

What does the Bible say about the Church? Part 2.

1 Timothy 3:15: *....I write (to you) so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God...*

The decline in participation in local churches is the result of a lack of Biblical teaching *by the church* and *about the church*. Last week we learned that being part of the Lord's church is not optional. This is true, because being part of the local church is to experience being part of the household of God.

Many metaphors are used to describe the Church in the Bible: a temple, a body, a community and a family, amongst others. When the Church is referred to as a household or family, the emphasis is on the essential need for believers who wish to have a healthy relationship with the Lord, to be supported and encouraged through relationships with other Christians.

When we think about Christ's community as a household, we emphasise that our union is created by sharing a relationship with God and with one another. We are interconnected to the extent that the Bible says that we are brothers and sisters, because God is our Father, because we have one Saviour and because one Holy Spirit lives in us.

Do you live as part of this family of God? Do you experience this connectedness with the people worshipping with you? Remember, if someone is God's son or daughter, he or she is your brother and sister.

This has implications for how one "ought to conduct himself in the household of God." It means that we are to care for each other, to share God's love and to help those who need support or are hurting. We call this "ministry". And when we pray and learn together to be equipped for Christian living, we call it discipleship. We are not so much prepared and equipped by programs for the challenge to consistently live as God's family, but by fellow pilgrims on this journey - the household of God.

We all need encouragement and we all need to grow in faith and in knowledge. We all need to grow in love for the Lord. This happens within the family of God. Being part of the family is therefore not optional. It is essential and the Bible says the local Church is where you will experience this.

What we do in and about the Church of our Lord really matters. Our behaviours and choices impact on our brothers and sisters who need us. Someone may say, I do not need these relationships - but God needs you to make a difference in the lives of his children, and your fellow Christians need you to encourage and build them up. When we are willing to be open to share in the family of God, we will find that we need their love, friendship and encouragement too. When this penny drops in the local church, the whole church is built up and functions according to God's will.

Lets be very clear about this: If we do not see the church as the household of God and ourselves as brothers and sisters to every other believer, we do not listen to what the Bible says about the church. But if we do, we will begin to experience the abundance that Christian living is intended to be.