

START HERE

Week Three • Start With The Local Church • Message Notes

Introduction: Hello my name is.... Welcome to church. I want to welcome everyone today as we begin a new message series called Start Here where together over the next few weeks, we are going to be talking about three essentials to the Christian Life: The Gospel, The Holy Spirit and The Local Church.

PLUG – Get your devotional and on this bookmark, there is a password for the digital companion resources at starthere.church or we have copies at Energy Bar available for purchase for \$5?

Transition: This week we are wrapping up our final week of devotion with a message called:

START WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH

As we look around our world, it is easy to see that something is broken. Every time you turn on the news it is more of the same. Murder, Divisiveness, just over all meanness. People hurting people, everywhere. It is crazy what a simple smile or a kind word does in our culture.

- Our temptation is to focus on the problems and fix them. We elect politicians who make promises, we start non profits that specialize in a specific problem or series of causes. We dedicate our life to so many things.

It might surprise you to know but God hates injustice too, why? Because it hurts his creation, remember the ones made in his image, you and me...

CONTEXT

As we look at Jesus and our key passage today, it is important to note that Jesus was born into one of the darkest times in world history, the roman empire. If you think it's bad now, it was really bad then. The darkest most depressing time in world history. I don't think it was a coincidence that the Navity happened in such darkness, why because the light shines brightest in the darkness.

- *Jesus starts his ministry with a message to a crowd of people, in this crowd are different kinds of people, many would become disciples.*

He looks at the crowd, those following him and says:

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

He wasn't talking to individuals, he was talking to a group of people. This is important, our culture is very individualist, it's difficult for us to understand this type of community.

Here's what he's saying:

- You together are the light of the world. – One person can't light the world.
- You are like a city that can't be hidden. – A city on a hill. One person doesn't make up a city, a group of families make up a city.
- Your light shines the brightest when it shines together.

Why is this important:

In our culture we elevate the individual. It's all about me not we., here Jesus is emphasizing we, us together. Here's what he's teaching us:

1. Our faith is personal but not private.

Context: Later Jesus builds on this idea and challenges our whole idea of faith and family in:

Matthew 12:46-50

⁴⁶ As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, and they want to speak to you."

⁴⁸ Jesus asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and

brothers. ⁵⁰ Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"

Jesus Asserts here a radically different view of family, here we are introduced to the idea of Spiritual family. This was radical then and today.

In another encounter he once again challenges our view of family:

In John 3, Nicodemus: a religious leader, good guy, in cover of night, did all the right things but something was still missing. He had done it all and did pretty well when comparing himself to others. But something was still missing. He comes to Jesus and ask what he needs to do to see the kingdom of God:

John 3:5-6 ⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit.

You can see the picture of spiritual family. We are born into a natural family but when we surrender to Jesus, we are born again, into spiritual family.

He's teaching us, that.

2. Spirit is thicker than blood.

Jesus continues to build on this idea later in **Matthew 16** He gives us his strategy, his plan for a new kind of family:

Context: During Jesus' ministry on Earth, everyone had an idea of who he was and how He would build His kingdom on earth. At one point in his ministry Jesus takes his disciples on a trip to once and for all make clear his intention. He takes his disciples to Cesaria Philipi. Not only was it out of the way but it was also a very wicked place. Here he asks the only question that matters: WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM... PETER ANSWERS:

Matthew 16:16-18

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human

being. ¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell^[e] will not conquer it.

- Here he redefines family, establishes His Church and promises to build it. Why? Because

3. The Church is God's plan for a hurting world.

In a dark and Isolated world.... God shines a light. It starts with Jesus and Jesus establishes his church, the spiritual family of God. His strategy for the hurting world is the church.

What do you think of when you think of church? Do you see a building, religion, maybe your mind flashes to a tradition or activity. Our western culture is very individualistic. We see everything through the lense of me church instead of we church. **But why does this approach leave us empty?**

Connection without belonging is empty. To be sure you need to have a connection but that doesn't necessarily mean you'll find true belonging. **Why?**

- *Connection is temporary, belonging is permanent.*
- *Connection is about consumption, belonging is about contribution.*
- *Connection is about a feeling, belonging is about purpose.*
- *Connection is about you, belonging is about family*

God satisfies our need to belong by giving us family

Psalm 68:6 "God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy."

4. The Church is God's spiritual family.

What do you think of when you think of family? Depending on your experience, you have a lenses of what family is.

Our past experiences inform us but only God's word is meant to form us. Jesus is the head of the church. And he teaches us how to live

Context: As the disciples started discovering more and more about Jesus' plan, they, like us, started posturing for position. Comparing themselves with

others, so much so that one day this happened, they had a different view of this new family that Jesus was establishing: James and John are prompted by their mother to ask Jesus for power and position, This was his response:

Matthew 20:25-28

²⁵ But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

He establishes here a new culture for spiritual family.

This culture is what marked the health of the early church and it marks the health of spiritual family today. **What made them different?**

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ **They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—** ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Six Characteristics of Spiritual Family:

- 1. They were fully devoted to God. (To god and to one another.)**
- 2. They were generous. (generosity is how they thought)**
- 3. They spent time together. (gathered and scattered)**
- 4. They were joyful. (not painted with worlds attitude)**
- 5. They were inclusive. (It accepts – those being saved)**
- 6. They were exclusive. (Jesus was their context not causes.)**

Maybe our struggles start in how we view church.

- The Old Testament was written to God's chosen people, the Jewish people, a family that started with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God's favorite name. **He is the god of family.**
- Then Jesus Comes and starts a new family and his family expands, **every letter in the new testament wasn't written to an individual but to the family in various places around the world.**

We must fundamentally change our view our perspective. As we close, I want to read a powerful passage about you and me in the church God is building...

Ephesians 2:19b-22 (MSG)

You're no longer strangers or outsiders. **You *belong here***, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

Paul is describing what he sees in what God is building in the local church. In this case he is giving vision for what the church could be if we all embrace it as we embrace family, IT WILL CHANGE OUR LIFE.

LET'S PRAY