

Resist The Exist Part 6

Contributor or Consumer?

Romans 12:13

Memory Verses: 1 Peter 4:10

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

What is existence? Time plus matter, right? Most scientists say that the Earth has existed for over 4.5 billion years. Those same scientists also say that life has only existed on the Earth for 3.5 billion years. That means for almost 1 billion years... the Earth simply existed without any living things on it. According to the white coats for 1 billion years the Earth existed but it was not alive and did not support any life. Some may call that a boring existence.

Did you know that there is a male angler fish? Well if there is a female there must be a male. You've all seen the Female angler fish made famous in movies like finding Nemo. They glow, have a lamp that they hold in front of their face, they have extremely long spiny teeth, and look like a swimming nightmare. Pretty awesome right? But did you know that up until recently they couldn't find a male angler fish? They knew they had to exist but no one had ever seen them. Then recently these poor animals were discovered. They are 1/20th the size of the females, they have no teeth, or lamp, or glow... they can barely swim and they can barely find their own food. Not awesome. If by some chance they are able to find enough food to live long enough, which still won't be very long, they may be able to find a female angler fish, but once they do they begin to dissolve and are then absorbed into the skin of the female. They exist to be grossly absorbed by the female like in the horror movie the blob. Some may call that a miserable existence.

No thank you. There's nothing great about simply existing... it's boring, and it's miserable. William Wallace in the movie Braveheart said, "All men die, not all men really live." He could have just as easily said; "all men exist, not all men really live." I'll take really living over simply existing any day. And you should too. Especially if you are a Christian.

For the past five weeks we've been talking about what it looks like to simply exist as a believer. What it means to choose to run out the clock instead of being the church. What it means to go through the motions of ministry with mediocrity, choosing to coast in neutral while you wait for the train to heaven. We look at the American Church and we see thousands of Christians trying to eek out a religious existence without making an impact on the world... and we recognize that this is not our calling or our mission, that we were made for something greater than simply existing. And so we come to this realization... we must resist the

exist.

And so, for the past 5 weeks we've been looking at **Romans 12:9-13** as our guide to help us in our quest to resist the exist. Let's read that passage again. We see 5 exhortations that will help us resist the exist. Hold Fast! Hold fast to good, and hate evil. Outdo! Outdo one another in love by loving others authentically, like family, like royalty. Remain! Remain passionate for the Lord in ministry, and in discipleship. And, Persevere... wait on the Lord with patience, trusting that he will come through as he always has.

This week we are going to focus on **verse 13** and the last exhortation. Our keyword here is Contribute! Hold Fast, Outdo, Remain, Persevere, and Contribute. To Contribute means to add to the value of, give to, be a part of, and work together with. It is impossible to simply exist and also contribute. Those who resist the exist contribute while those who simply exist consume.

We have a pandemic in the American church today and it's not Covid... it's Consumerism. In existing we've become a people who ask not what we can do for our God or our Church but ask what our God or our Church can do for us. In our apathetic attempt to run out the clock the only thing we've aspired to... the only thing that arouses us out of our religious stupor is when we become the center of attention. When others serve us, when we are entertained, when we are given special preference... then we'll show up. But when we are called upon to serve others, minister on a team, or weather shaky or difficult times... well that doesn't interest us in the slightest. It's unfortunate but the church in America has become a consumer driven industry, where we attempt to produce a quality product to lure new members who fill seats. We've catered to consumers for years and now we shouldn't be surprised when our churches are filled with them.

We must shift our focus and change our mentality. **God doesn't desire a church filled with people waiting to be blessed... he's looking for a church filled with people who are saying, how can I be a blessing.**

In order to resist the exist we must stop being consumers and start being contributors. Our passage this morning shows us two ways.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first is; you... **Contribute By Serving Your Church Family.** Notice it says; "the saints." "Saints" means Christians, believers, those who belong to your local church. So we contribute by serving our church family; those we are in partnership with. We use the term "partnership" deliberately here at Stone Creek Church. We aren't members of this church like I'm a member of Planet Fitness... pay my dues each month, come and go as I please, no real growth... kinda pointless. No, we are covenant partners because we agree to partner together to accomplish the vision of our church. This means we share the work and we share the vision. It's a team effort where we all have a say in the process.

Customers are the exact opposite of partners. Customers are consumers. Customers say... you make a product... I will decide if I want to buy it. Partners say... you cast a vision and I will join in the fight with you. Customers follow a boss / worker model where the boss gives all the vision and the church does all the work. Customers follow an owner / customer model where the owner creates all the vision and does all the work while the church simply exists to consume. Neither of these models are biblical. A partnership model says we are in this together so we all share the vision and we all share the work. **2 Cor 9:7** says that we should not contribute reluctantly or under compulsion but with a pure heart. We aren't customers, we aren't consumers, we are partners.

If you are a part of Stone Creek Church then you've made a commitment to contribute. Partners are contributors. When you became a partner with Stone Creek Church you agreed to contribute in three ways. You agreed to contribute your tithes and offerings. Meaning, it takes an amount to run this ministry. We just voted and agreed on the 2021 budget and realized that to do what God has called us to this next year we will need to bring in around \$150,000. This isn't us begging for money. I don't do that. This is us saying, if you believe in what God wants to do through this church then you should support the ministry. Simple and plain. It takes a dollar amount to do this work... if you believe in it you will support it.

You agreed to contribute your time in fellowship and discipleship. You agreed that when the church meets together whether it be in this building or in a home or for a prayer meeting outside around a camp fire that you would make it a priority. We agree with **Hebrews 10:25** that we should not neglect the assembly of the saints.

And you agreed to contribute your talents to build up the body and serve where needed. There are many areas to serve. As a partner you can't sit on the sidelines. You must get involved.

And this isn't one sided. Remember, this is a partnership. When you agree to be a partner with us at Stone Creek you have a leadership team that cares about you and your opinions. If you have something to say or a suggestion about ministry, we are available, approachable, and excited to hear you. If you partner with us you have a team committed to your spiritual growth. We are dedicated to helping you in your discipleship journey. If you partner with us you have a church who will have your back through thick and thin. We don't let you slip away. We won't let you become a distant memory. We care about you and when you go through tough times we will be there for you.

But... that also means you must do your part. We contribute to the vision together, we do the work of ministry together. **We all must do our part - that's why it's called partnership**

So where specifically can you serve or contribute at Stone Creek

Church? **1 Peter 4:10-11** tells us that each of us should use our gift in an area that fits our gifts. Each of us have a talent that can fill the gap. So, you can contribute by worshipping with the church on Sunday's. Not just online. We need you here because there's something special about hearing the word together and praying together and singing together. And, we don't just come... when we come we contribute. We give, pray, sing, worship. We don't sit back and watch the show.

We contribute by joining a small group. Even during Covid we can join a small group, if for nothing else, for the socially distanced community. To know there are people praying for you, texting you, caring for you. Small group is where you serve and love one another personally, and where you grow spiritually the most.

We contribute by joining a team or board. There are plenty of teams to serve on and they all need your help. If you are not currently on a team we need you to join one. Here are some possible teams you may fit on. The missions team; where you can pray for, pray with, and keep track of our missionaries and agencies and plan events that help serve them. The finance board; where you can help plan the yearly budget, and help decide what funds we have to support ministries. The trustees & grounds team; where you can help landscape, fix things, and develop the land of this ministry. The SC kids team; where you can be a children's small group leader / teacher who helps disciple our kids into men and women of God. The praise team & tech & media team; where you can help lead worship or help run the mother ship in the back there. Or the first impressions team; where you can help greet, park, usher, set up coffee, and make sure people feel welcomed at our church. All of these are so important... and there is a place for you to serve.

The point is as Christians we are called to more than simply existing and the way we do more than existing is by contributing to the ministry of our local church body. We can't be a church where we simply come and expect to be entertained and served. We can't be consumers who simply exist.

God doesn't desire a church filled with people waiting to be blessed... he's looking for a church filled with people who are saying, how can I be a blessing.

The second way you contribute is... you **Contribute By Caring For Your Community.** The verse says seek to show. According to the original Greek this phrase means run fast towards and practice intensely. This isn't a carefree lazy showing. This is an active desire which runs to serve. The word hospitality in the original greek means; care towards strangers. Put this together... we actively run towards serving and caring for the strangers in our community. We've talked about loving strangers like family and royalty. This verse speaks to the actions of that love in how we care for them. We must contribute to the cause of Christ and reject the temptation to

exist by caring for the strangers in our community. Look... **we don't lazily or haphazardly serve... we run to serve, as we should be in the practice of doing**. Are you in the practice of serving the strangers in your neighborhood? In your community? Get this... the opposite of merely existing as a consumer is contributing to the well being of neighbors, co-workers, and class mates.

We contribute to the care of our community by serving sacrificially and benevolently. We must give to meet their needs. We must give them food, help pay their bills, tutor their children, coach their children, fix their homes, etc... We must continue to do community appreciations like easter egg hunts and trunk or treats to show them we love them.

We contribute to the care of our community by building strong lasting relationships with them. We must each adopt a needy family and make them part of our family. We must start leading community bible studies with people who don't attend our church and may not know Christ. We need to plan and have neighborhood cookouts and block parties to show our neighbors that it's not about us... it's about them.

We contribute to the care of our community by sharing the gospel with them when given the opportunity in natural and authentic settings. We don't do drive by evangelism... we earn the right to have these conversations in an unthreatening way. **God doesn't desire a church filled with people waiting to be blessed... he's looking for a church filled with people who are saying, how can I be a blessing.**

Application

Too few Christians contribute to their church or to their community. They are merely existing as consumers waiting to be blessed. We can't allow this as it is unbiblical and unworthy of our great God. Our great God who loved us when we were at our lowest, served us even though we were his enemies, died for us on the cross and rose again to give us new life. No one could ever accuse Christ of being a consumer, rather he was the greatest contributor the world has ever known. How can we call ourselves Christians and do any less? No we are not consumers simply existing, simply taking up space and wasting our lives. We will resist the exist at every turn. We will serve our church family and we will show care to our community... til the day we die.

Because... **God doesn't desire a church filled with people waiting to be blessed... he's looking for a church filled with people who are saying, how can I be a blessing**

Conclusion

When I think of contributing I think of those who have made great contributions to humanity, other than our Lord Jesus of course. I think of Sir Isaac Newton who's contributions include the law of gravity and the

three laws of motion which have laid the groundwork for all modern mechanics. I think of Johannes Gutenberg who created the printing press, paving the way for the mass production of all printed materials. I think of Christopher Columbus who among other things is best known for discovering America and paving the way for exploration and colonization of the western hemisphere. I think of Albert Einstein and the theory of relativity. I think of Thomas Edison and the invention of the light bulb. I think of Henry Ford and the automobile and assembly line. I think of Marie Curie and the discovery of radioactivity of which we treat most forms of cancer. I think of George Washington and the revolutionary war and the first presidency. I think of Abe Lincoln and the emancipation proclamation. I think of Martin Luther and the reformation. I think of Martin Luther King Jr and civil rights. And, I think of the Apostle Paul and the early church, which without we wouldn't be here this morning. In light of all these great people... it is true that we may never make contributions as equally impactful as these... but we can still make a contribution. God has created you to make a contribution in the grand scheme of things... I wonder what mine will be. I wonder what yours will be. We'll never know unless we stop being consumers. Unless we resist the exist.