

Title: Aquarium Living pt.2
Text: 1 Corinthians 10.23-11.1
Theme: Living as the body of Christ
Series: 1 Corinthians #42
Prop Stmt.

At the end of Christ's first recorded sermon (Matt 5-7) is the story of the man who built his house on the sand and the man who built his house on a rock. According to Jesus, both of these men heard the sermon that Christ preached. The difference between these two men, was this: the man who built his house on the rock, put the sermon into action. It is the same idea that James talks about in chapter one of his letter. If you only listen to the Word and you do not obey it, you are deceiving yourself. If you only hear the preaching of the Word but you do not change your life, then you will become one who sits in judgment of the sermon, instead of placing yourself under the authority of the truth.

We have just completed another major section of 1 Corinthians (8-10). Many of you have been waiting to get to the next four chapters because there are all sorts of interesting topics that come up. But, I remind you that we are not studying this book so we can talk about and debate interesting topics. These truths are given to change the way we think and the way we live. So, before we can go on in our study, we need to access our lives. We need to access our church. What are we doing with what we have learned? Are you putting any of this into action? If not, when? The book of 1 Corinthians is all about how the church solves problems. At the beginning of this book Paul reminds his readers that the church is historically and practically based on the gospel. The gospel affects our attitudes, it affects our relationships, and it affects our destiny. The going to heaven when I die part is very attractive, but the we have seen that the call to Christ is the call to a community of believers and this is where it gets interesting, because many people do not see it like this. Let me ask you a question:

How do you select a church?

Location? Driving distance
Service times? Convenience
Friendliness of the people
Atmosphere
Length of service?
Service style? Contemporary (whatever that means) Traditional (whatever that means) or Blended (whatever that means)
Quality of Music
Preaching? Length of sermon, interesting, amusing, practical
Children's Ministries
Clean Nurseries
Student Ministries
Senior's Ministries
Ease of parking

Other amenities

Honestly, for many people, picking a church is a lot like picking a restaurant. The criterion is amazingly similar. Is it close enough, convenient hours, friendly, atmosphere, menu variety to satisfy everyone in your group, does not take too long, ease of parking and good value for your dollar?

For the sake of discussion, let's accept this approach, valid or not, as the basis that many people have in selecting a church. Do we want to reach people? Yes. If this is how people select a church, then what should we do? The first thing a restaurant has to figure out is this: What is our target audience? Are we after the breakfast crowd, lunch crowd, dinner crowd, or all of the above? If so, do we offer fast food and carry-out, or sit-down meals? Are we a plastic ware and sandwich wrap, or a silver and cloth napkin place? Mr. Paul's Chop House does not have drive thru and Rally's does not serve Prime Rib. Therefore, a church has to figure out, what is our target audience? Do we want a drive thru crowd, sit down crowd or what? Then, based on that, we decide what we are going to do. It is simply Marketing 101.

We ought to select a location that is convenient and safe.

We ought to offer services that fit into people's schedules.

We ought to be friendly.

We ought to pick an atmosphere that makes people comfortable.

We ought to be careful that the service does not go too long.

The style ought to appeal to our target audience

The sermon, or the talk, or the sharing time should be humorous, engaging, interactive, and definitely not too long.

There should be activities for every single person.

The facilities should be neat and clean.

And people should feel like they are getting a good value for their dollar.

You could argue that many of these points make sense. But, what is clearly missing from this picture? The Bible does not speak to the location, the service schedule, the service length, the number of activities, the neatness of the facilities, etc. Even though I would agree that people tend to look at a church like they do a restaurant, we cannot do that! The church is not a spiritual 7-11, nor a religious restaurant where there is something on the menu for all of your tastes. You do not join 7-11 or Texas Roadhouse. You go and purchase a service, but you have no sense of ownership. If that restaurant does not survive, you simply find another restaurant. The joining of a restaurant would be similar to a country club, where you apply for admission, pay an initiation fee, pay monthly dues and then have the responsibilities and privileges of using the facilities. Is that what a church is like? Well, not exactly.

Let's go back to a very important point that Jerry has pointed out in our Sunday night study of Ephesians. Ephesians 5.18 commands us to be filled with the Spirit. On the surface that appears to be saying that our lives are like a cup and the Spirit is the liquid that fills us. Or as I have attempted to explain this concept, our lives are like a glove and

the Spirit is like the hand in the glove Who is there to direct our attitudes and actions. Now, that is not heresy, but upon a closer study of the verb – to fill, that is not exactly what this particular text is teaching. The word “with” can mean, by means of. Jerry has made a very convincing case that this is how this passage should be understood. The Spirit, is not the water that goes into my bucket, the Spirit is the hose who connects, me, the bucket to the substance that is to fill me. What or Who is to fill me? It is all of God! Look at Ephesians 3.19. Paul prays that you would be filled with the fullness of God. The Spirit is the means by which we are to individually be filled up with the fullness of God. That has huge implications. God is a Tri-unity. The reason for you being filled with the fullness of God is so that you can live in harmony with other people who themselves are filled with the fullness of God. Notice the emphasis on the plural (3.20-21) and the emphasis on how our relationships are a reflection of God (4.1-6).

When you are called to Christ, when you become a follower of Jesus Christ, you are called to a community of believers. 1 Peter 2.9 calls you “a chosen PEOPLE”...a holy NATION... a PEOPLE belonging to God, that you (plural - together) may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (v.10) “Once you were not a people. (What is the implication of that? Once you were not part of the family. Once you were not part of the group. Once you did not belong. Once you did not have a place.) but now you are the people of God!”

A country club has connections based on common horizontal interests and a sense of shared responsibilities or activities as a result. A true, NT church is an actual relationship in God. We really are part of each other’s lives. When you come to faith in Christ, you become part of Someone who conquered death, which is why even though your body will die, you will not die. You have Spiritual life. We have Spiritual life. That life, from God is something that fundamentally binds us together. But, our attitudes and actions are like the caboose to a train. They have to follow the engine. Step back for a minute from the book of 1 Corinthians. What is the big picture here? What is God trying to teach us through this book? Do you see what I have designed and made you to be? Do you see what I am trying to make out of you? Do you see that you are called to be a vital, important part of my presence on this earth? Do you see that you are here to put the character of God on display by replacing your selfish agenda with God’s?

Let me give you some examples of what I am talking about. What would happen if you smashed your fingers in the car door? Does your brain say, “Whoa, sure glad that was the fingers, and not the head.”? Do your ears say, “Stupid fingers, there always pointing at others, maybe they will learn a little lesson now.”? Do your feet say, “Now, the fingers know what our world is like.”? “We are always getting stepped on, or smashed into shoes.”? Does your mouth lecture your fingers? Does your neck say, “I’m not sticking myself out for them – that’s their problem.”? Do your lungs say, “Look fingers, if you want to get any sympathy from this body, you have to go around with a sad look and make the rest of us feel guilty for all of the things that you have done and how nice we have it.”? Do your knees say, “Hey, I’m too busy to be bothered with your problem?”

If you smashed your fingers in the car door, your feet start dancing, your mouth starts yelling and your brain is sending out all sorts of information that rallies the entire body to get involved. Adrenaline jump starts all sorts of things. Your heart starts racing to get blood going there, your breathing deepens in order to get more oxygen inside, in fact the rest of the body gives up some attention because there is a need that is going on and it is urgent, but no one has to convince the rest of the body to do something because the body already knows that it is connected.

The Pistons have been fun to watch this year. It seems that night in and night, these guys come to play ball. What if, on the night before the playoffs begin, Rasheed Wallace gets so angry at a referee that he slugs the official? If Chauncy, Rip, Ben, Tayshawn, Flip and the rest of the team say, “Rasheed, what are you doing?” Can Rasheed say, “Hey, it’s my life, my game, my business, you live your life, do your thing and leave me alone.”? He can say that, but it is not true. Rasheed is part of a team. His actions affect other people. One of the major keys to the success of the Pistons this year is the incredible lack of ego on the court. I do not think Chauncy will get MVP of the league because his numbers are not as impressive as some others, but when you place MVP ahead of TEAM, you are missing the whole point.

What was going on in Corinth? People were placing MVP ahead of TEAM. They were looking at the weak and at times hurting parts of the body and saying, “That is their problem – that is not my problem.” I have my rights. I have my life. If what I do offends other people, who cares, that is their problem. There was a huge disconnect between what they were called to be and how they were living.

Do we ever do such a thing? I am afraid that we do. Let’s say that this week, a brother in the church loses his job. What do you say? What do you do? Hey, glad that wasn’t me. At least he knows what it feels like now. I’m not sticking my neck out for him. Hey, good luck, hope you find something. Now, if he lost his job because he was lazy or violated company policy, then your responsibility to him is a little different, than if he lost his job due to no fault of his own. Granted, the specifics of the situation will govern the specifics of your response, but we have to respond as if our fingers were just smashed in the car door. Church is theology. Church is worship. Church is gospel. But church is also authentic and personal. Church is not a show that has to go on with a smile, that pretends that life is perfect and covers up the real issues. Jesus is the hero, we aren’t. If we pretend, then we are seeking to draw attention to ourselves that belongs to Christ.

Let me challenge you with another thing. Recently, Don and Stephanie Bens and Doug and Mary Ann Curd stood before you and made a commitment to raise their children in a manner that honors God. We understand that God uses the life of a church as one of the major components of raising kids for His glory and we understand that we are all part of that process. That is why I ask you, “are you willing to be the church that will support our parents who are seeking to raise their kids in a Christ-honoring way?” You say, “we will.” Then, Julie Rosol, one of our members asks you, “Would you serve in our pre-school area, because we have a need?” When you see that this church is your family, and that you are really a vital part of His body, then you will see these needs as your needs.

Quiz:

1. How have I been viewing the church?

- A) a restaurant
- B) a country club
- C) a body

2. How have I been viewing my part?

- A) a consumer
- B) a relative
- C) a vital part

3. What is my relationship to the church?

- A) playing the field
- B) dating
- C) married and committed

4. How do I respond when I hear of a need?

- A) Someone else can do it
- B) This church is so big, someone else will do it
- C) I am taking responsibility to see that this need is covered.

5. How do I view my actions?

- A) It is no one else's business how I live.
- B) It only matters how I act in the church building.
- C) What I do in private, stays in private.
- D) Everything I do affects the community of believers.

6. What am I going to do about this?

- A) Find out how I can get connected.
- B) Find out how I can serve.
- C) Take my part seriously by holy, joyful living.
- D) Keep on growing and playing my position
- E) Nothing

In March of 1943, 12 Norwegians sailed from northern England to the Nazi-occupied arctic section of Norway in order to supply the Norwegian resistance. They were betrayed, and 11 of the men were killed. One man survived. But the only way he could stay alive long enough to escape would be if the people of Norway would be willing to

help him. But, if they did, and were caught, the men would be killed, the women and children sent to concentration camps and their homes burnt to the ground. The story of this man, Jans Baalsrud is really the story of a small community, who were bound by a love for a native land and who were determined against incredible odds to save this man's life.

Brothers and sisters, we are bound, eternally bound by the life-giving, love-producing breath of the Spirit and the bonds of Christ. We long for a land that already we are citizens of, but not yet have we breathed its air and felt the perfect light of the Son on our faces. But, right now, we are called to live as a taste of that kingdom that is to come. Right now, we are called to show our world, what a community really looks like, what it means to consider the needs of others more important than the wants of my own life, what it means to seek the good of others, what it means to eat and drink to the glory of God, and what it means to set the tempo in following Christ so that others can keep the pace.

Communication cards:

- 1) I am ready to formally commit myself to this family of believers.
- 2) Find me a place to serve, I need to do my part.
- 3) Contact me so I can learn more about what opportunities are available.