

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Recently, Apple unveiled the *iPhone*. In introducing the *iPhone*, Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO, said, "Every once in while a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything." Jobs has big dreams for his new product. He says, "We want to reinvent the phone."

What does the *iPhone* offer consumers? Apple mentioned at least three: First, the ability to skip over voicemails you don't want to hear and go directly to the one's you want to hear. Second, with one touch of the screen you can connect two calls, making conference calls easier than ever. And third, internet accessibility, just like on your desktop.

The *iPhone* is not cheap! One model costs \$499, and another model costs \$599. But for what you get, the monetary sacrifice is negligible. At least that's what Apple hopes you will think. No one is going to reach deep into their pocketbooks until you answer the question: *What's in it for me?*

Unfortunately, this attitude has crept into churches. We are a consumer driven society, and when we are deciding on a church to attend, we can't help but think, "What does this church (or that church) have to offer? How can this church (or that church) meet my needs? In other words: *What's in it for me?*

Now, we can complain about this attitude, making people feel guilty about it; or, we can admit that it is simply part of our human nature to ask that question. No matter how bad we may wish it were otherwise, this attitude is not going to change. People want to know what Christ can do for them, what the church can do for them as well. The problem is not the attitude. The problem is we look to

the wrong things to answer the question, *What's in it for me?*

What Jesus offers you, and me, is exactly what we need. And, in His sovereignty, He has chosen the church to be the instrument of meeting those needs. However, we have gotten so far off base we don't even know what are real needs really are. Watch this video entitled "Me Church."

Our Real Needs

What do we really need? What are we really looking for?

Consider this: *Every civilization—no matter how advanced or primitive—worships something.* Anthropologists have yet to discover a society that did not have some form of religion to it. Furthermore, societies that have tried to banish "religion" have failed miserably. Apparently there is something in the make-up of being human that tries to connect with Something, or Someone, outside ourselves. Every person who has ever lived has asked themselves, "Is there a God, and if so, what is my relationship to Him (or her)?" Psalm 14:1 says, "The fools says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

What I am trying to say is: ***The greatest need we have is a relationship with God.*** Our hearts cry out to connect (or reconnect) with the One who Created us.

But we also have another need. ***We have a need to be in relationship with each other.*** We were created to be social creatures. We were created to do life together. We need each other.

A rather crude and cruel experiment was carried out by Emperor Frederick, who ruled the Roman Empire in the thirteenth century. He wanted to know what man's original language was: Hebrew, Greek, or Latin? He decided to isolate a few infants from the sound of the human voice. He reasoned that they would eventually speak the natural tongue of man. Wet nurses who were sworn to absolute silence were obtained, and though it was difficult for them, they abided by the rule. The infants never heard a word -- not a sound from a human voice. Within several months they were all dead.

What Happened?

If we need God and each other, why don't we experience better relationships? Why do so many people feel lonely and disconnected? Why is it so hard to meet these two basic needs? What has happened?

One event in human history severely damaged both our relationships with God and each other, *the Fall of Man*. After Adam and Eve sinned, their perfect relationship with God was destroyed. The Bible says, "But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'" Earlier, in the Creation story, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." And so God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, removed one of his ribs, and created Eve. Then, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, God questions Adam and Adam blames Eve, saying, "The woman You put here with me—she gave some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Thus, their relationship with one another changed.

What has been the result of all this? Each of us are born with a longing to

live in relationship with God and others, but we are also born with a lack of being able to experience true relationships with either God or one another. Our most desperate needs, left to ourselves, can never be completely fulfilled!

What is the solution? God, out of His mercy, love, and grace; and because of His desire for relationships, sends His only Son to redeem us and restore us, so once again we can experience authentic relationships with Him and each other! Jesus Christ came announcing that God's kingdom had now arrived. Through Jesus Christ, we can once again live in harmony with God!

But that's not all. Jesus announced His ministry to His home synagogue in Nazareth, describing to them the purpose of the Messiah. Reading from Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Notice: poverty, enslavement, disease, disabilities, and injustice—all social ills that do not exist where God's kingdom rules. And get this, after Jesus read this prophecy, "He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down...(and said), 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"

In Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God is near; and that means what we were originally created to do and be (social beings, created to live in relationship with God and others) can now be accomplished. In Jesus Christ, our greatest needs can be met and we can live a life of true fulfillment. It is for this precise reason that Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and love others. By implication that means the

greatest sin is not to love God and not to love others.

When Jesus left earth, He left His people to continue His ministry of healing people's relationship with God and others; and His primary instrument for bringing healing into this world is the "body of Christ;" the Church. Pastor Bill Hybels has said it best. He has said, "The local church is **the** hope of the world. There is nothing like the local church when the local church is working right."

Our greatest need is not to be involved in an organization where we can gather once a week and be entertained and motivated and made to feel good and run ragged from one program after another. Our greatest need is to live in community with one another where we can worship God, encourage each other, love, and learn to do life together—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

When it comes to reforming and restarting Franklin Community Church, "What's in it for me?"

What's in it for you, and for me, is an opportunity to live the greatest, most fulfilled, and most significant life you can ever live by ***experiencing authentic relationships with God and each other***; and helping others do the same.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen."

What is expected of me?

That's what's in it for you. But it will not occur without a price on your part. Personal sacrifices will have to be made. If you decide to commit yourself to this

local church, what will be expected of you? FCC's expectations are spelled out in the "MIT" (Member Inverted Triangle), and in our "Membership Covenant."

[MIT (Membership Inverted Triangle)]

Franklin Community Church Membership Covenant:

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized, and being in agreement with FCC's statements, strategy and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the FCC family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

I. I Will Protect the Unity of My Church.

- ...By acting in love toward other members
- ...By refusing to gossip
- ...By following the leaders

"So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together." Rom. 15:19 (Ph)

"Live in complete harmony with each other — each with the attitude of Christ toward each other." Rom 15:5 (LB)

"Have a sincere love for your fellow believers, love one another earnestly with all

your hearts.” 1 Peter 1:22 (GN)

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...” Eph. 4:29

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.” Heb. 13:17

II. I Will Share the Responsibility of My Church

- ...By praying for its growth
- ...By inviting the uncharted to attend
- ...By warmly welcoming those who visit

“To the church...we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly.” 1 Thess. 1:2

“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.” Luke 14:23 (LB)

“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.” Rom. 15:7 (LB)

III. I Will Serve the Ministry of My Church

- ...By discovering my gifts and talents
- ...By being equipped to serve by my pastors
- ...By developing a servant's heart

“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you... 1 Peter 4:10 (Ph)

“God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Ephesians 4:11-12

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant...” Phil. 2:3-4, 7

IV. I Will Support the Testimony of My Church

- ...By attending faithfully
- ...By living a godly life
- ...By giving regularly

“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one

another." Hebrews 10:25

"But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ." Phil. 1:27 (Ph)

"Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering." 1 Cor. 16:2

"A tenth of all you produce is the Lord's, and it is holy." Lev. 27:30

CONCLUSION:

Listen to these wonderful words Paul wrote to a difficult church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13:13).

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by^[a] one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And 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, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in

the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire^[c] the greater gifts.

And now I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.