

## Me and the community



The search for the perfect community

### Once upon a time ...

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

What arguments there were! Everyone knew better. And then there were the various leaders. They had their loyal followers and everyone wanted to be the biggest. That's how they wore each other out. The community was in danger of being completely torn apart.

It was no secret, which is why I can talk about it openly. Christians from this church went to the brothel and argued: "What's the big deal - we're free!". I know an even worse example. One man had an intimate relationship with his father's second wife. That was a disgrace! The others who didn't belong to the congregation also saw it that way.

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

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

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

### The church has faults

God has no interest in concealing faults. That is why such examples are openly recorded in the Bible. The majority of biblical books were written because God was not happy with his people. Even the prophets of the Old Testament had to repeatedly criticize God's people and call them to repentance.

It was no better at the time of the New Testament. It began with the fact that Jesus often had to rebuke his disciples. And it ends with Jesus' not always good judgment of various churches (epistle of Revelation).

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

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

If God is not satisfied with his church, then I can be too. This prevents me from false complacency. Then I have to become active and help. Because the church should not remain as it is. It should become more beautiful! It should be more like Jesus!

## **The search for the perfect church**

It is natural for us to look for the perfect church. Some people get stuck thinking about the first Christians: "Those were the days! We should have a church like the one in Jerusalem."

Really? But my Bible says something different. The Acts of the Apostles does describe a good start. But we soon find the first deception, which God punishes with death (Acts 5). One chapter later, there is talk of tension and grumbling in the church. The food was distributed unjustly. The church had to be organized differently. Later, the Jewish Christians argued violently with Peter because he had gone to the Gentiles (Acts 11). And then the church was obviously surprised that God answered prayers and Peter stood at the door (Acts 12). Heroes of faith? - hardly! Or should I mention the example where missionaries argued so much that they had to separate (Acts 15). The Bible does not paint an ideal picture of the early church.

Nevertheless, Christians have repeatedly searched for the ideal church throughout history. There were divisions and new churches were formed. But they soon realized: The church is already flawed again! New divisions followed. But what is the problem?

## **I am the problem**

I am not flawless! The better I know myself, the more clearly I see my mistakes. This is even more true when I look at myself in the mirror of the Bible. Only those who don't know themselves think differently.

Even if there was an ideal church, it would no longer exist as soon as I was in it. The first mistake this church would make would be me! This consideration makes me think - and makes me compassionate towards the weaknesses of others.

## **JESUS LOVES THE CHURCH ANYWAY**

Jesus never had any illusions. He knows me and he knows the church. Nevertheless, he came into the world and started the church. And he loves it more than anything! Because he gave his life for them.

Should I say no to the church when Jesus says yes to it? Should I reject the other person if Jesus loves him despite his faults and has accepted him? This makes the words in Romans 15:7 understandable: *"Accept one another as Christ has accepted us for God's glory."*

## **LOVE GIVES WITHOUT ASKING ABOUT THE QUALITIES OF THE OTHER!**

### **Bear one another's burdens**

We should not only accept one another, but also bear one another's burdens. This text is closely related to mistakes that happen in the church (Gal. 6:1+2). If I see weaknesses, then that is also my problem. I want to lovingly tackle them and work on them. Because I love Jesus and his church!

I will not tear down, but build.

**"Nothing is working in the church!"** - What should I do?

First of all, the question arises as to whether this is really the case or whether I just see it that way. Because even if I am a JS leader, my opinion is not the measure of all things. Could it be that I pay too little attention to other things? Because older people also have different needs and the congregation is made up of young and old. Can I expect older people to understand the Jungschar if I don't? And where is my contribution to promoting the community - apart from the youth group work? Yes, I know the argument: "I do Jungschar, that's all I have time for." But it's also essential that I foster relationships with the whole community. This is an important contribution. Together with a lot of patience and prayer, this can revitalize the church.

**Jesus had something in mind when he founded the church**

I belong to the church! Jesus had something in mind when he founded it. It is not the work of man. I always want to keep that in mind. And he has placed me in this "my" church so that I can fill my place.

Questions:

1. Are you happy with your church? Why (not)?
2. What should change?
3. how could you help?

1 Ich und die Gemeinde

## References:

**Contents:** Annual focus 1993 "Community", Peter Blaser, Siegfried Nüesch, Martin Bihr, Hansruedi Tanner, Ueli Obrist, Johannes Wallmeroth, Peter Schulthess

**Drawings:** Andreas Vetterli

**copyright:** [www.besj.ch](http://www.besj.ch)

**Cover picture:** Clipart courtesy of the publisher buch+musik ejw-service gmbh, Stuttgart - [www.ejw-buch.de](http://www.ejw-buch.de)