

Who Needs It!

Ephesians 3:1-12/Acts 2

I think his disappointment had such a deep impact on him that it has influenced how he has viewed his world ever since. He had grown up in a home with strong Christian values where family, trust, and character were highly prized. His junior high and high school years were what one would call typical. He was always confident in himself and in his faith which served as a baseline for making good decisions. It was during those years that he came to understand more fully the reality that not all, rather that very few, of his peers came from homes with the values that had imprinted his life. Actually, it was during this time that he developed a more independent and determined attitude which established a confidence that has served him well.

In his junior year of high school he began to anticipate college. He was a good student, but he knew that being one of 30,000 students could leave him void of the “family”, trust, and sense of brotherhood he so highly valued. After no small amount of research and after visiting with others, he pledged a highly regarded fraternity. The first 3-4 weeks went OK, but then the bottom dropped out. What he envisioned, what had been defined as the identity of the fraternity, was anything but. The polarization, conflicts, bickering, fights, morality, or lack of, even stealing among its members completely destroyed his confidence in the organization and left him to suspect every organization in his future. He de-pledged and was pretty much a loner from that point on. Now as a successful businessman, he still views his world with an element of cynicism. His conclusion: “Who needs it!”

This disillusionment is nothing unique or new. It affects all of us in many areas. Most have jaded views about investments, marriage, children, politics, or buying a house or car because of disappointments and broken confidences of the past.

There is perhaps no greater destructive disappointment than when the church has failed to meet the expectation God has for His fraternity (His church) and those for whom He paid the price—her members. As with the young anticipating college student, many today have chosen to independently run from the church and say “Who needs it!” It’s a statement; they aren’t even humoring it as a question. Without a doubt, many of us here (including myself) have asked the same question “Who needs it?” Surely there are some who may well be asking that question right now.

What are our expectations of the church? Are our expectations of the church the same as God’s expectations? And if so, what are they? As we come to know and experience His expectations, we will likely be driven by the question “*Who* needs it?” as we bring hope to a disillusioned and disappointed world.

LIFE RESPONSE:

1. This week **MEMORIZE** and **MEDITATE** on Ephesians 3:10-11, “. . . *so that the manifest wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, . . .*” (place in context of Ephesians 3:1-12).
2. The challenge in this passage centers on how we as a church are to make known to all who observe us the manifold wisdom of God.
What does this mean for you personally as others observe your life?
How is it, or can it be, manifested in your family?
3. Imagine for a moment that your Mini Church is the only representation of the “manifold wisdom of God” in the city of Tulsa. What steps, based upon today’s study, can you take toward seeing the growth of the church in Tulsa?
4. What does it mean to you to be entrusted with the mystery of Christ? (*Specifically* with the gospel and *generally* as a member of the church.)

*“This should be the first inescapable reality in a Christian congregation; God is here.
This is ‘the church of the living God.’” - Dr. Alan M Stibbs*

WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH TODAY?

Present Perception:

What can I get out of it?

Biblical Perspective:

What/whoever Christ is about is the same as what the church is about.

“What can I give through it?”

WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE CHURCH?

Cannot separate Ecclesiology from Christology

Church from Christ

The church is the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

Called a Mystery

- General – The Gospel Eph. 3:3-4
- Particular – Inclusion of Gentiles
 - ▶ Eph 3:5-6
 - ▶ Eph 3:8-10

WHAT IS SO UNIQUE ABOUT THE CHURCH?

▶ Universal Church

- Used to describe all 1st century believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire after Pentecost.
- All believers of all time who are members of Christ’s body.

▶ Local Church

- Identifiable, local particular group.

What was so unique about the church?

Its Birth

Its Messenger

Its Message

Its Growth

Acts 1-6	Jerusalem
Acts 6:8-7:6a	Judea
Acts 8:1-9:31	Samaria
Acts 9:32-28:31	The World

Principles of Uniqueness

- * Begins with the Gospel
- * Modeled within the community
- * Naturally (supernaturally) expands as church plants

Its Indispensable nature

Reveals my identity as a child of God.

- * The church PLACES me in a relational, supportive fellowship of a family for growth.
- * The church POSITIONS me to make known His manifold wisdom to impact a broken, estranged, hurting world.
- * The church PREPARES me with His present and eternal plan for which He created me.

SO . . . Who Needs The Church?

Not to need the church is to NOT need Christ.