

## DAILY BIBLE STUDIES

### *“The Local Church & You”*

#### *Selected Scripture*

*January 18 – January 24, 2009*

**THE LORD'S DAY** –This week, 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”. Back in 2006 we did a Bible study adapted from this book and you will also find the study notes for that study on the web site in the “Document Library” section under “Bible Studies”. I highly recommend that resource as you read the book (our daily studies will come from this material). As we continue this week, we will see the connection between individual Christians and the local church, why a true believer needs the local church, and what testimony the local church is to show to those outside. Read **Ephesians 1:19-22**.

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

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

**MONDAY – CAN YOU SPOT A “CHURCH DATER?” –THE PROFILE OF ONE WHO DATES THE CHURCH.** **1.** A “**me-centered**” attitude. They go to church for what they can get—social interaction, programs, activities. The common question of the “church dater” is, “What can church do for me?” **2.** A “church dater” is **Independent**. They go to church because that is what Christians are supposed to do. They are careful to avoid getting involved too much, especially with people. They don’t pay much attention to God’s larger purpose for them as a vital part of a specific church family. They go through the motions without really investing themselves. **3.** A “church dater” tends to be **Critical**. They are short on allegiance and quick to find fault in their church. They treat the church with the consumer mentality—looking for the best product for the price of **Their** Sunday morning. They are fickle and not invested for the long-term, like a lover with a wondering eye; they are always on the hunt for something better. *(These three points taken from, Joshua Harris-“Stop Dating The Church!” –Chapter 1- page 16-17)* Read **John 13:34-35**.

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

*Suggestion for prayer: Father, help me not be a selfish “church-dater”. May I love you and Your church with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.*

**TUESDAY – WHY A TRUE BELIEVER NEEDS THE LOCAL CHURCH.** The New Testament itself is a testimony to the importance God places on the local church. Besides the gospels, we find that the other books of the N.T. were either written to leaders of local churches, local churches themselves, or contained instructions for or historical narrative about the “local church”. (**Romans-Revelation**) When a person resists commitment in a relationship with the church,

Praise & Prayer	ADORATION Hallowed be Your name. (6:9)	AUTHORITY Your Kingdom come... (6:10)	APPEAL Give us this day... (6:11)	AQUITAL Forgive us our debts... (6:12)	ASSISTANCE Deliver us from evil. (6:13a)	ADMIRATION For Yours is the Kingdom... (6:13)
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everyone gets cheated. No one wins when a person is just a “church dater”. God calls us to commit to a local church that obeys and follows His Word. We are to belong to a local church that follows His commands in its practices. We show our love for Christ’s church by being a part of a Biblical local church. FORMALITY? Many people feel they don’t need a local church family; they don’t need to belong because they think it is an unnecessary “formality”. We often hear the copout of “**I belong to the Universal Church**”. Many people when asked what church they belong to come back with that answer feeling it is somehow a sign of “spirituality” when in fact; if they don’t belong to a local Biblical church body there may be more “**carnality**” than “spirituality” going on. Yes, true believers **ARE** part of the “UNIVERSAL” or “catholic” church in a technical sense but is disconnection to a local church wise or even right? Josh Harris says it this way, “**Wouldn’t that be like telling your new bride that while your love is true, you have other priorities? Your heart of course is all hers, but as for the rest of you...well, you’ll be in and out.**” (Joshua Harris-“*Stop Dating The Church!*” chapter3 page 45) The Bible allows for no such disconnection. If you love the “**church**” you will identify and love an **actual, local** church. The universal “Body of Christ” takes a visible, tangible shape and reality through the local church. And there will be commitment evidenced in the life of one who is truly “**in love**” with the church. Read **Acts 2:41-47**.

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

Suggestion for prayer: Father, thank You that I do belong to the universal church and help me to obey You by being faithful in my local church.

**WEDNESDAY – THE MARRIAGE ANALOGY** –The following is a sample of the basic traditional wedding vows: Many “Christians” do not even show this type of loyalty and love to the savior of their souls or to His church; either corporately or locally. *I, (Bride/Groom), take you (Groom/Bride), to be my (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part. "[Name], do you take [Name] to be your wedded [husband/wife] to live together in marriage. Do you promise to love, comfort, honor and keep [him/her] for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health? And forsaking all others, be faithful only to [him/her], and keep yourself only unto [him/her], so long as you both shall live?"* These traditional vows are all about true, genuine love & commitment. We should strive to live these out with our God given mates but we should also reflect these qualities of faithfulness and steadfastness to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. Remember Christ’s example and commitment. (**Ephesians 5:25-28, 32, 1 John 3:16**) May we reflect this love for Christ and for our true brethren, His church.

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

Suggestion for prayer: Father God, help me understand the wonderful reality that marriage gives us concerning our union with Christ. Help me be a faithful spouse.

**THURSDAY – THE LOCAL CHURCHES TESTIMONY** One thing the local church does is make a visible display to the surrounding neighbors that there is

something to this “**NEW LIFE**” in Jesus Christ. The local church is to display the transforming power of the gospel as it lives out the gospel. One way we live out the gospel is by being obedient to the practices given to the local church from God’s Word. The following three things are given to the local church by Christ and enable the church to shine forth a distinct and different message. **BAPTISM** -Baptism is a public testimony that a person makes to declare they have been saved and therefore identified with the death and resurrection of Christ. (**Matthew 28:19, Romans 6:4**) **THE LORD’S SUPPER** -Taking “communion” is also a step of obedience and a time for introspection and examination to keep our lives clean before God and to focus on and remember the death of Christ which makes our forgiveness and cleansing possible. (**Matthew 26:26-29, 1 Corinthians 11:23-32**)

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

Suggestion for prayer: Father, thank You for the Sacraments and how they show me the Gospel in visible form when I see and participate in them.

**FRIDAY – CHURCH DISCIPLINE** - The process that keeps the testimony pure and bright before the lost and helps not to confuse the issue of what it means to be a Christian and who is one, is the matter of church discipline. A person in unrepentant sin is to be admonished and rebuked in love according to the Biblical principles and if they refuse to turn from their sin to Godliness in their living, they are to be removed from the local fellowship that hopefully they will be brought to a point where their heart is changed and they can be restored. (**Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13**) **Charles Spurgeon:** “*An unholy church! It is useless to the world, and of no esteem among men. It is an abomination, hell’s laughter, heaven’s abhorrence. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy church. In proportion as a church is holy, in that proportion will its testimony for Christ be powerful.*”

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

Suggestion for prayer: Father, thank You for loving us enough to discipline us. May I see its importance and also that where there is no discipline-there is no real love.

**SATURDAY** – It should not be hard to see right away that the local church is to be different from the “neighborhood Bible study”. Groups of Christians getting together can express many aspects of Christian community, but they are not church. NEITHER is just a bunch of Christians coming together in the same building for encouragement “being the church”. All of those contexts could give you your teaching or fellowship “fix”, but they cannot substitute the local church. God has distinctly set up the local church with its God ordained leadership and structure as well as its unique guidelines as the place to display His ordinances and qualities. He is the one who chose to establish the local church. (**Ephesians 4:11-16**)

*What truth(s) did I learn from God’s Word today?*

Suggestion for prayer: Thank You Father for the blessing that is, Your church.