

# I Have A Dream - Schedules

REVIEW: For the last two weeks we have looked at the idea of church membership in Scripture. While I am not going to go over all of the things we have discussed in those two weeks, let me tell you why we have walked down this road. My desire was to deconstruct your ideas about church membership, and then reconstruct them, with the focus being helping you to attain a high view of church membership.

## I. Deconstruction

### A. Two things that people are often confused on:

1. That membership in a church is just a club, so I don't need to join
  - a) As we have already looked at, the church is no club
    - (1) It is a calling together of people that have been delivered from darkness to light, that have received God's free gift of salvation, none of whom deserved it
    - b) It is not like the Lions club, or the country club - it is something far greater
  2. That membership is not really found in Scripture
    - a) On that point you are right and wrong
    - b) There is no verse that says "Thou must join a local church"
      - (1) But keep in mind, there is no verse in the Bible that says you must pray before every meal - yet some would question your salvation if you don't
      - (2) There is no verse in the Bible that says:
    - c) But the example of Scripture is full of people and situations where belonging to a specific group of people is evident

### B. I had to deconstruct ideas about membership so that I could reconstruct them

1. Being called into the family of God is a high calling
2. One that demands high commitment and high cost
3. It is a privilege to belong to the Body of Christ
4. The church has been given oversight of the discipleship process
  - a) As such, it is important to belong to a local church rather than just to general church or universal church
  - b) The local church can then oversee and help you in the process of becoming more like Christ

TRAN: So today we reach the next idea that we have to deconstruct and then rebuild so we begin to think correctly. The main point of today is that it is not all about you! You are not the reason that God saved you, or that God has done even one thing for you.

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- I. How many have ever heard of cat and dog theology
  - A. How many are scratching their heads thinking, "I don't ever remember that in the Bible?"
  - B. It's actually a website and they have a book out. Here's how it works
    1. Cat's think, "My person feeds me, they shelter me, they pet me, they love me - I must be god"
    2. A dog thinks, "You feed me, you shelter me, you pet me, you love me - You must be god!"
      - a) I get told all the time that I need to get a cat
      - b) My reply, I like dogs - cats have attitude issues
    3. The animals receive the same information but reach different conclusions based on who is the center of the universe to them
  - C. Sadly, the church, especially the American church does not even lean toward cat theology - we are fully camped out there
    1. Have you ever heard that the reason Jesus came was to save His people from their sins
      - a) Absolutely correct - and completely biblical
      - b) Left unchecked, however, it lends itself to the wrong idea that we are the point of the Bible, and that we are the reason for why God has been so gracious
    2. Back in the late 80's early 90's, if you could stomach the "CCM" of the day, there was a song that was popularized by a man named David Meece entitled *We Are the Reason*
      - a) It says, "We are the reason that He gave His life/We are the reason that He suffered and died."
      - b) Nice thoughts but not an completely accurate picture from Scripture
      - c) Allow me to give you a quick overview of what Scripture does tell us
- II. For the sake of His name and glory
  - A. I encourage you to do a study on the glory of God and on His name
  - B. When I looked up the words "sake" and "name" together, 21 verses came up and of those 21, 19 were about what God has done on earth for His name
    1. He does not reject His people - 1 Samuel 12:22
    2. Turn to Psalm 23 - why does the shepherd lead us - His name's sake
      - a) It's not because we are amazing
      - b) It's not even because we are so stupid we can't lead ourselves
      - c) It's to point glory and honor to Him
    3. Flip to Psalm 25:11
      - a) David asks for his many sins to be forgiven
      - b) Why? The sake of God's name

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- c) In other words God forgiving our sins points back to the fact of how amazing, gracious and loving He is, and brings Him more glory
  - 4. He saved Israel from Egypt for His name's sake - Psalm 106:8
  - 5. He delays His wrath for His name's sake - Isaiah 48:9
  - 6. Three times in Ezekiel 20 God says that for His name's sake He did what would keep His name from being profaned among the nations
  - 7. It is not for the sake of Israel that God gathers them back together, but for His name's sake, in spite of the fact that Israel had profaned the Lord's name and holiness (profane simply means to make it commonplace) - Ezekiel 36
  - 8. Turn to Daniel 9:18-19
    - a) We don't ask God for things based on our righteousness but on His mercy
    - b) God forgives for His name's sake - the people bear His name
  - 9. Paul received grace and apostleship to share the gospel with the Gentiles for His name's sake - Romans 1:5
  - 10. Psalm 79:9
  - 11. As I looked up the words "for the glory" all of the verses were applied to God except two
    - a) Both verses were in Daniel 4
    - b) Both were in reference to Nebuchadnezzar's admiration of the kingdom he built "for the glory of his majesty"
      - (1) If you remember your OT that did not set well with God
      - (2) The King was sent into the field to eat grass with the wild beasts for 7 years
  - 12. Are we getting this? One more verse - go to 1 Corinthians 10:31
    - a) How do we live our lives - for the glory of God
    - b) Everything we do should be with that in mind
      - (1) From the gardening around the house
      - (2) To the manner in which we drive our car
      - (3) To how we handle our finances
      - (4) To our work ethic - everything means everything
  - 13. It is about His name and His glory - it is all about Him
- III. The Lord's glory and the church
- A. Everything in our society militates against God's glory and the fact that He is what life is all about
  - B. The philosophies of world (especially America - which explains why America is so hated around the world) all scream that life is all about us
    - 1. From "obey your thirst" and "have it your way" ads
    - 2. To 24 hour banking and fitness

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3. To easy divorce
  4. If you want it you're entitled to it because life is all about your happiness
  5. All of these things scream that life is all about you
- C. The problem with this philosophy, besides it just not being true in any area of life, is that we carry this into the church with us
1. We go back to where we began that we think that God did all of this stuff for us - as if we are the final reason
    - a) We pick out and cherish the texts that make it sound as if we are the reason that God chose us and we are the reason that God forgave us
    - b) There may even be some of you that are lining up the texts in your mind that you plan to email me, or catch me coming out of the bathroom to help me see that, yes, God did do all of this for us
      - (1) God loves us so much that He sent His one and only Son for us to have eternal life
      - (2) And hosts of other texts
      - (3) And hear me clearly - I am not saying that those texts are not true
      - (4) What I am saying is that there is a deeper reason for God's actions - His glory
        - (a) The fact that God loves us - the unworthy, unlovely sinners that we are - that is God's glory shining through
        - (b) The fact that He chose us - God's glory
          - i) Somehow we think its as if God could not live without us in His kingdom so He had to do what He did to make sure that He got us on His team - because we're so amazing
          - ii) If you remember, God did not choose Israel because they were the best nation - He chose them because they weren't, and the fact He chose them displayed His glory - same is true for you and I
          - iii) In God choosing us - weak-willed sinners that we are - God displays His glory
        - (c) The fact that He was so patient with Israel, even though they were morons (not that we aren't btw) - God's glory
        - (d) All of the things that God has done on our behalf all display the glory of God
- D. But allow me to get into an offshoot of this wrong philosophy that affects the church as well
1. And this is where I hope you brought your steel-toed shoes
  2. As if I have not beat you up enough today by telling you that you are not the point of the Bible and what God has done, now I am going after an

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area the fits with where the sermon series is headed, but is perhaps the greatest area of tension for a pastor to be tugging on that string

3. Yet here I go, tugging away

IV. When we have this view of us being the center or point of the Bible, it affects how we live out our faith in church, and the use of our time

A. There are two components to this, so let me deal with them one at a time

B. First: how we live out our faith in church

1. If we are the point, then admit it or not we often come to church more to be entertained than to worship or serve

a) We are consumers of what the church is offering rather than becoming disciples

b) In average churches all around our nation we see people that come for what they can get out of the church, with little or no thought about what they can add to the church

(1) It's as if church is another item on the to do list, but they don't want to add more than they have to

(2) What that does is betray who they feel is the center of church and life

c) That is symptomatic of having the wrong frame of mind that the Bible, and God are all about you

d) If people were to be honest with themselves, many of the people we are describing here are not here really to worship God

(1) They are here to begrudgingly give some time for the church to serve them

(2) Please understand this and reflect on this deeply - God is not after your forced submission

(a) He never wanted to beat you down into submission to coming to church

(b) God is after the praise of His glory

(c) You know what that does for church on Sunday morning: frees you up to enjoy Him

i) It frees you up so that your focus is on Him

ii) Church is no longer about you - it never was - it is all about Him

2. One of the other things that marches right along with this feeling of things are about me is people's insistence on how things should be done in church

a) We have gone over this point in past sermons so I will not spend much time here

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- b) But for anyone to insist that church must contain certain elements otherwise church is not being done right is suffering from the delusion that church is about them
    - (1) We all have preferences for worship and the kinds of things a church might offer
    - (2) But understand that those are preferences - they are not commands
  - c) If someone wants to be insistent that there are certain elements that must be in a church service for it to be worship - they are not far off
    - (1) Biblically the Bible speaks of singing as a way to worship
    - (2) It speaks of prayer
    - (3) It speaks of the public reading of Scripture
    - (4) It speaks of teaching associated with Scripture
    - (5) And it speaks of the ordinances of communion and baptism
    - (6) That is as detailed as it gets - everything after that is purely preference
  - d) But if we are not the point, and God is the point, we come to worship Him - not indulge our preferences
    - (1) It is a freeing experience knowing that it is not all about me
    - (2) It really is all about Him!
- C. The second thing that I mentioned, and here is where I wish the trustees would have taken me up on installing some safety glass up here for me, is the use of our time
- 1. Now I am going to push on this area pretty hard, but listen all the way through to the end please
  - 2. The fact is that when we are the point, our commitment on the use of our time does one of two things
    - a) Either we argue that we are doing everything privately
      - (1) We follow God privately, we worship in the car because we can't make it to church, we are doing our devotions, etc.
      - (2) That is great that you are making an effort to grow on your own!
      - (3) The problem is that you are missing a huge chunk of God-ordained opportunity for you to grow
        - (a) When we remove our brothers and sisters in Christ from the equation, we become grossly handicapped
        - (b) I will not dig too deeply on this because we will be hitting on it in a future sermon(s), but suffice it to say that there are a number of problems that come up when we choose to ignore the very institution that Christ died to provide for our growth

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- b) The other way our use of time takes a hit is that we make less and less time for even church on Sunday morning, much less anything else in church
  - (1) This is why I started the series with trying to elevate church membership
  - (2) When church is about us, rather than about God's glory, we think it is okay to miss church as much or more than we attend
- 3. We even start up the excuse mill and churn them out
  - a) Well God doesn't take attendance preacher!
    - (1) Touché! God does not take attendance. I have never found that in Scripture anywhere
    - (2) What I have found is Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
    - (3) What I have seen is this is an area much like the areas of reward and giftings in the Bible
      - (a) You can make use of what God has given you for His glory, or not
      - (b) It is only going to help you grow or keep you stunted if you don't
    - (4) The fact is that just because God does not take attendance does not mean that he wants you to be a baby Christian all of your life
      - (a) He does not want you to struggle with sin because of a lack of good brothers and sisters in your life
      - (b) He does not want you to wonder what His will is when, in coming and worshiping God together you begin to understand the will of God better all the time
  - b) Well Pastor, this is a family thing and so its about family
    - (1) Let me tread lightly, but press firmly, since when did family become more important than God?
    - (2) Wouldn't it be better that you display to your family your deep love and commitment to Christ by making God your first priority on a Sunday both personally and as a family
    - (3) When I was in 3-4 grade I remember learning an acronym from the cutest girl in our SS class
      - (a) It has stuck with me ever since - either due to its truthfulness or because she was so cute - either way I remember it
      - (b) JOY - Jesus, Others, You

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- (4) Jesus is always first - even above family
- (5) Trust me I get it that life is jammed packed and that coaches and school teachers, and all manner of other folks all want pieces of your time
  - (a) Let me give you a challenge - a line in the sand if you will
  - (b) Take your calendar and re-build it with that acronym in mind
    - i) Jesus first - Church, Bible study/small group, serving church
    - ii) Others - Family first on the list of others (But build in that family time otherwise someone will steal it away), then other friends that draw you closer to Christ
    - iii) Then You
  - (c) If it means that you can't do the amount of things you are currently doing - that may be a good thing
    - i) I have seen too many people over the years drop things at church because their lives were so chaotic
    - ii) Rather than dropping other things for commitment to the community of Christ
- c) Well Pastor, Sunday morning comes awfully early
  - (1) Seriously?
  - (2) I say this with all the love I have - if that is the excuse I will smack you down in Jesus name - that is biblical too - Nehemiah 13
- 4. Now, let me say one more thing here
  - a) I get it!
    - (1) I get that there are bosses out there that could not care less about your Christian commitment
    - (2) I've had conversations with Todd Schapman and I get that the cows don't know or care that its Sunday morning, they just know its time to get attended to
    - (3) I get that some are retired and like to travel to see family
    - (4) I get that there are coaches and leagues who don't care about it being Sunday morning
      - (a) A couple of possible ways to handle that - one being not to be involved if the sport becomes all consuming
      - (b) Another is speaking with the coach at the beginning of the season about occasions you may miss due to your faith
      - (c) Please do not get me wrong on this - if you commit to something I want you to follow through and expect you to be committed

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- i) When the commitment runs counter to allow you to participate at church for your season, seek out other ways to continue to connect with your brothers and sisters in Christ
- b) Main thing I want you to hear is I get it. I understand that there are a lot of things out there that push against our commitment to Christ
- c) What I want to make sure you hear is the concept of “first fruits”
  - (1) In the Bible, God asked people to give Him the first 10% of their crops
    - (a) Now crops were their life - they sell them, they eat them
    - (b) Giving the first 10% was a display of faith that God will provide and make sure the crops grow
    - (c) We usually apply this to money and tithing
  - (2) I want you to think of your time that way
    - (a) Give your best - your first 10% to serving God and growing deeper
    - (b) Trust God that the rest will be okay
    - (c) Too often we give what we have left over - that is not first fruits
  - (3) Because time is so precious, in the next few weeks I will be giving you some ways to use your first fruits in the most constructive manner possible
- D. When I was growing up church attendance on Sunday morning, or even whenever the doors of the church were open was fairly legalistic
  - 1. People would be praying for your soul if you were not sick, dead or on vacation out of the state
  - 2. That was the pendulum too far out of line
  - 3. Yet somehow we have allowed the pendulum swing too far back the other way
    - a) We have to seek to find that balanced position
    - b) And that balanced position needs to come from our one and only motivating factor - giving God the glory He deserves