

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, November 14, 2010 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

The Household of God - 1 Timothy 3:14-15

Introduction: On a typical Sunday morning, over 100 million Americans will attend a church. Hopefully, most will attend out of a sense of belonging and desiring to worship and fellowship with other Christians. Hopefully most will attend church because they believe in the church's divine purpose and mission and want to be involved in it.

But the reality is that some only attend out of guilt, or habit, or pressure, or because they think it will get them on God's good side.

One church attendee, frustrated about having to go to church, wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. His complaint was that going to church made no sense. He wrote:

"I've been going to church for 30 years now, and during that time, I've heard over 3,000 sermons. I'm sure some of them were good, and some of them were bad. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I've come to the conclusion that going to church has been a complete waste of my time, and the preacher's time too, since I can't remember anything he said."

Well, that letter caused a stir among the township. Here's what one respondent wrote:

"I've been married for 30 years now. During that time, my wife has served some 30,000 meals. But for the life of me, I can't recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals, and no doubt, a few of them were probably not as tasty as the rest. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to live. If my wife hadn't served them to me, I'd be physically dead today. Likewise, if I hadn't gone to my church and heard all those sermons my preacher preached, I'd be spiritually dead today!"

What about you? Why do you go to church? Why have you chosen to be a part of this church family? On a larger scale, Why do we do have a church here? What is our purpose here?

Before we answer these questions, let me point out something the Bible makes very clear. When talking about Christians, the Bible says that we are all a part of something very special and unique. Something that has eternal implications.

When the Apostle Paul was giving a young pastor named Timothy some instructions on church order, he told him, *"I am writing you these instructions so that 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."* **1 Timothy 3:14-15 (NIV)**. Did you get that? He said all followers of Christ – all believers are a part of *"God's household."*

Now how does one become a part of *"God's household?"* Well, in **Galatians 3:26 (NIV)** Paul says, *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* In Romans 8:15-17, Paul says that believers are *"adopted into his family"* therefore we are called God's *"children"* and *"heirs of God"* and *"fellow heirs with Christ."* So as Christians, we are a part of God's family.

You became a part of your biological family when you were born physically. By the same token, when you were reborn spiritually, you are born into God's family. The Bible says that God's family is the church.

This tells us something we all need to hear and understand. The church is not a building. The church is not a business or an institution, or an organization or a social club. The church is a family. We, as members of it, are God's family.

Paul said that this *"household of God,"* this family of God, is *"the pillar and the foundation of the truth."* That means that it is the foundation for your very life!

If you have ever built a house, or survived a flood, earthquake or a strong wind with your house intact; you know how important a good foundation is. Without it, your house will crumble.

Well, in your life, you're going to have some personal floods, some financial earthquakes, and some relationship tornadoes fly through. Chances are, you're even going to suffer a health problem or two. In other words, some things are going to come into your life that will shake you to the very core.

If you don't have a good foundation in life, you're going to crumble. The Bible says that one reason God

established the church was to be the support and the foundation of your life. This is why the Christian life is more than just believing - it's belonging. It's belonging to a family – belonging to the household of God.

A lot of people say, *"I want to be a Christian but I don't need a church."* That's like saying, *"I want to play football in the NFL but I don't want to be a part of any team.... I would just rather play for myself."* Or it's like saying, *"I want to play a tuba but, I'm not going to join the band."* A Christian without a church family is like an orphan without parents. You don't have the support and foundation you need to make it. This world is going to put pressure on you to denounce your faith. That's why it's so important to believe and belong to a church. The church is not just the place you go to, it's the family you belong to.

You see, God established the church and His Son, Jesus Christ gave His life for the church. Therefore there has got to be something divinely glorious and eternally wonderful about it.

So, for the next few minutes, I want to tell you why the church, and specifically belonging to God's family, is so important. First, it's important because it helps us:

1. Focus On God.

In this fast-paced society we live in, it's easy to get distracted and lose our focus. I've told you the story about how Elaine get's distracted when she's picking up around the house. She'll go to put a coat away in a closet, and she'll see dirty dishes in the sink, so she sets the coat down and goes to filling up the dishwasher. But before she gets through, she'll go through each room to see if there are any dishes left in them. When she gets in a room, she sees that a bed is not made up, so she'll stop to make up the bed. So when she gets through with that, she's forgotten all about the dirty dishes left in the room and the coat is still not put away in the closet! It's so easy to get distracted.

Think about it, do you as a Christian find that you can spend all day going from here to there, doing this and that, trying to accomplish one thing and then another, and then you lay down at night, and discover that you've not even thought about God?

I think that is one reason one of the 10 Commandments was *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."* It's like God is saying, *"Every seventh day, you need to stop and refocus."* That's called worship. And that's what we do, church! When we come together we worship God. Worship is focusing on God.

Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment was, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind."* Why? Because that's what we're created to do. We're created to love God. The church helps us do that. It helps us focus on Him - how great and wonderful and holy and precious He is. We belong to the family of God so we can come together as His church to focus our attention on Him.

But you say, *"Pastor, I can worship God without being in a church."* And I'd say, *"You're right, but do you? Do you set aside a special time and place each week to focus your attention and adoration and worship on Go?"* Besides, even if you do set aside a special time and place each week to worship God by yourself, you have to admit, you're missing out on some powerful stuff.

Let me ask you, would you rather sing by yourself or with 100 or more people? I've heard some of you sing, and believe me, I'd rather hear you sing with 100 with more people! Worship is just better with other people. There's power in group worship.

Have you ever come to church when you didn't feel like it? I have. But when I do, I always leave feeling better. I've found that when I don't feel like coming – or when I don't feel like singing, or praying, or studying my Bible, if I just come on and get involved in worship, that is the very time I need it most.

So listen, what would you think of me if I just didn't show up one Sunday, and didn't tell anyone? What if I said, *"Elaine, I'm not going to church today, because I've got a headache, or I'm not going to church because I'm going to sleep late?"* What would you think about me?

What if you had to bring a permission slip with you after you'd been out of church? Do you think God would accept it? Being with our family is so important because we belong to each other. We miss each other. So the first reason that being with your church family is so important is that it helps us focus on God. But also, the church is important because it helps us:

2. Face Our Problems.

Life is tough. Either you're in a problem right now, or you just came out of one, or you're getting ready to have one. In fact, life is a series of problems. And because we face so many problems, we get discouraged, tired,

stressed out, drained. Sometimes we can feel like giving up, or going away and never coming back.

But God never meant for you to go through life alone. He established the church so we'd have a church family for support. In church, we draw strength from each other. This is called fellowship. That's how we support each other.

You take a campfire with a bunch of hot coals in it, and they're all keeping each other hot. If you take one coal out, set it by itself, it eventually gets cold. It loses its heat and it eventually goes out. If you put it back in the campfire, it gets warm again.

It's the same for Christians who get out of church. If you don't have consistent contact with other Christians, your heart's going to grow cold. You're going to burn out. You're going to die spiritually. You need that contact with other people to give you encouragement, to help you keep going. The church is like our extended family - a place where we can find sympathy, love, and support from people who have a heart for God.

Romans 12:5 (NIV) says, "*So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*" That means that as Christians, we not only belong to God, we belong to each other as well. Look down your row. Look across the aisle. You belong to them, and they belong to you. We belong to each other. We're a family, and we need each other.

Do you really know who is across the aisle? Do you know those who are sitting in front of you or behind you? God's put us here in this church for support and love, but if we don't take the opportunities before us to get to know our own brothers and sisters, we're missing the boat!

The Church offers so many ways for its people to become close to each other, but so few take advantage of them. Sunday School, Mission involvement, the Youth and Children's Ministry, PrimeTimers, the Choir, Wednesday night Bible studies and Discussion Groups, these all are excellent ways for you to feel connected and feel a part of the family.

My prayer is that everyone who attends here would get involved in a ministry so that when the heat is on in your life, you'll have somebody you can lean on for support. That's what your church can do for you. You are here to help each other face the problems that come up, so that no one will have to face them alone. But thirdly, church is important because it can help us:

3. Fortify Our Faith

The word "*fortify*" means "*to strengthen, develop, or reinforce.*" We have breakfast cereals that are fortified with vitamins. Some people claim that because Pop Tarts are fortified with Vitamin A they are a health food. But being fortified, means something has been strengthened or reinforced.

That's what a church family does. It helps us clarify and reinforce our values. It helps us set priorities and know what we really believe. A church family can be so instrumental in helping us develop character and conviction. Belonging to a church family will help us fortify our faith.

Finally, the church is important because it can help us:

4. Find Our Purpose

There are two types of Church attendees – those who take up the towel and wash cloth of service, and those who take up space. But listen, God didn't save you and place you in the church to take up space. God expects you to give something back. He expects you to make a contribution with your life. He gave you abilities, talents, and specific spiritual gifts that He wants you to use to help others.

That's what we call "*being a minister.*" Any time you use your talents, abilities, and gifts in service for the Lord, we call that "*ministry.*" A Christian who is not a minister is being contrary to God's Word! You were made for ministry. One day you are going to stand before God and He's going to say, "*What was your ministry? What did you do on earth to help grow my kingdom?*" Part of the church's purpose is to help its members discover and develop their ministry.

Conclusion: God is saying, "*I established the church to help my children focus on Me and know how to better face life's problems. I gave my life for the church so that their faith can be fortified, and so that my children can find their purpose.*" God loves His church and He wants everyone to be a part of it.

There are some good churches in our area. Some are bigger than us, and some smaller, but there is none better. Some might have more ministries going on, or different worship styles, or better organization. But there's one thing that our Church has that the other churches doesn't have - YOU! You help make this church

unique. God has placed you here for a reason. There are a lot of things your church can do for you, but there are a lot of things you can do for your church. Everyone has something to contribute.

We're not perfect by no means. We've got our problems to be sure. But we're striving to be healthy. We believe that by placing a priority on preaching and teaching the gospel, we're doing what God wants us to do. We believe that by making our worship of God something that will impact people's lives, we're making a difference. We believe that by having a vision for our schools, we are reaching out into our mission field. We believe that by focusing on prayer and ministry, we'll have a bright future, because we believe that's God's will. If you're not a part of Sonoraville Baptist Church, let me invite you to this family.

How do you join this church family? If you haven't been saved, you need to accept Christ as your Savior first, then follow Him in believer's baptism. If you've been saved, but never baptized, you can come and present yourself for baptism. If you've been saved and baptized, then you just need to come and let us know that you want to belong here. We'll accept you on your statement of faith in Christ, or if you belong to another church, we'll accept you by a transfer of your church membership. The main thing is that whatever step you need to take, I invite you to do it today. Come on in to God's household. Come on and join this family of believers. We'd be glad to have you!