

## Me and the community



The search for the perfect community

### Once upon a time ...

there was a community that had almost nothing but problems. It was so bad, you don't even want to talk about it.

The things that were argued! Everybody knew better. And then there were the various leaders. She had her loyal followers and everyone wanted to be the greatest. So they were tearing each other down. The community was in danger of being completely torn apart.

It was no secret, that's why I can speak openly about it. Christians of that church would go to the brothel and argue, "What's the big deal - we're free!". I know an even worse example. Someone had an intimate relationship with his father's second wife. That was a disgrace! That's how the others who didn't belong to the congregation saw it too.

Shall I tell you more? These Christians had common meals, which they associated with the Lord's Supper. Now it happened that some drank so much of the communion wine that there was nothing left for the others. They went home from the service drunk. The former pastor of this congregation said that such occasions did more harm than good.

Would I join that congregation? Surely that would be far too problematic for me! I wonder if this was even a real, biblical church?

Yes, it was a biblical church! It was founded by the apostle Paul himself. And though he saw their faults, he thought very highly of these Christians. He addressed them in his letter, "To the church of God at Corinth, to the saints..."(1Co 1:2). And this is supposed to be a church of God? Was the word "saints" really appropriate for such people? Yes, Paul respected them highly!

### The church has faults

God has no interest in hiding faults. That is why such examples are openly written in the Bible. The majority of the biblical books were written because God was not pleased with His people. Thus, even the prophets of the Old Testament had to repeatedly criticize God's people and call them to repentance.

This was no better in New Testament times. It begins with Jesus often having to rebuke his disciples. And it ends with Jesus not always judging various churches well (Send-writes of Revelation).

## **A good dissatisfaction with the church**

God was always dissatisfied with His people. But he never gave up! It is the troublesome story of God with us people to this day.

If God is not pleased with His church, then I may be too. That keeps me from false complacency. Then I must become active and help out. Because the church is not supposed to stay the way it is. It should become more beautiful! It is to be more like Jesus!

## **The Search for the Perfect Church**

It is natural for us to seek the perfect church. Some get their minds stuck on the early Christians, "Those were the days! A church like Jerusalem is what we should have."

Really? But my Bible says it a little differently. True, the book of Acts describes a good beginning. But soon we find the first deception, which God punishes with death (Acts 5). One chapter later we hear about tensions and grumbling in the church. The food was distributed unjustly. The church had to be organized differently. Later the Jewish Christians argued vehemently with Peter because he had gone to the Gentiles (Acts 11). And then the church was obviously surprised that God answered prayers and Peter was standing at the door (Acts 12). Heroes of the faith? - hardly! Or should I still give the example where missionaries quarreled so much that they had to separate (Acts 15). The Bible does not paint an ideal picture of the early church.

Despite this, Christians throughout history have searched for the ideal church. Splits occurred and new churches sprang up. But soon they realized: The church is already flawed again! New divisions followed. But what is the problem?

## **I am the problem**

I am not without faults after all! The better I know myself, the more clearly I see my flaws. This is even more true when I look at myself in the mirror of the Bible. Only those who do not know themselves think differently.

Even if the ideal church existed, it wouldn't be once I was in it. The first mistake of that community would be myself! This reflection makes me think - and makes me merciful-hearted towards the weaknesses of others.

## **JESUS LOVES THE COMMUNITY THEREFORE**

Jesus never had any illusions. He knows me and he knows the church. Yet he came into the world and started the church. And he loves her more than anything! For it is for her that he gave his life.

Should I say no to the church when Jesus says yes to it? Should I reject the other person when Jesus loves him despite his faults and has accepted him? From there the word in Romans 15:7 becomes understandable: *"Accept one another, just as Christ accepted us for the glory of God."*

## **LOVE TAKING, WITHOUT ASKING FOR THE QUALITIES OF THE OTHER!**

### **One bear another's burden**

We are not only to accept one another, but to share one another's burdens. This text is closely related to mistakes that happen in the church (Gal. 6:1,2). So when I see weaknesses, that is also my problem. I want to lovingly help and work on it. Because I love Jesus and His church! I will not tear down, but build.

## "Nothing is going on in the church!" - What should I do?

First, there is the question of whether this is real, or whether I just see it that way. Because even though I am a JS- leader, my opinion is not yet the measure of all things. Can it be that I pay too little attention to other things? Because older people also have different needs and the community consists of young and old. Can I expect understanding from older people for the youth group, if I don't have it the other way round? And where is my contribution to the advancement of the congregation - except in the Jungschar work. Yes, I know the argument: "I'm doing Jungschar, that's all I have time for." But part of my work in the youth group is to cultivate relationships with the whole congregation. In doing so, I make an important contribution. Together with a lot of patience and prayer, this can enliven the congregation.

## Jesus had something in mind when he planted the church

I belong to the church! Jesus was thinking something when he started it. It is not the work of man. I want to keep reminding myself of that. And he has placed me in this "my" church to fill my place.

Questions:

1. Are you satisfied with your church? Why (not)?
2. what should change?
3. how could you help with that?

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### Source reference:

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