

W @ K L J P r a J @ r J O U r n a l

DAILY BIBLE STUDIES

“Fidelity to the Local Church”

Selected Scripture

January 25 – January 31, 2009

Praise & Prayer	ADORATION Hallowed be Your name. (6:9)	AUTHORITY Your Kingdom come... (6:10)	APPEAL Give us this day... (6:11)	AQUITTAL Forgive us our debts... (6:12)	ASSISTANCE Deliver us from evil. (6:13a)	ADMIRATION For Yours is the Kingdom... (6:13)	Lord's Day	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

THE LORD'S DAY –Again, we continue our small mini-series which has been taken from Joshua Harris’ book entitled “Stop Dating The Church –Fall In Love With The Family Of God”. Although I was not planning on simply going through the content of the book step by step, there has been a lot of positive feedback from this study so, Lord willing we will continue moving at the pace we are, and will probably be staying in this study for several more weeks. Remember, don’t just hear the Word of God and get an emotion or “inspiration” but rather ask God for the faith to believe it and then obey, or “do” it. Read **James 1:21-25**.

Suggestion for prayer: Ask God to teach you from His Word this week.

MONDAY – THE LOCAL CHURCHES FAITHFULNESS-The more mature a believer grows in Christ the more they realize they cannot “make it on their own”. It is not just to be “YOU and CHRIST”. I once had a man who disagreed with me on this point and who left the church, yet this idea of “personal” relationship that excludes all the other “brothers and sisters” you have in Christ is foreign to the scripture. God uses others to dispense much of His grace. He created a “body” not a freakish disconnected “living thing”. **Hebrews 10:19-25** is one place in Scripture that lays out for us the importance of the corporate nature of the local body and being faithful to it. We see that we truly do need others and we are not to neglect gathering together so we can receive from God what he has to give us through the local church. **WE CAN BECOME INCREDIBLY BLIND TO THE SIN IN OUR OWN LIVES.** So we need others and God has designed the local body to fulfill that need.

Suggestion for prayer: Father, help me love & cherish this fact of corporate unity.

TUESDAY – We also see the vital nature of corporate worship throughout scripture. **1 Corinthians 6:19** says that we as individuals are “temples” of the Holy Spirit, and then in the same letter we also read that we are all together a part of “God’s building”. **(1 Corinthians 3:9) 1 Peter 2:5** says we are **“living stones being built up together into a spiritual house.”** Gathering together as a local church body is irreplaceable. It CAN’T be substituted for with “personal devotions”, Bible study with friends, a hike in the woods to reflect on God, or a TV service. Corporate worship edifies and strengthens in its own particular way; a way that God has ordained. Remember back to the “church daters”. Do you see how they are actually cheating themselves?

Suggestion for prayer: Father, help me understand I can’t replace gathering with Your people with my own “private” worship. Thanks for my brothers & sisters.

M a t t @ M 6: 9-13

WEDNESDAY –Part of “FAITHFULNESS” to the local church is membership. This is a subject which causes much consternation in today’s “church”. **Spurgeon:** “I believe that every Christian ought to be joined to some visible church; that is his plain duty, according to the Scriptures. God’s people are not dogs, else they might go about one by one; but they are sheep, and therefore they should be in flocks. Now, I know there are some who say, “Well, I hope I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any church, because—” Now, why not? “Because I can be a Christian without it.” Now, are you quite clear upon that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord’s commands as by being obedient? Well, suppose everybody else did the same, suppose all Christians in the world said, “I shall not join the Church.” Why there would be no visible Church, there would be no ordinances. That would be a very bad thing, and yet, one doing it—what is right for one is right for all— why should not all of us do it? Then you believe that if you were to do an act which has a tendency to destroy the visible Church of God, you would be as good a Christian as if you did your best to build up that church? I do not believe it, sir! Nor do you either.” Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC often begins his speaking engagements about the local church with this provocative sentence: “If you are not a member of the church you regularly attend, you may well be going to hell. I don’t mean for a second that you literally have to have your name on a membership card in a church somewhere to go to heaven. I believe in justification by faith alone in Christ alone by God’s grace alone. At the same time, in the New Testament it seems that the local church is there to verify or falsify our claims to be Christians. The man in 1 Corinthians 5 who was sleeping with his father’s wife thought of himself as a Christian.” (Taken from: Joshua Harris-“Stop Dating The Church!” –Chapter 3- page 55) Read **Acts 2:41, Acts 5:12-14**.

Suggestion for prayer: Father, it is You that builds the church by saving souls; but help truly born again people see their need to join and commit to the local church.

THURSDAY –Yesterday’s point is there are many people who claim to be Christians, who have no idea of what the gospel does in a life and whose own lives have not been changed by the gospel (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). They are not born again and therefore do not have a changed life which will manifest a love and faithfulness to the church. True Christians come with anticipation to be fed the Word of God and even though it may step on their toes they still avail themselves to it for they desire to please God and be like Him. Like we see in **1 Peter**, assurance of salvation must include an obedient life that has been changed by God’s grace. Josh Harris also says in his book, “Confidence that we’ve truly been saved shouldn’t rest on an emotional experience or a prayer we prayed during an altar call years ago.” He then quotes Dever again, “I don’t care how much you cry during singing or preaching. If you do not live a life marked by love toward others, the Bible has no encouragement for you to think that you’re a Christian. None.” Dever continues, “Do you want to know that your new life is real? Commit yourself to a local group of saved sinners. Try to love them. Don’t just do it for three weeks. Don’t just do it for six months. Do it for years. And I think you’ll find out, and others will, too, whether or not you love God. The truth will show itself.” The place for this all to take place is the local church. Joining a church won’t save you. Christ alone saves you, but once truly saved the new life of obedience to Him and His Words will make evident who is His (**Matthew 7:24-27, John 8:31**).

Suggestion for prayer: Father, grow me and change me by Your Word and Spirit.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Does your life give forth the evidence of a faithful, obedient follower of Christ? Many people are more committed to everything else in their lives than the One who they profess has saved them and given them “New Life”. **Spurgeon:** “Persons go out on Monday to business who cannot go out on Sunday. It is raining on Sunday, and it is very curious how rain on Sunday will keep some people in; their health is so weak, though the same rain on Monday does not affect them at all in that particular way. Have you never observed how some persons appear to be periodically ill on Sundays? That seems to be a favorite day for being ill; and then they will say that they cannot walk so far, and they would object to ride, the objection being, probably, to going at all, at the bottom. Any hypocrite comes on a Sunday, but they do not, to my knowledge, all of them come on Monday to the prayer-meeting, nor all to the week-night service on a Thursday. I am pretty certain of this, though some of them may. Week-night meetings and services are a powerful test.” One more quote drives home the point of how the local church is a place where “community sanctification” takes place. That is to say that within a body of believers there is a constant process of each one edifying the other and building them up to be more like Christ. **Spurgeon** warns those who would come to his local fellowship to not come in to just “join” the church and drag in all your unconfessed sin and unholy life which actually weakens the church rather than build it up. “Do not come in to weaken us, we are weak enough already. Do not come in to adulterate our purity, we have enough impurity even now. Pray that God may make you a real increase to our prayerfulness, to our holiness, to our earnestness, to our higher life, and then come and welcome, and the Lord be with you!” “What holds us back from joining the church? Yes it is true that many churches don’t represent Christ through their lives and teaching. Everyone has a horror story to tell about a stale, lazy, or unfriendly church. But is this the real reason (or excuse) people don’t commit to the local church? I believe the biggest problems are not in the church but in people. We have been so influenced by the world around us that many of the world’s attitudes show up in those who are critical of the church. IE: **1.** People are self-centered and have bought the lie that we’ll be happier the less we give of ourselves and sacrifice our time. But the opposite is true. The more we hold on to “our” time, money, and comforts and refuse to give them to the church, the less we receive back and the emptier we really become. **2.** People take great pride in their “independence”. People tend to think they don’t need others in their life or they are afraid that people will see them for who they really are. Both attitudes cut us off from blessings the local church provides. **3.** Lastly, people have developed a critical eye toward the church. They think they are accomplishing something by logging the churches faults and complaining about it. God says to repent of a critical spirit and have an attitude of genuine concern. That is what people who love the Lord do. They see a problem and truly desire that it be fixed according to God’s Word and way. That kind of concern leads to positive change for both us and the church. Only when a person rejects being self-centered, independent, and critical can they truly see the beauty of the local church come into focus. And even the true faults of the church become an opportunity for us to love and serve. Read **2 Corinthians 5:17, James 2:14-26**.

Suggestion for prayer: Father, help me live a life that glorifies You in all that I do.