

## Essential Truths III: Working With God

## 18

## Establishing a Daily Church

The very first description of church life is found in [Acts 2:46-47](#). Here Luke records:

*“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number *daily* those who were being saved.”*

The Church was designed by God to be a daily Church, not a weekly one. This doesn't mean that you're supposed to fill up the week with meetings every day. Rather, it means Christians are having daily contact with one another and reaching out on a daily basis to the world.

## The Daily Dynamic

Everything in church life begins with the individual Christian experience. A church can never be something more than the sum total of its members.

There are two basic approaches that a Christian can take to the Christian life, and these approaches affect the dynamic of church life.

### ***A weekly approach***

We live in a world governed by the tyranny of the weekly schedule. Most of us have activities that are repetitive – they recur on a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis.

And for most Christians, their relationship

The Birthright

Taking the Baton

The Great Commission

The Body of Christ

The Ministry of Every Believer

Joining the Work of God

The Tree of Life

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Filled with the Spirit

Ministry to the Body

Sent into the Harvest

Speaking the Word of God

A Lifestyle Gospel

Salt and Light

Enforcing the Victory

Signs and Wonders

A New Kind of Leadership

▶ **Establishing a Daily Church** ◀

Making Disciples

The New Wine

The Goal of Ministry

with God revolves around a weekly schedule, matching the weekly rhythms of their lives. Sunday is time for church – at least an hour or two where we put aside the concerns of the week and focus on worshipping God. For some, this weekly experience is expanded to include, for example, a Sunday night service, and maybe a Wednesday night Bible study and a Friday night prayer meeting. But no matter how many meetings may be crammed into the schedule, these are still weekly events. Each event is exactly that – an *event* on the weekly calendar. Outside of those events, life continues on as normal, largely unaffected.

For the weekly Christian, the basic unit of time for the Christian life is the week. When do I learn from God’s Word? Once (or maybe twice) a week. When do I worship God? Once (or maybe twice) a week. When do I fellowship with other Christians? Once (or maybe twice) a week. Many believers struggle to get through the week to have their spiritual batteries recharged on Sunday. Is it any wonder that many Christians are spiritually anorexic? For it can be said, excuse the pun, that a *weekly* Christian is a *weakly* Christian.

But is this what God intended for you? Hardly. God has an entirely different schedule planned for your life.

### ***A daily approach***

As we’ve noted in **Acts 2:46-47**, the first believers had a daily approach to church life. They fellowshiped daily, prayed daily, studied God’s Word daily and witnessed daily. This daily dynamic was the key to their explosive growth, for “the Lord added to their number *daily* those who were being saved.”

One quick look at how numbers are added to a church reveals whether church life is being experienced on a daily or a weekly basis. Do commitments to Christ basically happen once a week, on the Sunday or at special evangelistic events. Are they happening on a daily basis?

It is the daily Christian who will overrun this world with the enthusiasm and vitality born of a deep, personal and daily walk with God. As Louis Cassels put it:

“*Daily* is the key word. Our commitment to Christ, however genuine and wholehearted it may be today, must be renewed tomorrow...and the day after that...and the day after that...until the path comes at last to the river.”<sup>1</sup>

The Christian life is a daily walk with God. It begins afresh each day, partaking of the mercies of God that are “new every morning” (**Lamentations 3:22-23**). This is because God is a *daily* God, not a weekly one (**Zephaniah 3:5**). “This is the day the Lord has made,” writes the psalmist (**Psalms 118:24**), not “this is the week.”

This daily experience is outworked in many ways:

- ➔ We are to encourage one another daily (**Hebrews 3:13**)
- ➔ We are to pray daily (**Luke 11:3**)
- ➔ We are to forgive daily (**Luke 17:4; Ephesians 4:26**)
- ➔ We are to take up our cross daily (**Luke 9:23**)

The Bible teaches us to live the Christian life on a daily basis. In **Matthew 6:34**, Jesus instructs us:

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

For the daily Christian, the basic unit of time is the day. We live our lives with the Lord one day at a time.\* This dynamic, when translated into church life, results in daily growth, not just weekly growth. As **Acts 16:5** describes it:

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.”

## Today

### Read Hebrews 4:7

In this remarkable passage, the writer to the Hebrew declares:

“Therefore God again *set a certain day, calling it Today*, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.””

Today is the day that God is working (**2 Corinthians 6:2**). In fact, God has actually set aside a certain day to work in your life – and that day is not called Sunday. It’s called Today!

Of course, this does not mean that we give up on Sunday gatherings (note **Hebrews 10:25**), because it is important to meet together on a regular basis, and weekly meetings are the best mechanism for gathering larger groups of people. What it does mean, however, is that Sunday is not the day into which God crams all his work. Rather Sunday is the time when we have the privilege of ministering the grace we have received on a daily basis through the previous week to other Christians.

God never meant church life to be boxed into a Sunday. Even though the Sunday meetings are a valuable part of your walk with God, God has intended that ministry *between* Christians take place right throughout the week! This is why the writer to the Hebrews, in **3:13**, gives this injunction:

“But encourage one another daily, *as long as it is called Today*, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

What are we to do daily? Encourage one another! You will remember from a previous study that this act of encouraging one another is a building process. We are partnering with the Holy Spirit in his construction program. And guess what! God doesn’t just work on Sundays. He works *every* day! (**John 5:17**). His construction schedule operates on a daily basis, and it is this daily program of building one another up that God has called you into.

\* This does not mean, of course, that we shouldn’t plan for the future. Rather, we must always be sensitive to what God wants to do in our lives today.

In the first century, church life was experienced on a daily basis. They encouraged one another daily and fellowshiped with one another daily. And this was without automobiles and telephones! How much more should we, in the twenty-first century, experience church life on a daily basis!

## Defining Church Life

---

But what exactly do we mean by “church life”? For many, this term conjures up images of frenetic church activity – making sure that chairs are put out for meetings, that the coffee urn is hot, that the song sheets are on each pew. But these activities are not church life. These are but the *preparations* for church life (something which many of us in ministry get too easily distracted by – note again Martha in [Luke 10:40](#)). Real church life involves three things:

- Mutual encouragement
- Prayer, worship and study in God’s Word
- Witness

It really is, surprisingly, as simple as that! Everything else is just the trappings, the scaffolding that is set up to *assist* in the construction of the building. All the Sunday school programs, all the prayer meetings, all the evangelistic rallies, all the choir practices – are the scaffolding of the building, and all of them can be weekly expressions. The three things listed above – mutual encouragement, prayer-worship-study and witness – are what should be operating on a daily basis. For if these three things are expressed daily, then you have a daily church!

Most of what is viewed as church life is just the *scaffolding* of church life. The real building is not the weekly programs. The real building is changed lives, lived daily.

## Beyond the Four Walls

---

Most of us already know that church is not the building, yet the vestiges of this concept still cling like old gum to the sole of a shoe. Even though we may know that the church is people, and not the building itself, most Christians still view the church as people *within the building!* Our concept of church life is still enslaved to the building. Thus when the word “church” is used, we still tend to think of *meetings* of the church.

But how does God view a church? When he sees a church, he doesn’t just see the carpet, the pulpit and the pews. He sees members of his Body, gathering together for worship, for the study of his Word and for mutual encouragement. But what happens when the church service finishes? Does “church” just evaporate right in front of God’s eyes? Or does he see church continuing, in the warm chatter after the meeting, in the encouraging words in the parking lot, and in the excited conversation in the car on the way home?

When a church meeting is over and people head for their cars, all that happens is that “church” spills out onto the streets.

So what function does the actual physical building of a church play? It is more than merely a meeting place. It is a training center, a place where people are equipped to be more effective in their daily lives! True church growth comes from a focus on the daily life of the believer, not on the weekly meeting.

Hopefully by now you've realized that to establish a daily church does not mean that we necessarily multiply meetings. It means church life continues beyond the four walls of the church building – into our homes, into our workplace and into the streets.

## Centers of Daily Life

---

### Read Acts 5:42

In order to be a daily church, church life must take place in the centers of daily life. Where does daily life take place?

### *In the home*

#### Read Acts 20:20

The quality of church life in general will only be as high as the experience of Christian life in the home. The experience of “church in the home” can be expressed on two levels:

- **Home life (Acts 2:46)** – incorporating the three essentials of mutual encouragement, prayer-worship-study and witness into family life.
- **Home meetings (Acts 12:12; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:5)** – experiencing the microcosm of larger meetings within the home – once again concentrating on the three essentials of mutual encouragement, prayer-worship-study and witness.

### *In the workplace*

#### Read Colossians 3:23

As we have already seen, every Christian is full-time in the ministry, wherever he or she may be. In the workplace, believers make daily contact with unbelievers, rubbing shoulders with those outside the Church. It is in your workplace that non-Christians should brush with your church – embodied in you!

#### Read 1 Peter 3:15

### *On the streets*

#### Read Luke 14:21

Wherever people can be found, that is where the Church is called to have an impact. When church life overflows onto the streets, our communities will see the Church in action. As we saw two lessons ago, God is still in the business of signs and wonders, yet most of the miraculous today is experienced within the four

walls of church buildings – ministered by Christians to Christians. The real arena for the miraculous ministry is out there – on the streets!

### Read Acts 5:15

### ***In the marketplace***

### Read Acts 17:16-17

One of Paul’s main evangelistic strategies was to preach the Gospel in the marketplace. His reason for this was simple. The marketplace was not merely a place where food was bought and sold. It was also the place where the people of a community would gather to mingle and catch up on the latest news. Without television in those days, it was the marketplace that fulfilled the function of a communal watering hole.

The supermarket is not a modern equivalent of the first century marketplace. It is not a place where ideas are discussed and people interact with one another. It is purely functional – a shop-and-pay-and-get-out-as-quickly-as-you-can experience. A modern marketplace-analog is the football stadium, where people come not only to watch a game but also to experience the community spirit of the game, or the school grounds at close of school, where many parents wait for their children and chat together.

### Read Acts 16:13

Many communities have special gathering places, where community issues are discussed and community life is gossiped about. These are places where the Gospel can be shared.

## **Levels of Church Life**

We have already seen that the Greek word for Church means “those called out” or “the gathering of called out ones.” Remember: the definition of the Church is based on God’s call, not man’s organization. God has designed his Church to be “the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (**Ephesians 1:22-23**) and the only way God can, through the Church, fill everything in every way is if the Church spills out beyond its four walls.

In **Matthew 16:18**, Jesus said: “I will build my church.” How, then, does Jesus “build” his Church? He does it in two ways:

- By drawing people, through the Holy Spirit, to himself. People are the “living stones” (**1 Peter 2:4-5**) – the bricks with which Christ builds his Church.
- By structuring church life so as to expose his people to the Word of grace and to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

There is no set structure for church life. Every church is different, and the composition of the church members – their temperament, culture and social needs – will greatly determine the type of structure that most effectively exposes them

to the daily grace of God.

There are, however, four principal kinds of church gathering:

- The family (**Acts 16:31-34; 1 Timothy 3:5**) – *daily*
- The small group (**Matthew 18:20**) – *daily/weekly*
- The small assembly (**1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 10:25**) – *weekly*
- The large assembly (**Psalms 68:26**) – *weekly/monthly*

Church life needs *all* these levels to function properly. The family is where church life is designed to be experienced on a truly daily basis. The small group (also called a cell group or home meeting) – usually between 6 and 20 people – is the place where personal sharing and close fellowship happens. The small assembly – between 30 and 150 people – is where Body ministry can take place (**Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**). The large assembly – generally over 300 people – is the place where the prophetic voice of the five-fold ministry of **Ephesians 4:11-13** can be heard.

## A Temple of the Holy Spirit

### Read Ephesians 2:21-22

The Temple of God is no longer a physical building (**Acts 7:48-50**) but is a spiritual construction of human lives (**1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16**). If we are to join with the Lord in the building of his Church, we must not concentrate on outward, physical structures but on the hearts and lives of the believers. The Temple of God's Spirit is made up of changed lives, lived daily.

For this reason, church life is meant to be a daily experience. But a church will only become a daily church when the members of the church become daily Christians – each contributing his or her part to the whole. This is why the Church is described as a Body (**1 Corinthians 12:18-20; Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19**). The Church is an organism, not an organization. Each church becomes “organic” as each Christian becomes a daily Christian, interacting with other Christians on a daily and continual basis.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Cassels (1922-1974), quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.