

Windsor Guildhall (The Church)

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. I
Corinthians 12:12*

The Basic Bible Truth

We live in what we commonly refer to as the Church Age. From our point of view, it may seem that God's plan for reaching this world with the truth about Him has changed from time to time. God has not changed. His desire is that all come to a saving knowledge of Him. The vehicle to promote that concept may have been modified a bit over the years, but the goal has not changed. In the Old Testament times, God's plan was to reach the world. He gave Israel the opportunity to be His chosen people and if they had obeyed His commands, they would have become the envy of all the world and thus would have drawn people to God. God made it incredibly easy for a non-Israelite to become one. Any Gentile living anywhere in the world could become a part of Israel simply by obeying God's laws as the other Israelites were required. Simple.

Today, God has looked away from Israel "but for a moment", and turned His attention upon a different medium of spreading the Gospel—the Church. No longer are we to sit back and be a shining example that the world will flock to in interest. The shining example part is still in place, but we are to be actively spreading the Good News of God in the corner of the world that we live in. The Church has the personal admonition of God to tell the world about Him. Sometimes, though, we are not inclined to share the news with everyone. There are some people that may make us uncomfortable, or they just aren't like us. We too often, like to keep our churches a "members only" club, keeping our time and talents focused upon ourselves and we forget the real call God gave—tell everyone.

In the church, we all have a position to fill. God has placed us accordingly and given us the gifts needed to accomplish His goals. We each have a part to play, and when we are missing or not doing our part, the body suffers and struggles.

The Object

The Windsor Guildhall



The Lesson

Quite literally, just down the street from Windsor Castle, one of the royal residences in England, stands a remarkable building. Built around 1688, it has stood the test of time quite well. The Windsor Guildhall was officially commissioned by the town and an architect hired to design and oversee the construction. Christopher Wren was the man chosen, and construction began. As the process of erecting the edifice continued, the town leadership grew concerned about the engineering of the structure. Wren was an architect, he knew his mathematics and engineering. The town leadership just looked and made judgments based on feelings rather than hard facts. Wren's design used 18 pillars around the perimeter of the building and the center of the structure spanned over the clear open area. The engineering said it should be well within guidelines, but the town leadership prevailed and Wren was forced to add four more pillars in the center of the building. The town leadership was happy and nothing more was said.

But Christopher Wren had the last laugh. He was so sure of his design, that when he designed the additional support columns, he had them made 2 inches short of the ceiling. But never told anybody else his little secret. For many years, the guildhall has stood with no issues whatsoever, the columns serving no real structural purpose. Proving that Wren really did know how to engineer a building. Over the years, many people have had a good chuckle over the deception that played out in 1688.

In I Peter, the church is described as a building made up of "living stone". We are the brick and mortar, the sheetrock and shingles, that make up the building. With Jesus as the foundation, nothing can prevail. There is one difference between God and Christopher Wren. God does not put useless pillars in his structure. I remember as a young boy, I attended a small church and the service was always accompanied by a bulletin, a simple folded sheet of paper with information about the day and the week to follow. Usually the lady that was in charge of printing that document would add a small clip art type picture. For some reason, I can still remember one of those. It was at the bottom of the inside page with this caption: "Are you a pillar or a caterpillar?" I guess the play on words caught my attention. But the question is a fair one.

There are a number of reasons that we should attend and be a part of a local church. First and foremost, God said so. That stands alone as reason enough. End of discussion. Let's get in the car and go home.

If you need more than that, you may have a spiritual problem that needs to be addressed. But there are advantages for the Christian who does attend church and does not just sit as a spectator, but gets involved. The key here is involvement. At the moment of our conversion, God gives each of us a spiritual gift. That gift is given with a goal in mind. We are to use that gift in the church, in cooperation with other people who also have their individual gifts, and work together to accomplish great things for God. He uses the picture in the New Testament of a human body. Many parts working together to move and breathe and live. The church likewise is many parts, each unique, but necessary for proper function.

Consider the concept of playing baseball. It's difficult to swing a bat with only one arm. With only one eye, depth perception fails and it becomes impossible to judge the distance and speed of the pitch. Only one leg makes the running of the bases a huge challenge. We need all of our parts to play a good game. The church needs all of her parts as well, and God has strategically placed people in the church for specific purposes. We need to learn what our specific gift is, develop it, and then use it for His kingdom.

The local church fills other needs in our lives as well. We were created as social beings. We need relationships to function well. Sitting in a fishing boat on Sunday morning and watching the sunrise may make us feel close to God for a moment, but there is little to no social interaction there, and whether we want to admit it or not, God created us with a need that only the presence of other people can fill in our lives. We have all seen, or at least heard, of examples of the odd behaviors established by those who

completely withdraw from society and social interaction. I recall, as a young man, hearing and reading about the richest man in the world at the time, Howard Hughes. A man with everything at his fingertips, and an amazing intellect, withdrew from everyone and lived as a very wealthy recluse. And died a very miserable, lonely man. He finished his life poorly. We need others—Christian others—who can challenge us and correct us if necessary.

We need a reminder from time to time who God is and our place in His plan. The world we live in is going to try to get our attention away from things spiritual and fill that void with anything that it can. We can easily get caught up in the lights and glitter of the excitement of the world. Satan is the greatest showman who ever lived and can quite easily distract us from what is really important in life. We need to focus on God and what He has to offer. When our children were young, we enrolled them in team sports in the community. Specifically, soccer. Our oldest, our son, played from the time he was 4 or 5 years old through high school. If you have ever been around a community league team, as the age bracket rises, so does the possibility of having to travel to neighboring towns to play games. When he started playing years ago, it was unthinkable for a league team to play a game on a Sunday afternoon. But very gradually, something changed. First, it was a “make-up game” that was scheduled “just once” on a Sunday afternoon. A year or two later, a game or two was scheduled for a Sunday afternoon. I vividly remember the weekend we found ourselves at a tournament that scheduled the final game for the top two teams for Sunday morning at 11:00. Our son chose to not play in that game and risked losing his place on the team, rather than compromise his convictions. Today, I teach a 6th-7th grade Sunday School class, and it is not uncommon during the sports seasons, to have half of the class out due to scheduled tournament games. God has described Himself as a still, small voice, a whisper. In the noise of today, that whisper is sometimes difficult to hear. Church gives us an organized, purposed time to reflect on God and his goodness. We need that structure.

Growth for the Christian occurs in many ways. Daily devotions are a wonderful thing. Listening to a sermon is a wonderful thing. But what I have noticed in my own life is that I tend to ignore my shortcomings. It is convenient for me to overlook things in my life that need to be addressed. I don't know that I don't know what I don't know. In the church, we will have the opportunity to meet those who may be much farther along in their walk with the Lord, and there will be things we can learn from them, simply by rubbing shoulders with them in the context of the church relationship.

A healthy church is a place filled with a family like atmosphere. Yes, there are moments of friction and disagreement, but those are fleeting and give way to laughter and joy and belonging. I grew up in a healthy family environment. I know first hand what that looks like. And I assure you, there is nothing quite like it. Being a part of a church gives us the opportunity to experience that joy. I had a friend in grade school who had spent his early years in an orphanage in Korea. He and his sister were adopted into a loving family that lived across the street from me when I was young. Do not ever underestimate the value of a family relationship. He clung to the concept of family. He had seen both sides, and much preferred a mother and a father and a family. We need each other. We spur each other on to maturity. And we actually are family—we are all God's children.

Nothing that we can do can possibly impress God, and cause Him to say that we have earned our spot in Heaven. Our very best is nothing to an infinite God. Our access to Heaven is based solely on the person of Jesus and what He did for us when He went to the cross and paid the price for our sins. However, God does expect us to show our faith through good works. The good we do should be a natural outgrowth of a close walk with Him. It should never be seen as a requirement for admission into eternal home. We love others because He first loved us. It is as simple as that.

Are we playing the part that God has assigned for us, or are we merely spectators sitting in the pew and watching others do the work? We are not useless pillars. God places us in the church to do our part in seeing that His blueprint becomes a living reality.

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