

We are looking at areas of growth and maturity for a Jesus Follower.

Today, look at this piece of the puzzle:

A growing and maturing commitment to continue to be involved in God's work through the local church

Over the years, as life has become busier and busier, the church has become less and less important in the lives of many people. The church can be perceived as just another activity rather than the powerful force that God intended it to be. Going to church should be more than just punching a timecard to appease God. He designed the church to be an intrinsic part of His plan and purpose for planet earth. Biblical discipleship teaches us the importance and role of the church and shows us how to get involved as a practical part of the local church.

In the early days of Christianity, there wasn't a western, market-driven idea of what the church should be. There was just the church, boiled down to the raw ingredients and practices.

Acts 2:42 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Today, though the cultural context is very different, the same foundational components and expressions should still be evident:

- 1) Commitment to solid, biblical, balanced teaching. (Apostle's teaching)
- 2) Commitment to the family of God on a deeper level than just going to the same building for an hour a week. (The fellowship [koinonia- partnership, i.e., participation, or communion, fellowship])
- 3) Commitment to hanging out together and sharing life. (Breaking of bread)
- 4) A lifestyle of individual and corporate reliance on and dialogue with God (Prayer)

These foundation principles were what the early church devoted themselves to as a community of believers.

As we mature in the Lord and develop the gifts He's given us, our goal should be to use those gifts in the church for the building up of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:12 *So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.*

The church is not an afterthought of God's plan. It is a part of His eternal purpose, and the church is on display to the heavenly realms as a testimony of His manifold wisdom. Each individual believer has a role to play in this cosmic production, and the only way we can fully realize our potential in Him is through the church.

Ephesians 3:10,11 *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The church is not only God's household, but it is the very pillar and foundation of truth. Because of its importance to the big picture of God's kingdom we should take our involvement with the church very seriously.

1 Timothy 3:15 *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.*

The church is a place for encouragement and support. As we move further into the last days, it is an essential shelter for those who call upon the name of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hale Pule Question:

As you meditate on the verses about that describe part of the Father's heart and intent for the Church, think how much these principles play a part of your life.

Ask the Father how you can do more than just go to church, ask Him how you can be a practical part of the Church in a local context.

How can you grow in these 4 foundational aspects of the Church?

1) Commitment to solid, biblical, balanced teaching. (Apostle's teaching)

2) Commitment to the family of God on a deeper level than just going to the same building for an hour a week. (The fellowship [koinonia-partnership, i.e., participation, or communion, fellowship])

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