## Think You Don't Need a Church to Know Jesus? Think Again

Many people think they don't need a church to know Jesus. It's actually the exact opposite: To know Jesus, we need a church.

During the summer at one of our Summit campuses, an Afghan woman—I'll call her Hadiya—showed up to VBS and, with a very limited vocabulary, let the staff know she was there for her 5-year-old to attend the event. She opened up her phone and showed them a picture of a lady who she called Amanda and said that this lady invited her while she was at the park. Hadiya had wanted to come because she'd heard of the church before.

Meanwhile, a volunteer overheard this woman struggling through English and asked on a whim if she spoke Urdu. (Not everyone in Afghanistan speaks Urdu, so this was a shot in the dark.)

Turns out, Hadiya is a native Urdu speaker. And this member happens to be fluent in Urdu, too. So she got Hadiya's name and helped her son get dropped off every day of VBS.

One night at VBS, Hadiya was walking with this member and saw another woman checking her kids in. Hadiya got really excited, went up, and hugged her. She then told our Urdu-speaking member that this lady was in line behind her at a thrift store a few months before. She had offered to pay for the pile of clothes Hadiya was buying for her kids.

Hadiya asked the question that had been on her mind since that day in the thrift store: "Why did you buy my clothes for me?" To which this member responded by explaining the gospel. God has been so gracious to me, and he expects me to respond by treating others the same way.

Hadiya said, "That actually sounds familiar. When I first moved to the United States as a refugee, some people helped me move in. They said the gospel was the reason they were helping, too."

Turns out, that group of volunteers was also from The Summit Church.

So, to review: A Summit small group moved Hadiya and her family into their apartment when they first came to the U.S.; a Summit member randomly bought Hadiya's kids clothes at the thrift store; a different Summit member invited her to VBS; and (to take the cake) a Summit member spoke her language when she arrived.

I don't tell that story to pat our church on the back. I'll bet if I sat down with Hadiya, I'd discover another dozen Christians from other churches in her story.

The point isn't about how great any one church is. The point is that God uses his church to reach people. We need each other. We are, all of us, incomplete, insufficient for life—at least for what God wants from our lives—without deep and meaningful involvement in the church.

## We Need a Church to Know Jesus

This is why, in Romans 12:5, Paul says, "We who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another" (CSB).

Paul's favorite analogy for the church is a body, and it's pretty brilliant, because—think about it—how does the body take care of itself? Through other members of the body. When my stomach feels hungry, it sends a message to the brain: "Feed me." My brain does not magically make food materialize; it sends a message to my feet: "Take J.D. somewhere he can get something to eat." My feet carry me to the refrigerator, and then my brain tells my hand to grab the food and my mouth to chew the food.

All of these things are in the process of taking care of the stomach's need for food. In the same way, Paul says, when God wants to do something in your life, he uses another member of the body. If he wants to reach an Afghan refugee, he uses an army of church members.

And if he wants to minister to you, he'll do the same.

What, then, if you separate yourself from intimate connection with the body? Not smart. You see, in pushing away God's body, you're pushing away the very means by which God would help you.

I imagine countless American Christians crying out to God, something like, "Oh, God, I feel so lost. Why don't you just guide me?"

To which God replies, "Um, hello? You cut yourself off from my body, the instrument I use to execute my will in the world. You've cut yourself off from me."

If you think you don't need a church to know Jesus, then you don't understand how the body works. The body only works when it is connected. We are interdependent, and when God wants to minister to one member of the body he does so through other members of the body.

The most valuable earthly gift God has given to me outside of my wife is the community of the church. There are times God raises up somebody at just the right moment to speak a word of encouragement, warning, or guidance, to give a gift of love, to minister to my family and me.

I learn more about God from being part of the body than I did from seminary. Now, I love seminary. But the working together of the body of Christ is the way God reveals himself in our lives and how he does his greatest work in the world.

The best way to see this at work is to invest your life in the church. Don't just show up; show off in the way you give yourself away for God's family and the people it serves.

Until you do, you will never really know Jesus.



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