



"The world is a fallen world because it has fallen away from the awareness that God is all in all."

—Alexander Schmemmann,
For the Life of the World

What are spiritual practices? The working definition we are using is actually an image—spiritual practices can be understood as a trellis that give structure and support to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Through intentional habits, we structure our time and orient our hearts toward Christ, interrupting our natural use of time and our heart's affection that often bends in on our selfish desires.

It is not our hope that you leave with a longer list of to-do's than you walked in with. Spiritual Practices are meant to create space for us to receive God's invitation to come to him and rest. (Matt. 11:28)

We are using the book [Liturgy of the Ordinary](#) by Tish Harrison Warren as a jumping off point. This week we are look at chapter 2.

Welcome + Psalm 121

Living as a Church Community

See the back of this page.

Consider + Discuss

1. The Bible uses many metaphors to describe the nature of the church. What we can learn from the metaphors about the nature of the church: Family + Household (Eph 2:11-22, Eph 3:14, 1 Tim 5:1-2), Bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-33), Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27), Temple + Priesthood (1 Peter 2:4-8), Branch + Vine (John:15:1-11), Pillar + Bulwark of Truth (1 Tim 3:15), and Crops (Matt 13:1-30, John 4:31-38)?
2. How do you observe the Gospel proclaimed, preserved, and displayed in and through your local church? What are the specific patterns you observe in the corporate life of your local church and of it's individual members that enable those goals?
3. Share with your table how life in your local church intersects with your weekly/monthly routine? What is one way you would like to see your regular life in the church expand or grow?

Sources

- ▶ [Liturgy of the Ordinary](#) (Chapter 9) by Tish Harrison Warren
- ▶ Systematic Theology (Chapter 44) by Wayne Grudem
- ▶ PCA Book of Church Order: <http://www.pcaac.org/resources/bco/>
- ▶ 9Marks: <https://www.9marks.org/>
- ▶ What is a Healthy Church? by Mark Dever

Review

What is one thing you want to remember from this morning?

Write it here:

What is one thing that you learned from this session that you want to live?

Write it here:

Closing Prayer

Living as a Church Community

Calling a Friend: Congregation and Community

What is the church?

“There is no merely private faith – everything we are and do as individuals affects the church community. Yet many believers of my generation are not sure what the church is for. Some have denigrated the need for it all together. We have produced a me-centered faith that would be foreign to most Christians throughout history. We have made a false gospel...” (Warren, 120)

Summary: An errant understanding of church can lead to lying about who God is and what he has done through the person and work of Jesus. So what can we understand?

What is the purpose of the church?

“The only reason we know anything at all about Jesus is because his disciples told their friends, neighbors, and enemies about him, the apostles preached and wrote down his teaching and stories about him, and believers have carried his message everywhere they’ve gone in each generation.” (Warren, 119)

The church has something to say – it has a message to communicate. One way to summarize the church’s mission is to say that it,

- “The Proclaims the Gospel (Matt 28:18-20, 2 Tim 2:15);
- Preserves the Gospel (1 Tim 3:15, 1 Tim 3-4, 2 Tim 1:13, Titus 1:9) and;
- Displays the Gospel (Eph 3:10, 1 Cor 12:12-26).

The church accomplishes these objectives through repeated and regular practices and patterns

- “The ordinances established by Christ, the Head, in His Church are prayer; singing praises; reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God; administering the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; public solemn fasting and thanksgiving; catechizing; making offerings for the relief of the poor and for other pious uses; and exercising discipline; the taking of solemn vows, and the ordination to sacred office” (PCA Book of Church Order, Section 4-4)
- God wants his people to be known and to be marked-off in order to demonstrate to watching world who he is, what he’s like, and what he has done and promises to do through the finished work of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through regular gathering, Gospel preaching, affirmation and oversight, and the administration of the sacraments.

What does it mean to live as the church?

“It’s easy for the church to exist only in our mind as an abstract ideal... But our love for the church universal is worked out in the hard pews (or folding chairs) of our particular, local congregation... It is the basic unit of Christian community and the place where we encounter God in Word and sacrament. The body of Christ – ancient, global, catholic – is only known, loved, and served through the gritty reality of our local context.” (Warren, 124)

- Christians are characteristically committed and joined to a specific local church. The church takes responsibility for the Christian and the Christian takes responsibility for the church. In today’s language, we might call this church membership (Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 John 3:14-17)
- But what does this look like in practice? While the context may vary, the general patterns should be entirely ordinary. Consider the following (non-exhaustive list): Attend regularly, Prioritize church ministry and fellowship, Pray for the church and its members, Pursue one another in relationship, Be transparent in relationships, Submit to church leadership, Promote unity in the church, Support the church financially, Use one’s spiritual gifts to encourage the church.