above "Devoted to Encouragement"

Contributing to meet needs: Giving financially

- Financially, God expects us to be faithful and reliable (2 Corinthians 9:5-8)
- Be cheerful, because you have *faith* that your generosity will reap blessings
- Be *reliable* with your promise. Follow through with what you decide to give
 - Periodically, we request pledges for budgetary planning purposes
 - Planning helps with reliable giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
- At times, collections are made to meet special needs: missionary work, disaster relief, helping the poor, expanding the church (2 Corinthians 8:13-15, Acts 4:34)

- *How devoted are you to being a reliable financial contributor to God's church?*

Contributing to meet needs (continued)

- How much should be given? A tithe is good starting point in deciding what to give
 - Tithing is the practice of giving the first tenth of your income to God
 - Tithing reminds us that everything we have is a gift from God
 - ◆ Jesus told the Pharisees they should practice the tithe Luke 11:42
 - ◆ He commended those who sacrificed financially for the church Mark 12:41-44
 - ◆ God wants to bless us when we responsibly sacrifice Malachi 3:8-10
- Leading:** We can lead in our areas of strength. Are you willing to lead when called?
- Mercy:** Helping the poor and needy was part of Christ's mission (Matthew 25:31-46)
- From time to time we participate in programs to help the poor locally and worldwide

Devoted to Peace and Unity Romans 12:18-21

- We make every effort to live at peace with each other
- Work to resolve matters with people quickly and directly (Matthew 5:25-26)
- Involve others when you cannot resolve matters personally (Matthew 18:15-16)
 - Unity is very important. Use every means possible to bring peace
 - When involving others, be considerate and avoid gossip
 - Any person you talk to about the matter should be included in the reconciliation. If you do not, that person will be left with a bad view toward whomever is involved in the matter

◆ **Devoted to Purity** (primarily for the unmarried)

- ◆ We honor one another with our purity..... (Romans 12:10) 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- ◆ Treat the opposite gender with absolute purity, like family 1 Timothy 5:1-2
 - Widows are only to marry disciples..... 1 Corinthians 7:39
 - Do not be yoked with unbelievers 2 Corinthians 6:14-15
- ◆ The call to absolute purity, undivided devotion, being yoked with only believers and for widows to only marry disciples, strongly lead us to believe:
 - expecting disciples to date only other disciples is in the Spirit of Christ
 - double-dating only disciples helps single adults honor each other's purity

Conclusion Galatians 5:6

- The church helps us to focus on what's important: building faith and loving one another. Let's give church the priority that God envisioned for our lives!