

Sermon Series: Transformation
Sermon: Why the Church?
Text: Hebrews 10:19-25

Discussion Questions:

There's a woman who has been moving from one church to another for several years - in search of the right one. There are problems with each one. Some were judgmental, some internally focused, one was cold and unwelcoming, another unappreciative of her service and still another that was weak theologically. Unable to find one that she thought was suitable, she decided to simply listen to podcasts from a fairly well-known church featuring worship that suited her tastes and solid Biblical teaching. *Is this "enough," or does she still need to "go to church"?*

There's a couple with three young children. They are typical parents who want their children to excel. The children are involved in dance programs, sports, preschool, play dates and much more. All this activity doesn't leave much time or energy to be involved in a local church. The parents host a weekly Bible study in their home that provides some teaching and Christian fellowship. *The parents are convinced that this is all they and their children need. Are they right?*

William is a successful businessman, who is sure that if he ran his business the way most churches are run, he would be bankrupt within a month. Consequently, he has little time or respect for the church. He and some likeminded businessmen will often invite teachers to come and address their group, or just get together for accountability and mutual encouragement. He feels closer to these men than to his own brothers. For him this group is his "church," and he doesn't need any other. *Is there any reason for him to become involved in a local church?*

There's a student at a Christian University, where upwards of 70% of the student population aren't regularly engaged in a local church. Between mandatory chapel services, easy fellowship with other students, missions and service opportunities through the school and busy schedules, *most students find church to be redundant—plus, it's just much easier to attend "Bedside Baptist."* *Are they right?*

A study in Britain covering 1990-2000 found that during this decade, weekly church attendance dropped from 28 percent to 8 percent, while the number of people reporting "spiritual experiences" rose from 48% to 76% (David Wells, "The Courage to Be Protestant", Eerdmans, 2008, pp. 179-180). In the United States, 60% believe that church is unnecessary, because we "have God within us." *Is church unnecessary?*

Examination:

- Read **Matthew 16:13-18**.
 - We have become very familiar with Simon Peter's declaration: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Take some time to talk about what this truly meant. What kind of faith did it require of him to make this statement?

- Jesus says that this truth was *revealed* to Peter by the Father in heaven. What does it mean for something to be revealed? How might this revelation have occurred? How long did it take for the Father to reveal this to Peter? Is it interesting that Jesus contrasted divine revelation with knowledge that comes to us by means of “flesh and blood”?
 - Jesus gives Simon, son of Jonah, a new name in this conversation - Peter (the Greek word for Peter means *rock*). Why do you think Jesus gave him this name?
 - It’s a question that has been asked through the ages: What did Jesus mean when he said, “Upon this rock I will build my church”? Was the church going to be built on Peter himself? Was His declaration the rock? Were they standing on a boulder - and Jesus was pointing down at the ground when He said this? (OK...probably not this answer!).
 - This is the first time we see Jesus using the word “church.” What can we learn about the church from what Jesus says here?
- Read **Hebrews 10:19-25**.
 - What does it do inside of you when you read the word *confidence* in verse 19? What do you think the writer of Hebrews had in mind by using this word?
 - How is the Body of Jesus a “new and living way” into the “Most Holy Place”?
 - How is Jesus a “Great High Priest”? What (or who) is the house of God?
 - From what you understand about the Old Testament temple in Jerusalem, how is this passage paralleling what we see in the various aspects of the temple?
 - By the time Hebrews was written, there were clearly some people who had decided that meeting together wasn’t something that needed to be done anymore. What are the reasons given here for us to CONTINUE meeting together?
 - Two of the 39 “One another’s” of Scripture are here in verses 24 and 25. Take some time to talk about them. What do they really mean? How might we do them? How do these two particular “one another’s” relate to how we ought to “do” church?
 - What does it mean in verse 25 that we “see the Day approaching”? What day? Why is this being cited as a motivator? Is this something that you ever think about? Be honest - have you ever thought about going to church and spurring others on to love and good deeds as something that OUGHT to be done in light of “the DAY approaching”?

Application:

Take some time this week to think through why it is that you go to church. What are YOUR reasons for going? Are they good reasons? Are they biblical reasons? Is it enough to simply attend worship services - or does God have more in mind for us when we attend church? Are you willing to call others to the biblical standard of church attendance? Why or why not?