

MOUNT SINAI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

TEACHINGS ON DISCIPLESHIP

“WHY DISCIPLES NEED THE CHURCH”

Disciples need the church because we are designed as relational beings. Spiritual growth occurs in the context of relationships that we'll find in a fellowship of Christians and fellow Disciples. A Christian lifestyle can only be practiced when it is lived out with other people. Only in relationships can we learn what it means to be patient, loving, giving or sacrificial. Even God's gifts to you are meant to function in relation to others:

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

God wants a personal relationship with His children, and He wants His children to experience that relationship with other Christians (Disciples). He has always centered our spiritual worship, training and religious celebration in the heart of community. The people of Israel practiced their devotion as a nation. Modern-day Christ-followers (Disciples) practice theirs in the collective body of the Church.

It's easy for us to think that religion is strictly a personal matter. It's true that God will touch each of us individually and uniquely in our spiritual journeys. But that's only one aspect of living as a Disciple. From our individual commitment to Christ will come a growing need to both find and give support, direction and interaction in a community of believers (Disciples). What begins as “I” finds its completion in “we.”

In Matthew 18:20 Jesus proclaimed, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” God is always with us as individuals, but Jesus seemed to be saying that there is also a unique quality of communion that He shares with us when we meet together as His Church.

One of the most important functions of the Church in our lives, however, is in moving us toward spiritual maturity. Ephesians 4: 11-16 explains that the goal of church life is that we may be

“built up until we all reach unity in the faith. . . and become mature.”

Through the influence of the church we

“will in all things grow up into Him. . .as each part does its work.”

We may know and love God on our own, but we become complete in Him when we're connected to the life of His Church.

Recommended resource: Church: Why Bother? My Personal Pilgrimage by Philip Yancey (Zondervan, 1998)

NIV Pastor's Bible, Zondervan Publishing 2000, Grand Rapids, Mich.