

Getting a Passion for His Passion

-Intro thoughts: 'Covenant' in Scripture

4 Reasons for Making the Church a Life Passion

Reason #1: God's passion is the Church.

- We're called to love what He loves.

Zech 2:8 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.'"

Deut 10:15-16 "Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day."

Isa 43:4 "Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life."

Eph 5.25-32

- Christ is passionately committed to Church, and He picks up language that is familiar in the OT as He speaks of the covenant people in terms of marital union.

"What passion He has for His Church! Even if you've never studied the Bible, you've heard the echoes of this amazing love throughout your life. Every true love story has hinted at it. Every groom weakened at the sight of his radiant bride has whispered of it." –Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating the Church*, p.30

Watch ya mouth!

- Jesus identifies Himself with the Church to such a degree that when the Church is physically harmed, He takes it as a personal attack.
- No matter how many pot shots people take at the Church, we are never given the option to simply forego it and do the Christian life some other way.

Reason #2: the best way to love the world is, first, to love the Church.

- A huge part of Church's mission is to be a world-redeeming agency.
- It doesn't help the world when Christians neglect the Church because they "want to be evangelistic."
- Social action and medical aid missions efforts are great for making a way for the gospel, but when they are *substituted for* the gospel, we've lost sight of the fact that sickness is not humanity's biggest problem.

2 Cor 5.18-19 "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself ... and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

- Paul emphasizes the corporate ("us") aspect of the reconciling ministry of the Church.

Reason #3: no cause is as worthy of our living & our dying than the Church.

- There are temporal 'callings' on our lives, and there is an eternal call
- But, at the end of the day, every enterprise will die but one.

"Your life is much bigger than a good job, an understanding spouse, and non-delinquent kids. It is bigger than beautiful gardens, nice vacations, and fashionable clothes. In reality, you are part of something immense, something that began before you were born and will continue after you die. God is rescuing fallen humanity, transporting them into his kingdom, and progressively shaping them into his likeness – and he wants you to be a part of it." –Paul David Tripp

- Evangelism is a means to an end; God is building His Church through evangelism

- The body of people that God has desired to enjoy for eternity is the Church.

Rev 11.15

Reason #4: without vital connection to the local church, our Christian growth is stunted.

"Today we live in an increasingly fragmented world. That mind-set has influenced the way we approach our relationship with God. Faith is a solo pursuit. These days experts describe America as a nation of "believers" but not "belongers" – and the numbers confirm it. According to pollster George Barna, while the adult population in the US increased by 15 percent during the nineties, the number of adults who either didn't attend church or only went on major holidays increased by 92 percent."

–Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating the Church*,
p.16

"The church is earth's single best place – God's specially designed place – to start over, to grow and to change for the glory of God."

–Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating the Church*, p.21

Things we need that God has put in the local church

Eph 4.11-16

- Leadership
- Training
- Spiritual gifts/serving opportunities
- Fellowship
- Protection

- Vital involvement in the local church is an indispensable for Christian growth.
- Vital involvement looks like serving, and serving, itself, is a means of maturing us.

Gal 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

"Do you love Me?"

John 21:15-17 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, " Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, " Tend My sheep.

1 Jn. 3.14 "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."

- Does this mean, **primarily**, "We know that we've passed out of death ... because we love the billion plus believers around the world that we've never met or seen?"
- Are we seeking to imitate Christ in loving the Church *the way He does?*

"I want you to catch a glimpse of the beauty of God's plan for the church in each believer's life and the unimaginable power that could be unleashed through even one generation embracing that plan." –Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating the Church*, p.18

- There is no place that is better suited to mature your walk than a solid local church.
- Join one, start serving, and watch the growth that God accomplishes through the proper working and ministry of the local church!