

Why We Need the Church

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Over the past few years, we have been hearing about a group of Americans identified as the religious “Nones.” A recent study by Pew Research found that the Nones are the largest cohort in the country. In 2007, the Nones made up 16% of Americans. Today they make up 28% of Americans. They have eclipsed evangelic Protestants at 26 % and Catholics at 23% (Rose, Jason. “Religious Nones are now the largest single group in U.S. 24 January 2024. www.npr.com).

Within the group, Nones are a diverse group. Some believe in God or a higher power. Some even think religion is good. Others are atheists and agnostics. Some of the group identify themselves as “nothing in particular.” While the Nones have a wide range of beliefs, they do not attend a place of worship.

In addition to these statistics, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence of the increase of the Nones. What religious group or local church has not experienced a declining membership? Church attendance has been decreasing for many years. The pandemic expedited the exodus.

Today, fewer, and fewer people recognize the value of organized religion. More to the point, they do not understand the importance of the Church. Even some Christians fail to appreciate the purpose of the Church.

About the Church

1). The Church is the family of God. The Church is described in loving terms in the Bible. Collectively, the Church represents the family of God (Eph. 3:14; 1 Tim. 3:15). God is our Father. Christ is our older brother. Christians are brothers and sisters. We are knit together by the self-giving love of God.

The family is designed for the mutual support of each member. The collective can provide for the individual needs of each member. Therefore, the family is an appropriate metaphor for the Church. We are not to isolate or distance ourselves from the Church. Rather, we are to treasure one another as the family of God.

2). The Church provides support to Christians. From the beginning of the Church, Christians took care of Christians. The Bible says, “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32). Christians took care of one another’s daily needs.

Also, the activities of the local church provide the spiritual needs of Christians. In Hebrews, the writer warns against the danger of Christians forsaking the assembly of the church: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24-25). For these Christians, failure to worship and participate in the local church contributed to their weakening faith.

Group worship is one of the ways that our faith is strengthened. There is no substitute for in-person worship with the Church. Livestream worship was a well-intentioned short-term reaction to the pandemic. In the long-term, livestream worship contributed to the decline in active participation in congregational life.

Our souls crave spiritual sustenance. Jesus promised those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled (Matt. 5:6). God provides for these needs through congregational worship and teaching (1 Pet. 5:2). Depriving our souls of spiritual food will cause spiritual starvation. This culminates in eternal death. By God giving us the local church, there is no reason for Christians to go hungry.

3). The Church supports the truth in the world. After describing the Church as the family of God, Paul added that the Church was the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). The Church has a role in society. God intended the Church to promote the truth within society.

As head of the Church, Jesus is identified as the truth (John 14:6). At the cross of Jesus, God made a distinction between good and evil. The cross was a judgment against the prince of this world and those who collude with him (John 16:5-11). Composed of believers in the cross of Jesus, the Church serves as a check on power in the world. The Church is to discourage evil and uphold righteousness.

Today, the truth is being assaulted. This battle is not new to our generation. It has been raging for many years. The Church must fulfill its role of being a beacon of truth, shining the path that leads to eternal life.

4). The Church will be saved. Jesus, the Spirit, and the apostles revealed that judgment is coming to the human family. The earth as we know it is going to come to an end (2 Pet. 3). In the end, God has planned to save His Church/kingdom. Paul wrote, “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

Conclusion

The apostle Paul wrote that the Church reveals the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:8-13). He preached that Christ died to purchase the Church (Acts 20:28). We need to be warned against treating the Church with casual indifference. The Father, Son, and Spirit do not look kindly on us when we disparage the Church.

As Christians, we need to do better at supporting our local churches. We need to speak highly of our leaders. We need to encourage the workers. We need to volunteer. We need to bring out the best in one another. We need to create a culture that reflects the character of Christ. This is how we demonstrate to the world the surpassing worth of Christ and His Church.