

“I Will Not Be Church Dropout” – Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Cor. 2:27

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Pastor Jon Haakana

For the past five weeks we have been looking at the nine traits of the outwardly focused Christian. We have re-discovered how Christ has called us to forsake self and serve others for His sake. We do that by worshipping and growing spiritually together. We do that also by our serving, going to share the Good News in Jesus, and by giving generously to the church and God’s kingdom work. Today we will discover that as members of a church it can be harmful to our spiritual lives to do too much and to do too little. We will see the importance of finding a balance in church life, versus burning out or being isolated and becoming a church dropout.

I. Introduction: Church Dropouts

a. What is a “Church Dropout?”

“Comet Christians” – they come in like a burning flame, only to disappear after a short while.

7 Reasons Active Church Members Drop Out

1. Moral failure
2. Dropping out of a group
3. Burnout
4. Traumatic event
5. Dropping out of a ministry
6. Major interpersonal conflict
7. Gradual withdrawal

Confirmands “graduate” – HS graduates “seek independence”

70% of young adults are leaving church and not returning

II. Sermon Text(s):

“For you are saved by grace through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:8-10)

“Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.” (1 Cor. 2:27)

III. Point 1 – The Burnout Syndrome

- a. Balance in church life (See *I Am a Church Member*)
 - i. Doing too much

- ii. Doing too little
 - iii. Or when a church member is doing things for which he or she has no real passion
- Common thread – something about church brings big disappointment and disillusionment.
- b. Eph. 2:10 – *“For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.”* (Share Gospel)

Up and Out

The Greek word for fellowship comes from a root meaning “common” or “shared.” So fellowship means common participation in something either by giving what you have to the other person or receiving what he or she has. Give and take is the essence of fellowship, and give and take must be the way of fellowship in the common life of the body of Christ.

Christian fellowship is two-dimensional, and it has to be vertical before it can be horizontal. We must know the reality of fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ before we can know the reality of fellowship with each other in our common relationship to God (1 John 1:3). The person who is not in fellowship with the Father and the Son is no Christian at all, and so cannot share with Christians the realities of their fellowship.

IV. Point 2 – The Ministry Atrophy Factor

- a. What is atrophy? Our organs and tissue waste away if we don't use them.
- b. Spiritual muscles
- c. 1 Cor. 12:27 - *“Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.”*

The Gift of Garbage

In March of 1981, President Reagan was shot by John Hinckley, Jr., and was hospitalized for several weeks. Although Reagan was the nation's chief executive, his hospitalization had little impact on the nation's activity. Government continued on. On the other hand, suppose the garbage collectors in this country went on strike, as they did in New York later in 1981 or in Philadelphia in 1986. Those cities were not only in a literal mess, the pile of decaying trash quickly became a health hazard. A three-week nationwide strike would paralyze the country. Who is more important--the President or a garbage collector? In the body of Christ, seemingly insignificant ones are urgently needed. As Paul reminds us, "The head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" the King of heaven.

- d. Atrophy and isolation leads to dropout

The Cure for Loneliness

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

Dorothy Day, "The

Long Loneliness"

V. Point 3 – The Crux of the Matter

- a. Church members become overcommitted
- b. Do not serve at all
 - i. "An inactive church member is an oxymoron"
 - ii. "A church dropout is a disobedient Christian."

VI. Conclusion – "I will not be a church dropout."

- a. Will you make the pledge?

I will serve. I will function as a member of the body of Christ. I will not be a church dropout!