



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bible Study

OCTOBER 2012

SERMON DATE **7 OCT 2012**

BELONGING

1 PETER 2:4-12

SERMON DATE **14 OCT 2012**

AUTHENTICITY

EPHESIANS 4:17 - 5:2

SERMON DATE **21 OCT 2012**

SERVING ONE ANOTHER

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31A

SERMON DATE **28 OCT 2012**

ORPC 156TH ANNIVERSARY

TOWARDS A CARING CONGREGATION

It is one thing to be Orchard Road Presbyterian Church (ORPC); it is quite another thing to be a caring congregation in ORPC. Is ORPC simply a place where you worship in one of the two services, serve in one or two ministries, drink and snack in Dunman Hall, and call it a Sunday? Or, is ORPC a community of believers where you are personally connected to and where you relate with others in Christ?

It takes more than a friendly smile and a cordial greeting to be a caring congregation, although we must begin there at the very least. What does it take for us to be a true Christian fellowship?

In this Congregation Care Emphasis Month, we explore three vital themes – belonging, authenticity and service – to understand how we can become an even more caring congregation here in ORPC.

BELONGING

1 PETER 2:4-12

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Does merely attending a worship service on Sundays indicate that we belong to a local church? What IS the church in God's eyes and is everyone automatically a part of it? A re-look at what the church is and how we become part of it. The body of Christ - what is it? And what is this phrase meant to convey? What is the "Local church" versus "Universal church"?

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. The Church's Foundation (2:4-5)

Peter wrote to Gentile Christians at large who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Their faith in Jesus was especially tested in pagan and hostile societies. In verses 4 and 5, Peter used an image from masonry to communicate his understanding of what we call 'church'. Notice that words like 'stone' and 'rock' are repeated eight times in five verses.

a. What did he say about Christ in relation to God [the Father]?

b. What did he say about the church in relation to Christ?

Discuss: In view of Peter's teachings: (1) When does a church cease to be a church? (2) What is the primary calling of the Church? (3) What does a true church of Christ expect to receive from people of the world?

2. The Church's Membership (2:6-10)

a. To the Believers (2:6-7a, 9-10)

i. What has God promised those who put their trust in Jesus? Why was the promise so valuable to the Gentile Christians, especially in the societal environment to which Peter wrote? Consider also the context of Isaiah 28:16 from which verse 6 is cited.

ii. The Church as 'the people of God' (v10) is very rich in her identity. Verse 9a is a composite citation from Deuteronomy 10:15; Isaiah 43:20; 61:6; 66:21; Exodus 19:6; Deut. 7:6 and Titus 2:14. What are the church's privileges and responsibilities as God's people in view of her identity?

b. To the Unbelievers (2:7b-8)

i. Verse 7b is a citation from Psalm 118:22 which was also used in Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11, and Ephesians 2:20. How was Psalm 118:22 used in each of those passages? How did Peter use it here in verse 7b and what point did he make?

- ii. Peter equated those who did not believe in Jesus Christ (v7b) with disobedience to the word (v8). To what end were they appointed for their unbelief and disobedience? In contrast, to what has God called his church (v9b)?

Brainstorm: God's church consists of those who trust and obey Jesus Christ; living as children of light (cf. John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5). In what ways can ORPC shine for Jesus Christ? What is your part?

3. The Church's Witness (2:11-12)

- a. Peter urged the people of God to live like 'aliens' and 'strangers' in the world (v11). How does this help us to resist sinful desires?

- b. Why is it so important for the people of God to be diligently watchful of her public actions and behaviour?

Ponder: In his last prayers, Jesus interceded for his disciples that they may be in world but not of the world (John 17:13-19). As a member of the people of God, how do you appropriate Jesus' prayer in your life daily?

DISCIPLESHP POINTERS

Belonging to God's church begins with:

- Accepting Jesus Christ as the foundation upon whom believers are gathered;
- Recognising our individual privileges and responsibilities to God as a member;
- Worshipping God as our primary calling;
- Trusting and obeying God as our primary duty;
- Proclaiming God's excellence and mercy all the days of our lives by our witness.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

- Why is it wrong to treat the church like a weekend club to hang out for your spiritual and social needs?
- Discuss these statements: 'It is the responsibility of the church to assimilate newcomers and to help them feel belonged.'
- Do you belong to ORPC? What can you do to belong or to help others belong to ORPC?

AUTHENTICITY

EPHESIANS 4:17 - 5:2

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

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Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

For some, worship services can become a weekly tradition a place where we go dressed in "our Sunday best" Is there more to the Christian life than corporate worship? Is there a place for being our real selves, without masks, coming as we are - sometimes as needy even broken people? And how should other folk respond to such openness? Some themes to explore are being ourselves, acceptance, vulnerability, true fellowship, being supported, mutual encouragement/prayer, and accountability. Appreciating the diversity of people, cultures, backgrounds and experiences we come from and celebrating this diversity within our unity.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Living together in unity (4:1-16)
Read the important preceding context in 4:1-16 upon which 4:17 onwards is built.
 - a. What basis is there for believers to be united as one? (vv1, 4-6; cf. 2:14-16; 3:6)

 - b. What heart attitude provides the 'glue' essential to maintain and attain unity? (vv2, 15-16)

 - c. What is the goal of Christian unity? (vv13b, 15; cf. 3:10, 21)

2. Unity through mutual edification and authenticity (4:17-32)
Paul insisted (v17) that the conduct of Christians must be conformed to their saved status as the 'new man' created individually and corporately in Christ (v24).
 - a. Paul's exhortations follow a rough 'Put off-Adopt-Put on' pattern (vv22-24).

	Put off the <i>old</i> self	Adopt <i>renewed</i> mindset	Put on the <i>new</i> self
25		All members of one body	Speak truthfully
26-27	Sinful anger		
28			Do useful work
29		Benefit those with needs, who listen	
31-32	Bitterness...malice		

Verses 25-32 speak of some areas we can reflect on. What other examples can you share?

- i. Relating: Do I deal with people in a deceitful or manipulative manner? Do I seek to treat others with integrity and sincerity?

- ii. Anger: Who gains or suffers when my anger goes out of control? Me, you, God, or Satan?

- iii. Work: Are there avenues where my expertise, experience and earnings can be given to benefit the Lord's ministry or persons or organisations in need?

- iv. Speech: How can my words build up others instead of belittling them directly or indirectly? Do my words provoke or calm down a quarrel or disagreement?

- v. Offence: Am I willing to forgive others when I am bitten by their sinful 'old self'? How much do I desire others also to forgive me? Am I watchful for signs of growing resentment?

- vi. What mindset or perspective do you need to adopt to help you relate with others in an edifying and God-pleasing way? Is it similar or different to how we build love and trust in your family and friendship?

- 3. Unity in the bond of love (5:1-2)
 5:1-2 concludes 4:17-32 well and also serves as a transit point to further exhortations in 5:3ff.
 - a. 5:1-2 ends at the same place where 4:1-2 begins - 'in love'. How do we describe the greatness of God's love towards us? (cf. also 1 :4-5; 2:4). How does this love motivate us to imitate likewise?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Authenticity is driven by the love of God for the love of others

1. Authenticity begins with God sharing His 'real self' to us. He identifies with our human weakness, fellowships with us in joy and sorrow. He shows the costly extent of His love by loving the unloved, the unloving and the unlovable. The authentic love of God gives us hope and significance. Authentic and sacrificial love of God, not social planning and programming, is the source for building genuine Christian fellowship. Satan is also clear he will work to sow distrust, politics and hypocrisy if he is given a mere foothold.
2. Authenticity also challenges us to examine, wrestle and pray so as to deal with sinful mindsets and conduct in our lives. Jerry Bridges warns about 'the acceptable sins of the saints' (Respectable Sins, NavPress, 2007) - those subtle sins that we refine, rationalize away and relax in. While struggling with sin is a life-long one, let us confront those particular sins in our lives so that they do not mask our relationships with God and others.
3. Loving sacrificially, expressed by our sincerity and authenticity to care and be cared for by others, reflects God's love for us and also our Body-unity with the Head. By this, the witness and mission of the church are strengthened, thus fulfilling God's great aim: to display his manifold wisdom through the church united and matured as one new man in Christ (3:10), and to be glorified 'in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.' (3:21)

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

Let this month's Congregation Care emphasis remind us it is not the gift or calling of a few leaders and members to exercise loving care (though they may lead us), but the whole people of God genuinely caring for the whole people of God, at every level, in every circumstance, all the time. Take time to pray with one another in your small group and the community here.

SERVING ONE ANOTHER

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31A

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Belonging to the Body of Christ is a privilege but there are also responsibilities. God gives us spiritual gifts/abilities to build up the Body of Christ He has placed us in. Do we know what our gifts are and are we using them to bless our spiritual family? Are we doing so in love and in a spirit of servanthood as Jesus did? Do we give as well as receive? Or are we like the Lone Ranger riding in and out of the church all alone?

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Unity and diversity (12:12-14)
 - a. According to these verses, what unites Christians in the churches?

 - b. How does Paul deal with the principles of unity and diversity among Christians? Think of practical examples from your lives, small groups, church, etc.

2. 'I do not belong' (12:15-20)
 - a. What attitude should a Christian with a 'less spectacular' gift take towards another Christian with a 'more spectacular' gift? And Vice versa?

 - b. To what extent do you accept your place in Christ's body? Have you ever said or thought this way – 'I do not belong'? Share with your group.

3. 'We do not need you' (12:21-27)
 - a. How is each member important to the church as a whole?

 - b. According to verses 23-26 how does God desire Christians to treat one another and relate in the church community? Give examples of how this may work out or have worked out in reality.

4. Desiring the greater gifts (12:28-31a)
 - a. What is Paul's point in asking all those questions in verses 29 and 30?

 - b. What are the 'greater gifts' according to v31a? (cf. v28; 14:1-3, 12)

 - c. What is the more excellent way within which spiritual gifts are to be exercised? Consider 1 Corinthians 13.

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

United in service through diversity of gifting

- There is no such thing as a 'Lone Ranger' Christian. A Christian is part of the body of Christ, whether he/she feels like it or not. The Christian who says or thinks, 'I can worship God on my own, I do not need to be in a church or have fellowship with other Christians' is plainly wrong or misguided.
- There is no reason for a Christian to look down on another person because he seems to be 'less gifted'. There is also no reason for a Christian to envy another person because he seems to be 'more gifted'.
- Whatever spiritual gifts God has given to each of us, we have the responsibility to exercise and use them, in love, to build up others.
- Intelligible gifts that build up the church community are to be desired above the self-edifying gift of tongues.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

- What practical steps can we take to find out what our spiritual gifts are and then to use them to build up the church community?
- What can we do as a group or in our families to encourage one another to take this passage seriously and to apply the lessons learnt?