

Getting Plugged Into Ministry Through the Local Church

LAST WEEK we studied the importance of the Local Church in Evangelism, Discipleship and Missions. We learned that there is *no such thing in the New Testament as an unchurched Christian*.

We observed the development of the LOCAL CHURCH in the NT, as it spread from Jerusalem, then Samaria and then to the Gentiles as represented in the church at Antioch. This pattern fulfills the Savior's command in the Great Commission, to take the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth.

As these churches developed, we find at least seven elements that characterized each New Testament local church.

- **The Preaching of the Gospel.**
- **Teaching that produces mature disciples.** Mat 28:19-20
- **Ministry through Spiritual Gifts.**
- **Faithful administration of the ordinances.**
- **God centered worship.**
- **Willing Followers.**
- **Godly Elders properly appointed.**

Upon our observation of the importance of the local church the next question for every believer is "how do I participate in the mission Christ gave to the local church?" To answer that question, let us first look at the way in which local churches New Testament carried out the task of **evangelism, discipleship and missions**. After our study of these churches, we will re-focus our attention of our to our the present time as we ask the question, "**How can I get plugged into the ministry of evangelism, discipleship and missions here at Faith Bible Church??**"

The **Local Church** is **God's Command Center** for accomplishing His Work of **Evangelism, Discipleship and Missions**

Every combat ship in the US Navy contains an area known as the "CIC." This is the Combat Information Center where combat decisions are made. Information from sensors, satellites, and sonar streams into the CIC. From there, the commander gains a picture of threats on the surface, under the water or in the air, and a plan is made to fulfill the ship's mission. The local church is God's command center for accomplishing His task of fulfilling the Great Commission.

We see this accomplished in the **church at Ephesus**. We normally refer to 1 Timothy as one of the Pastoral Epistles. This is correct as we consider all of the personal

encouragement and instruction given to Timothy. But there is also a strong emphasis on the local church, the church at Ephesus throughout this epistle. We learn from the opening verses that Timothy was serving at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). The epistle is filled with specific instructions given to Timothy that he was to implement in the church he led. Note some of those instruction:

- A. Dealing with antagonists in the church. 1:19-20
- B. Prayer in church. 2:1-2
- C. Evangelism in the church. 2:3-4
- D. Modesty for women. 2:9
- E. Women leading over men. 2:11
- F. Qualification for Elders/ Deacons 3:1-13
- G. Timothy as a “good minister” 4:6
- H. Older and younger believers. 5:1-2
- I. Widows. 5:3
- J. How to treat Elders. 5:17
- K. False teachers
- L. Money

It should not surprise us then, that when Paul tells Timothy the reason for writing this letter, the focus is on the local church. 1 Timothy 3:14–15 *“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”*

The term “God’s household” refers to the local church because the local church has been the focus of Paul’s letter! Notice that the church is the “pillar and foundation of the truth.” A “pillar” was a Greek COLUMN. Many of these columns are still standing today, long after the roof’s they supported have collapsed.

The term “foundation” is a word used only here in the NT. It is also an architectural term meaning a “support.” The NAS translates this *“Pillar and **support** of the truth,”* while the ESV uses the term *“pillar and **buttress** of the truth.”*

Simply put, it is the local church that maintains and defends the truth of the gospel!!! The letter to Timothy reflects strongly on the priority of the local church as God’s center of operation.

A second local church that supports the priority and centrality of the local church is the church at Jerusalem. Notice in **Acts 4:32-35** that the people of the church were selling their possessions and distributing the proceeds to meet the needs of the saints. All needs were met because of the generosity and communion of the saints.

This generous spirit came to an end in Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira misrepresented the sale of their property in order to impress the Apostles and their fellow believers. As a result of their sin, they were struck dead by the Lord.

I am drawn to Acts 5:11–13 *“Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. 12 The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.”*

Because of the holiness of God’s church, and the Lord’s concern for purity, unbelievers were entirely uncomfortable around the believers. Those that were saved immediately identified themselves with the church, but those who were not saved did not want to associate with the church and possibly become the next objects of the Lord’s wrath.

This refutes the idea of the lost feeling comfortable in the church. A holy church is an uncomfortable place for the LOST, but a haven for those who are SAVED.

The church at Jerusalem demonstrates the priority of the local church and God’s concern for purity. It also shows us that the mission of the church was being carried out.

Our third example is the church at Antioch. This church began after persecution spread the believers (Acts 12:19). Disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene preached at Antioch (Acts 12:20-20). Notice how the church is responsible for the entire first missionary journey.

1. The church at Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem with a gift (Acts 12:27-30).
2. The church fasts and prays. They send Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary Journey (13:1-3).
3. Paul and Barnabas report back to Antioch. 14:26-27

As was true with the example of the churches at Ephesus and Jerusalem, the church at Antioch took seriously the task of proclaiming the gospel, evangelizing the lost and spreading the gospel through missions.

### **How Can I serve the Lord as a Part of the Local Church?**

We have seen examples of the the importance of the local church. Let’s examine some practical ways to get off of the sidelines and into the game!

The **FIRST STEP** is ministry through your **SPIRITUAL GIFT**. We studied this extensively in the message from Romans 12:4-8.

The **SECOND STEP** is ministry through your **PASSION for MINISTRY**. *If you drive*

*onto the church property and are distraught because you know how much nicer the LANDSCAPING could look, it sounds like you might just have a burden for a new ministry! If you are broken hearted over the lack of visual aids that your child's Sunday School teacher used last week, it sounds like you might just have a burden for a new ministry! If you are concerned that the shut-ins are not being visited enough.... it sounds like you might just have a burden for a new ministry!*

Our NATURAL response is **CRITICISM!** “Let the man who says it cannot be done not disturb the man doing it.” - Chinese proverb

Richard De Haan tells a story about criticism in "Our Daily Bread."

<http://www.rbc.org/devotionals/our-daily-bread/2004/02/16/devotion.aspx> After a church service in which the minister had preached about spiritual gifts, he was greeted at the door by a woman who said, "*Pastor, I believe I have the gift of criticism.*" He responded, "*Do you remember the person in Jesus' parable who had the one talent? Do you recall what he did with it?*" "*Yes,*" replied the woman, "*he went out and buried it!*" With a smile, the pastor suggested, "*Go, and do likewise!*"

Instead of criticism, use your passion as an indication that the Lord wants you to get involved. Notice how Paul's passion for the Gentiles led him to give his entire life to fulfill this goal Romans 15:14–16 "*I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. 15 I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*"

The **THIRD STEP** is to **Respond to Needs within the Local Church**. This is done by assisting in **STRUCTURED MINISTRIES**, and **ONE ANOTHER MINISTRIES** within the local church.

Structured ministries are the ones that we have agreed upon together and are accomplishing as a body. These include ministries within the church, the maintenance of buildings and property, music and ministries in the church, and children's ministries that we affirm are important. When you see a need, help there if you can.

One Another ministries are things we do personally as we see a need. Visiting the sick and shut-ins, giving, sharing with those in need, helping, encouragement, babysitting, and a myriad of other ways in which we serve one another without the formal involvement of the church or its leaders.

God is at Work in His Church! **From Truhe's Prayer Letter:** *When it comes to sharing the truth with people, our team uses an approach that Jesus instructed his disciples to use when he sent them out. We believe that the Lord goes ahead of us, and is already working in people's hearts, stirring them to seek Him. These people are "people of peace," often people who are enthusiastic about having spiritual conversations and hearing stories about the Savior, and we focus our efforts on them."*

Perhaps God is working in your heart. First and foremost, we are concerned about your relationship with GOD, not your relationship with Faith Bible Church. If you are visiting here today, you can expect a visit from one of our pastors or members. We will want to focus on your TESTIMONY.

If you are a member or regular attender, we want you to be involved in ministry through God's local church. You can do this in the following ways:

Attendance. People say they are members of FBC who never attend!

Small groups. Attend a group like a Sunday School class, Youth Group/ Olympians, or a Care Group or a Home Bible Study.

Baptism. If you are not baptized you should be.

Church membership. If you want to be involved in any of the Structured Ministries of FBC you must become a member.

Use your Gift

Find Your passion

Get plugged into ministry through local church. It is God's command center for accomplishing the task of evangelism, discipleship and world missions!