



THE ORCHARD

Proclaim the Excellencies of Christ

1 Peter 2:4-10

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Introduction:

- How can we live faithful lives in this broken world?
 - We can be faithful when we look to the future hope we have in Jesus Christ.
 - We can be faithful when we remember that our trials are helping us grow.
 - We can be faithful when we sincerely love one another.
- As we continue in our series, we'll see this morning how we can be faithful by connecting with other believers.
- God has given us the church.
 - And it's not just a place to attend.
 - Rather, it's a spiritual house that God is building up.
 - He's bringing his people together.
 - And it's by connecting with others, we can be faithful to Christ.
- So today, we're going to consider why every Christian believer needs the church.

Point 1:

- First, we see from our passage how it's through the church we can grow in Christ.
 - We grow in maturity as we connect with other believers.



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- That's what it says in verse 5.
 - **"You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house..."** 1 Peter 2:5
- God isn't just building individual Christians.
 - He's building a spiritual house.
- And this image teaches us that one way we grow is by connecting with other believers.
 - God builds us up by joining us to other believers.
- Bible scholar Karen Jobes writes this:
 - "The imagery of the living stones being built into a single unit implies that the significance and purpose of the individual Christian cannot be realized apart from community with other believers." (Jobes, 1 Peter, 149)
- Do you see what she's saying?
 - She's saying you can't reach all that God intends you to be as a Christian believer without the church.
- The Apostle Paul also makes this point in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 15 and 16.
 - Listen to what he says.
 - **"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way...into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."**
Ephesians 4:15-16
 - Paul is saying that we grow when we're joined together.



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- God uses other believers to help us grow.
- It's possible to believe in Jesus Christ without the church, but you won't be able to flourish without the church.
- Just think about how God uses others to help us grow.
- It's through others we can grow in love.
 - Think about it.
 - When we face conflict.
 - We need to forgive.
 - We need to work it out.
 - We need to be patient.
 - We need to sacrifice for others.
 - And that's going to build you over time.
 - That's going to grow your love.
- Through others God can also strengthen your faith.
 - There are countless times I've spoken with others at church, and I felt that God was speaking to me.
 - When I'm in LIFE Group, someone will share an insight, and it'll be exactly what I need to hear.
 - Exactly what I need to strengthen my faith.
- Through others God will also grow our holiness.
 - There will be times when we're blind to our sin.
 - And we'll need others to help us see, what we can't see.
 - To speak the truth.
 - To help us repent.
- Even Peter needed Paul to speak truth to him.



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- Peter was separating himself from Gentile believers because he was afraid of what others would think.
- Peter couldn't see he was contradicting the gospel.
- And so, in Galatians chapter 2, Paul tells us that he had to rebuke Peter to his face.
- Peter walked on water.
- He performed many miracles.
- He was the leader of the first church in Acts.
- And yet, Paul had to help Peter repent of his sin.

- We need others to grow.
 - And so, let me give you some ways you can grow with others in our church.

- You can grow by joining a LIFE group.
 - I know many LIFE Groups are on break over the summer.
 - But I really do hope you would consider joining one of our groups this coming Fall.
 - I know it can be nerve racking to visit a new group.
 - But I promise you, it'll feel much more comfortable after 4 or 5 meetings.
 - Please talk to Pastor Greg, and he'll make sure you get plugged in to the right group.

- I also hope you'll make it a habit to stick around after the service.
 - Because our worship to God doesn't end after the benediction.
 - The ministry of the church extends into the lobby.
 - Part of worshipping God is meeting new people and catching up with others.
 - And so, if you're able, please stick around for 10 minutes after our services, and build relationships in the church.



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- Another way you can grow in the church is by meeting others during the week.
 - Grab coffee with others.
 - Schedule a play date.
 - Take someone to Red Lobster.
 - I was trying to think of a restaurant, it was the first one that popped into my head.
- You can also grow by meeting with someone to study a Christian book together.
 - I encourage you to read a book together from our Open the Bible website.
 - Those are theologically sound books you can trust.
 - And I know they will point you to Christ.
- God never intended for us to grow alone.
 - He designed us to grow with other believers.
 - And so, in all these ways, let's seek to grow with others in the church.
- Because it's through the church we can grow.

Point 2:

- Second, we see from our passage how through the church we can encounter God.
- The church is where we can experience the presence of God in a unique way.
 - This doesn't mean we can't experience the presence of God alone.



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- God is with every believer through the Holy Spirit.
- But there's a special way God meets with his people when they gather together.
- Take a look at verses 4 and 5.
 - **“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:4-5**
- I want you to notice the images that Peter writes about in these verses.
 - He writes about a spiritual house.
 - And then he speaks about holy priests who offer spiritual sacrifices.
 - Peter didn't randomly choose these images.
 - To Peter's readers these images pointed them to God's temple.
- And here's why the temple is so important for Peter's argument.
 - Because the temple was where God's presence dwelled in the Old Testament.
 - Before the temple, God's glory rested over the tabernacle in the pillar of cloud.
 - And then, after King Solomon built the temple, it was filled with the glory of the Lord.
 - God's people came to worship at the temple, because it was the dwelling place of God.
- But now, the Bible is teaching us that his people are the temple.



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- In the Old Testament, if you wanted to encounter God, you went to the temple.
- But now, you don't need a temple.
- Because we're the temple of God.
- We're God's spiritual house.
- And when the church gathers together, God's presence dwells with us.
- All of you are sitting on holy ground because the presence of God is with us even today.
- Not because of the building, but because we're the temple of God.

- That's why Jesus says in Matthew chapter 18, verse 20:
 - **“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”**
 - This doesn't mean Jesus isn't with us when we're alone.
 - But it does mean there's a certain way God meets with us, when we gather with other believers.

- Here's what this means for us.

- It means you can't say:
 - “Well, you know what, I'm not going to go to church anymore, I'm going to listen online.”
 - “I can get as much out of the sermon listening at home, without listening at church.”
 - The answer to that is:
 - “You really can't.”
 - I'm not saying you can't learn anything by listening online.
 - Of course you can.
 - But there's a difference when you listen alone, and when you listen with other believers.



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- It's by gathering with other believers that you can hear God's word in a unique way.
- Many people think that going to church and listening to a sermon is mainly about learning more information.
 - But that's not the main reason why we gather.
 - We're not here to merely get more information.
 - If that were the case, there wouldn't be any need for the church.
 - Rather, it's through the church we can meet the living God.
- In the Old Testament, people didn't travel all the way to temple just to learn more information.
 - They went to the temple to encounter God.
- It's the same with us.
 - We gather together to encounter the living God, as we worship together.
- David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a pastor in the UK from about 1940 to 1970.
 - And when he was given the option of recording his sermons on tapes, he refused.
 - For some that are younger, tapes are these rectangular objects, we used to play music and audio on.
 - In fact, every car had a tape player.
 - In any case, Lloyd Jones refused because he thought it would diminish the preaching of God's word.
 - He felt people wouldn't get the full sense of God by listening at home or in the car.
 - Eventually, he allowed his sermons to be recorded.



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- But he was right.
- Listening to a sermon at home can be helpful, but it's not the same as gathering with God's people.
- Listen to what he writes:
 - "The very presence of a body of people in itself is a part of the preaching, and these influences begin to act immediately upon anyone who comes into a service."
(Jones, 326, Preaching and Preachers)
- In fact, Lloyd Jones tells the story about a psychic who practiced near his church.
 - People paid her money to connect them to the spiritual world.
 - One day, she noticed many people attending a church near her work.
 - And so, she decided to visit where Lloyd Jones was the pastor.
 - And eventually she became a Christian believer.
 - And Lloyd Jones asked her why she kept coming to church.
 - And she said it was because on her first visit, she felt a power and presence that she never felt before. (Jones, 326, Preaching and Preachers)
- Let's not neglect worshipping with others.
 - Because it's by listening, and singing, and praying with others, you can experience the presence of God.
- And think about all the ways you need God's presence.
- Your joy is connected to God's presence.



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- Listen to Psalm 16 verse 11:
- **“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy.”**
- If we want lasting joy, we need God’s presence.

- Your strength is connected to God’s presence.
 - Listen to Isaiah 41 verse 10:
 - **“Fear not, for I am with you...I will strengthen you, I will help you.”**
 - God strengthens us when we go to his presence.

- Your rest is connected to God’s presence.
 - Listen to Exodus 33 verse 14:
 - **“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”**
 - We don’t find rest by withdrawing from God’s presence.
 - We find rest by encountering God’s presence.

- Your transformation is also connected to God’s presence.
 - Listen to 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18:
 - **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”**
 - God changes us, as we behold his glorious presence.

- Let’s not merely seek information about God, let’s seek to encounter the living God as we meet together.

- We see from our passage how through the church we can encounter God.

Point 3:



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- Third, we see from our passage how as the church, we can serve one another.
- Jesus didn't only die on the cross to save us from our sins, but to bring his people together.
 - Jesus saved us to build his church.
 - He's building a spiritual house.
- And one reason Jesus is building the church is for us to serve.
 - The reason Jesus is bringing us together is for us to become a kingdom of priests.
- As I said before, priests were people who served in the temple.
- And in the Old Testament, the people watched while the priests would sacrifice animals on the altar.
 - The people were passive observers.
 - Only the priests could offer sacrifices to God.
- In fact, only one tribe was able serve in the temple.
 - And only the descendants of Aaron could serve as priests.
 - Only certain people could enter the holy place.
- But now, the Bible is saying that we're all called to be priests.
 - We're all given the honor to serve the Lord.
 - This doesn't mean we're all called to be pastors.
 - But it does mean we're all called to serve.
- And look at the way we're called to build the church.
 - It's by offering spiritual sacrifices.
 - I know I spoke about this last week.



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- But by spiritual sacrifices, Peter isn't talking about goats and bulls.
- He's speaking about our lives.
- Our strength, our time, our comfort.
- It's by sacrificing our lives, we can serve the church.

- For a church to be healthy, we need to receive.
 - But we also need to give.

- It's like the human body.
 - You can't just eat, and sleep, and rest, and do nothing else.
 - But if you just exercise, and work, and neglect to rest, you'll wipe yourself out.
 - You need both input and output to have a healthy body.

- It's the same with our spiritual lives.
 - Spiritual input is when you're taught, and encouraged, and counseled, and supported, and loved.
 - Spiritual output is when you encourage, and you counsel, and you support, and you love, and you volunteer.

- We need both to be a healthy Christian.
 - We need both be a healthy church.

- Do you see what this means for you?

- This means if God has sent you to our church, you're here for a reason.
 - Because every stone has a purpose.
 - There are no useless stones in God's building.
 - Every stone strengthens the building.



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- Or to put it another way, if our church is to be running at full strength, if we want our gospel light to be the brightest it can be, everyone needs to play their part.
 - It's only when everyone does their part, we can function as God planned for us to function.
- Listen to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
 - **“But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose...As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...”** 1 Corinthians 12:18-22
 - Not one person is dispensable in our church.
 - We need everyone one of you to play your part.
- Have you ever bought furniture to assemble and you realize a price is missing or a price is broken.
 - It could be the smallest screw, but without it, you can't complete the project.
 - Or if you do complete it, it won't be as strong.
 - Why?
 - Because every piece is important.
- You may think there's not much you can do.
 - But that's not true.
 - You have certain gifts.
 - You have certain resources.
 - You have a unique personality.
 - You have specific experiences.



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- There are certain hands only you can hold.
- There are needs only you can see.
- And let's also remember that serving won't always be easy.
 - To offer our lives as a spiritual sacrifice is another way of saying we're going to surrender ourselves to give to Christ.
 - That means it's going to require that we give to the Lord.
 - It's costly to serve.
 - It may cost our time, our comfort, our preferences.
 - But that's what it means to surrender to Christ.
- Furthermore, sacrificing ourselves also means we may need to serve in a place that's not comfortable for us.
 - God may use our gifts.
 - God may put us in a place where we have a lot of experience.
 - But he may also put you in a place where you need to serve in weakness.
- But let's remember, even when we serve in weakness, we have the power of God working in us.
 - In fact, it's when we serve in our weakness.
 - It's when we serve in uncomfortable situations, God can use us in the greatest way.
- Last year, Dan Chung our worship leader, who leads a ministry to North Korean refugees, asked me to speak at retreat in South Korea for North Korean refugees.
 - And I agreed.
 - But the only problem was I needed to preach in Korean.
 - And my Korean isn't that great.



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- It's definitely a weakness.
 - And as I was preparing to preach, I wondered why God put me in this position to preach at this retreat.
 - Surely, God could've found a much more eloquent speaker.
 - There are thousands of preachers in Korea who could speak Korean, better than I could ever hope to speak.
 - When the time came, I preached as best as I could.
 - I couldn't fully express myself.
 - I had to simplify the sermons.
 - But during the retreat, a woman came to me and said:
 - "Pastor, I'm so glad you're preaching to us, I can finally understand the sermon."
 - "When I go to most churches, I have a hard time understanding what the pastor is saying."
 - "But your sermons are so simple."
 - "I'm able to understand."
- Serving God isn't about how strong you are.
 - It's not about how much you know.
 - It's about being a willing servant.
 - And no matter how weak or incapable you feel.
 - Don't diminish what the Holy Spirit can do through you.
 - And so, consider how God may be asking you to give up your time?
 - Consider how God may be asking you to give up your strength?
 - Consider how God may be asking you to give up your comfort?



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- In our passage, we see how as the church we can serve one another.

Conclusion:

- Why do we need the church?
 - It's through the church we can grow in Christ.
 - It's through the church we can encounter God.
 - And as the church we can serve one another.
- In 1 Peter 2 verse 10, Peter quotes from the book of Hosea.
 - It says:
 - **“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”** 1 Peter 2:10
 - This is taken from the book of Hosea.
 - If you remember, in the book of Hosea, God tells Hosea to marry a woman who’s going to be unfaithful to him.
 - And after marrying her, that’s what happens.
 - She sleeps with other men.
 - But then, God tells Hosea to find her and to bring her home.
 - And that’s what he does.
 - He finds her.
 - He buys her back.
 - And loves her again.
 - And God says that’s how he loves his people.
 - In Hosea chapter 2 it says:
 - **“And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, you are my people; and he shall say, you are my God.”** Hosea 2:23
 - This is how much God loves the church.



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- Ultimately, Hosea points to Jesus Christ.
 - Because we are the unfaithful bride.
 - We were the ones who wandered away from God.
 - We were the ones who didn't deserve mercy.
 - But Jesus came to find us.
 - And he bought us, not with silver or gold.
 - But with his blood.
 - He gave his life.
 - Once we didn't belong to Christ.
 - But now, we are his people.
 - Once we didn't receive mercy.
 - But now, we've received mercy.

- I know that churches aren't perfect.
 - Some of you may have been disappointed by the church.
 - Some of you may have been hurt by the church.
 - But let's remember that Christ loves the church.
 - It's precious to him.
 - So, let's be careful we don't reject what's precious to Christ.

- The Bible says that Jesus died to build the church.
 - And if Jesus died to show mercy to us, to make us his people.
 - Shouldn't we show mercy?
 - Shouldn't we welcome the wounded, forgive those who disappoint us, and go after those who fall away?
 - If Jesus loved the church enough to die for it, shouldn't we love the church enough to give ourselves to serving it?

- Let's build relationships, so we can grow in Christ.



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- Let's gather to worship, so we can encounter God.
- And let's serve one another.
 - Because when we were lost, when we were unfaithful, God came to us.
 - And so, let's show mercy, because he has shown mercy.