

GET CONNECTED

Please indicate by lifting your hand if you are part of the following:

- A whatsapp group
- You have a facebook page
- You have a twitter account
- You have an Instagram account
- You have a blogger or you are a blogger

You can see just how many of you are connected in one way or the other. It tells you that you have a high affinity for connection and to belong to a community.

The current world system has made the world so highly connected that within secs of something happening, people across the globe will be knowing about it.

As a continuation of our series on building a Life giving community, today I will be talking to you on message entitled “GET CONNECTED”.

It is however sad that the more connected we are the more disconnected we have become. Just think about the amount of time

I am not saying get another facebook account or another chat network or another club – I am saying get connected with the most important of communities and that community is called the church.

I want to highlight to you that connecting with the church is one of the best moves you can ever do for yourself.

People have different views with regards to church and those views have gone on to shape their relationship with the church.

Due to a lack of understanding of what church is, many people have treated the church of Christ as a fast food outlet, which you can change whenever you feel like it.

Some people even say, they love Jesus but they can't stand the church – this is a very strange thing to say. Its an equivalent of saying, I really love you but I don't like your body or going to a married friend and saying to them; I really like you but I can't stand your wife.

There is only one relationship that will outlive any other relationship and that is your relationship with the church

Your marriage does not live for ever

Your workplace does not live forever

Your gym network won't live forever.

Why is it important to connect with the church?

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To highlight the importance of the church, the Bible uses certain metaphors to describe the church. A Metaphor is a figure of speech which makes an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics. In other words, a resemblance of two contradictory or different objects is made based on a single or some common characteristics.

In today's session we are going to look at FOUR of those metaphors

1. The church as a bride

- By connecting with the church, you enter into a special relationship with Jesus
- This image shows you how much Jesus loves the church

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Isaiah 54:5 For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

- He died for the church – He gave up His glory in order to save her

The word husband comes from the Old Norse húsbóndi “master of a house,” from hús “house” + bóndi “occupier and tiller of the soil.” The original sense of the verb was “till, cultivate.” This shows us two concepts about husbands. First, he is the master of the house. Second he occupies and tills or cultivates the soil.

- God loves individuals but He loves them even more when they are together in a collective called the church.
- The love of Jesus leads us to repentance – when a wife is loved, she willingly submits herself to her husband

Romans 2:4 Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

- Jesus pays attention to His bride

Matthew 18:18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done

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for them by My Father in heaven.20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

- When the church comes together in worship, there is a special grace that the father bestows on it – it taps into a corporate anointing

Matthew 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

- A bride does not live anyhow – she preserves herself for her bridegroom. Having this image makes you live beyond yourself
- You will appreciate the need to sanctify yourself – to keep yourself pure in spirit, in body and in soul.
- When you connect with the church, you are a partaker of the grace of sanctification – Jesus Himself will enable you set yourself apart for Him

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

2. The church as a Body

- The church is described as a body with many parts
- When you connect with the church, you become part of a body and you are able to fully function

1Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

- Every body part functions to its potential by being connected to the body

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

- When you are connected to the body of Christ the church, you get to appreciate diversity – each of us are unique and need each other.

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- Each body member needs to understand and appreciate its role in the body in order to function well.
- Do not mistake prominence for significance – a body part might be prominent but not very significant.
- Every part of the body that is detached from the body, will experience a natural death – in other words, we draw life from being connected to the body of Christ
- When a body part is disconnected from the body, it makes the body incomplete and it will start to malfunction – both the body and the body part.

Colossians 2:18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

- By being connected to the body of Christ the church, you receive all the nourishment you need in order to survive

3. The church as a lampstand

- The world is full of darkness and there is only one place where there is light – it is in the church.
- When you connect with the church, you become part of a solution

*Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. **And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man**, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

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Revelation 1:20 "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

- A lampstand is simply an elevated lamp holder to ensure that the lamp provides adequate to an area.
- The church is called to live a higher form of life in order to provide an alternative
- Our biggest challenge is that the church has succumbed to the standards of the world – what is acceptable in the world has become acceptable in the church.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

- Darkness is the absence of light and when things are bad around us, it is an indication that the church is hiding behind some building walls somewhere.
- Not only do we provide light the world, the church is meant to be rooted in the truth of the word.
- The word of God is light and must be held in high esteem – when we compromise in teaching the word, we lose our ability to be the light.

2Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2Timothy 4:1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

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- To substitute the traditions, creeds and doctrines of men for the doctrine of Christ will only bring darkness

2John 1:9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

4. The church as a family

- A family is a place of safety (meant to be) and a place of comfort and that is what a church brings to you.

Ephesians 2:19 - Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Psalm 68:6 God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

Hebrews 2: 10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting for God, for whom and through whom all things exist, to make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11For both the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are of the same family. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12He says: "I will proclaim Your name to My brothers; I will sing Your praises in the congregation."...

- Our natural families pattern our spiritual families – a family has a father and mother and siblings.
- In the same way, when you connect with the church, you have the privilege to have fathers and mothers around you. These are people who don't have a natural bond with you but have a spiritual bond. Your spiritual bond is stronger than your natural bond.
- See whom Jesus referred to as His mother and brothers:

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Luke 8:20 And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

- Connecting with the church gives you an opportunity to develop the fruit of the spirit (love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness)
- Do you realise that you can't grow in these dimensions unless you are exposed to some unlovable people, to some difficult characters around you.
- Connecting to the family of God, gives you an opportunity to be guided through life – sometimes having to be disciplined by your parents.
- Connecting to the church family gives you the support and stability you need

1Timothy 3:14 I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon, 15 so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

- In this portion of scriptures, Paul describes the church as a pillar and foundation – in construction terms, these two elements provide support and stability.
- When you join the temple of God, you are assured to receive support (pillars) and stability (foundations)
- It is in the context of church that you find support in times of need.

In conclusion – the reason why you need to be connected with the church is because

1. It gives you access to a special relationship with Jesus as His Bride
2. It gives you an opportunity to fully develop your gift in the context of a body
3. It gives you an opportunity to be a solution to a dark world by being part of a lampstand
4. It gives you an opportunity to receive support, stability and love in the context of a family