

## What's The Deal At Stone Creek Church Part 15

Kingdom Focus

*1 Corinthians 3:4-9*

*Memory Verses: 1 Corinthians 3:7*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

What's the deal at Stone Creek Church? For the past 14 weeks we've been answering that question by exploring our vision statement:

**Depending on Christ we will reach our world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed.** Our vision statement leads us to our 6 core values; a reliance on the Word, constant prayer, authentic worship, relational outreach, strategic missions, and intentional discipleship. This is our plan for reaching the world, and seeing lives transformed.

For 14 weeks we've been building a foundation by which this church seeks to do what God has called us to do in depending, reaching, and being transformed. This includes the disciplines of Biblical Teaching & Preaching, the Christ Focused Ordinances of Communion & Baptism, Family-like Fellowship & Unity, Gracious Giving, Servant Leadership, Orthodox Beliefs, Accountability & Church Discipline, and as David showed us last week, Covenant Partnership! When we come together as a faith family, covenanting with one another and partnering with one another for the sake of God's glory, we can see some pretty incredible things happen here! In fact, I truly believe we can see a spark ignited here that leads to revival in Danville, Pittsylvania county, and beyond. It's time to see the kingdom of God revealed before our very eyes, here and now, in the Stone Creek community, in the Mt. Hermon area, in Chatham, in Kentuck, in Blairs, in Dry Fork, in Providence, North Carolina, and in the city of Danville, VA. And as far as we are concerned it all starts with the movement of God right here with us at Stone Creek Church!

The kingdom of God... right here! When many of us think of the Kingdom of God we often think of Heaven or some time after this life like the millennial reign on a new Earth. But I want you to notice what the Bible teaches us about the Kingdom of God. Look at **Luke 17:20-21**. Did you get that? The kingdom of God is already here in the midst of us! How? How is the kingdom of God already here? You know the answer to that question. The kingdom of God isn't a place, it's a person. It's Jesus Christ and the spiritual reality of being in Him. Consider **1 Corinthians 4:20** which says that the kingdom consists of power. If that's the case, then... **The kingdom is beyond what we can describe. Its the power of a triune God; His wrath satisfied through the death and resurrection of himself, the eternal life of his followers and the relationship they will experience with him forever, and the past, present, and future**

**sovereign, never-ending reign over the universe, which he himself has created and saved.**

God's kingdom has never been absent nor has it ever ended. But, we have for a very long time been absent from it. In the beginning God created the world and thus His kingdom was expanded to Earth and those who dwelt on the Earth. But just as soon as his kingdom came to us, we rejected it. The entire Old Testament is the story of humanity trying to once again find access to the kingdom. Then, 2000 years ago God sent his one and only son to us to be the doorway into the kingdom. Now, all we must do is enter in through Christ. By placing our faith and trust in Christ we have once again gained access to the kingdom of Heaven!

The kingdom is here! And now it is our job as individual believers and as Stone Creek Church, to tell the rest of the world how to gain access to it through our Lord and Savior Jesus.

**But there's something within the American church that wars against this; which wars against the kingdom of God. It's the desire of wayward men to place the advancement of God's kingdom second to the advancement of their own kingdoms. Unfortunately we see this in churches all the time don't we. We see it on roadside billboards advertising that their church is better than other churches in the area. We see it on giant banners promoting a man and his ministry over the ministry of God. We see it in sermons promoting health, wealth, and prosperity over the blessings of transformation and suffering. We see it when a man who claims to be a pastor gets on television and preaches self help motivational God is love sermons but forgets to mention sin and repentance. And we see it on every street that has one, two, even three churches within walking distance to one another and yet rather than combining their efforts to share the love of Christ with their community they are in competition with one another. Instead of the pastors praying together and loving on one another, they gossip about one another and run one another down. Their main pursuit has become gaining more marketshare. They want to see their "churches" become great so that their name becomes great and all the while the world sees us acting like spoiled brats running Jesus' name through the mud! It's disgusting!**

We haven't been called to build the kingdom of Stone Creek Church, or the kingdom of Shevi Sloane... how dare we. We've been called to build the kingdom of God! People ask me a lot why I promote other churches in our community and have close relationships with many of the pastors in our community. They ask me like, it's strange to do that. Listen, that shouldn't be strange... it should be the norm! If we are brothers in Christ, laboring for the same thing, doing everything in our being to see people come to know Christ and glorify God... shouldn't we be doing it together?

Turn over with me to **1 Corinthians 3:4-9** and let's examine this passage together this morning. You see here that we aren't supposed to be promoting our own ministries and building our own kingdoms... we are

supposed to be building God's kingdom together. As individual kingdoms, we are nothing, but together we are building something powerful, something amazing! This morning I want to briefly walk through this passage and see what it means for Stone Creek Church to be about more than just our ministry here, but to be building God's kingdom with other churches. The main point this morning is simply this... **The Pursuit Of All Other Kingdom's Must Cease In The Pursuit Of God's Kingdom.**

### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see here is that... **Building The Kingdom Of God Takes Following God Over Men or their Ministries.** Look again at **vs.4-5**. When we are being territorial over our ministries Paul says that we are acting as merely human. You may ask, is there any other way to act? We are humans aren't we? And yes, that is the case, we are humans. But as Christians we are actually called to be more and equipped to be more than Humans because we have been given the Holy Spirit. We are more than humans in Christ because we have been gifted the supernatural power of God himself living inside our souls. This power allows us to now resist the draw of temptation and break free from the slavery of sin. Where as once we could not, now we have the ability through the spirit to overcome temptation and resist sin. Look at what **Romans 8:8-10** says; you are not of the flesh but of the Spirit which dwells in you and makes you alive in righteousness.

Through the Spirit we are now more than human and can overcome every sin – even the sin of idolatry. Listen, we are not immune to the temptation of idolatry. Did you know that one of the greatest dangers a strong Christian faces is the sin of idolizing ones pastor or church. Now, of course there is nothing wrong with loving your pastor or church and having a pride in knowing that they are biblically steadfast, however we cannot allow that pride to take our focus off of God as our one true spiritual leader. We must not ever allow our pastor or church to become an idol. I don't necessarily think that our church is in danger of this but I have seen it many times. I've heard Christians make statements like; "I don't trust other pastors or churches because they don't teach the truth" or "our church is the only place to hear real truth." Now, I'm sure that their church is probably a good church, but how arrogant and naive do you have to be to think your church is the only one that is good. That's the language of cults. I see it in the way good meaning Christians succumb to the draw of celebrity pastors. They start following a man, and before they know it they become blind to his wrong teachings or the flaws of his church. Why? Because they have become enamored by his persona and become fans of him more than the God he supposedly proclaims. Listen, anytime a man or his ministry becomes

more famous to his followers than the God he supposedly promotes there is a big problem.

The cure to idolizing ones own ministry, church, or pastor is to simply keep our eyes on the kingdom of God. Paul is telling us here that when we pick and choose one ministry over the other we are not exercising the power of the Spirit living in us. We must rise above. Simply put; **it is beyond human, meaning it is spiritually healthy and mature, to examine the preaching and teaching of various ministries or pastors, and if they prove to be faithfully preaching biblical doctrine, to see them as partners in building God's kingdom and not competition.** Did you get that? One of the ways we prove that the Spirit of God is in us is to stop doing ministry in our silos and cooperate with one another.

Why is this important? Because Paul tells us that that our pastors and our churches are merely assigned servants. **Pastors and the churches they lead are merely servants who are assigned by God in the service of a larger kingdom.** It's not "our church" it's our assignment. How can we brag about what we've done, when we've merely be assigned to this ministry by God himself. Each church serves the community by leading them to Christ and serves the church by shepherding them in biblical truth. The bottom line; **ministries and the men who lead them are mere tools used to build God's kingdom.** So why build alone? We rise above our humanity when through the Spirit of God we choose to seek His Kingdom above ours by partnering with other servants. **The Pursuit Of All Other Kingdom's Must Cease In The Pursuit Of God's Kingdom.**

Secondly we must see that... **Building The Kingdom Of God Means Recognizing That God Doesn't Need Us And Yet Allows Us To Play A Part.** Look again at the next two verses; **vs.6-7**. Here we notice that it was God who allowed them to serve. He allowed Paul to serve as a planter or an evangelist, and he allowed Apollos to serve as a waterer or a disciple maker. But in the grand scheme of the kingdom of God these men and their ministries are nothing.

How can we say this? Apollos is mentioned as one of the early church's greatest leaders. Paul is the greatest missionary, pastor, and writer of the New Testament, sans Christ. How in the world can we say that they are nothing? Simple. Because God didn't need them. In the end the only one who was needed to bring the growth was God himself. Only God is anything, because apart from him no salvation or transformation is possible. God brings the growth.

But here's the beautiful thing; even though God doesn't need us He wants us. He wants us to be a part of his Kingdom work. He wants us to water and plant as a part of the process of building his kingdom. Look at **Acts 17:24-27** which breaks this process down for us in greater detail. First, it tells us that God doesn't live in our church buildings exclusively. Secondly,

it makes it clear that God doesn't need our ministries to further his agenda. Thirdly, it tells us that even though God doesn't need us he created us and determined our lives. Fourthly, He hopes that everyone would seek him and find him and join him in building his kingdom.

In light of the loving benevolence of God to allow us to be a part of His kingdom, If I may, I would like to offer some sobering rebukes. Pastor, stop thinking that you are a big shot General in the army of God and without you at the helm, the kingdom of God will fall... it won't! God doesn't need you! Church, stop thinking you are the exclusive dwelling place of God and that if it weren't for your ministry the entire agenda of God in your community would collapse... it won't! God doesn't need you! Individual believer, stop thinking that what you have done for God, how much you give, how much time you volunteer, is necessary for God to accomplish his goals here... it's not! God doesn't need you! But he does want you! **Matthew 16:18** reminds us that He will build his kingdom and the gates of hell will not stand against it, but even within that he has a place for you to fight. **God wants planters, waterers, and worshippers to reveal his glory in the world and his glory in us**. But make no mistake, even if you don't fight in His army, God's kingdom will still prevail. Again, what a privilege it is to be a part of God's kingdom. **The Pursuit Of All Other Kingdom's Must Cease In The Pursuit Of God's Kingdom.**

Lastly, we need to see that... **Building The Kingdom Of God Takes Collaboration**. Look again at the last two verses here; **vs.8-9**. The ministries that plant and the ministries that water are not separate ministries in God's eyes, they are one. Think about the state of the church in Paul's day. At the time of this writing there were not different churches or denominations spread throughout the city of Corinth, rather the churches was separated by the city they were in, thus the Church at Corinth or the Church at Antioch or the Church at Jerusalem. Now, imagine that if this tradition had continued we wouldn't even be Stone Creek Church, rather we would be a house cell of the church at Danville. Maybe that's the way God wants it. **Perhaps when God sees us and other churches like us who hold to biblical orthodoxy, regardless of our nuances, preferences, and traditions, he sees one unified church.**

Two things here. One, each individual church is still held accountable for the way they conduct themselves – they will receive wages according to their labor. But, two, they are also to see themselves as one with or in partnership with other churches for the purpose of building the kingdom of God. We are fellows... meaning we should have fellowship with one another as we work towards building God's kingdom together. We, together with the other churches in our community, are God's field. The collaboration of our church with other churches comprises a larger harvests force and a people that can more easily be

cultivated for God's glory. And, we are God's building. We aren't one church building, rather together we are one building for the purpose of building God's kingdom. Rather than saying that Stone Creek is God's house, it would be more accurate to recognize the collaboration of Danville churches as the building of God.

If it isn't clear yet... God's kingdom isn't about individual ministries siloed from one another fighting for their own territory... God's kingdom is about all of us working together to see revival in our community. As the old saying goes... **we can go faster alone, but we can go farther together.** Let's go together. **The Pursuit Of All Other Kingdom's Must Cease In The Pursuit Of God's Kingdom**

### Application

So, let's recap. It is clear that God isn't okay with us using the name of Christ to build our own kingdoms for our own glory. It is also clear that God doesn't even need us to build his kingdom, yet he wants us to be a part of it. And lastly, it should be clear that God wants us to collaborate with other churches and ministries in order to build the kingdom together. **could it be that it is the unity of churches that reveals the kingdom of God more so than anything else.**

So how does this look practically in our church? I'm glad you asked. Here at Stone Creek Church we are committed to programs like Engage Danville where we partner with other churches to see God's love promoted in our city. We are committed to our local network within the SBCV where we hear ideas and ways we can work together with other churches. We are committed to serving and worshipping with other churches in our area. And hopefully we can eventually help other churches in this area revitalize and replant as God has helped us do over the past 5 years.

### Conclusion

Today we have representatives of a few of the churches in our area who we collaborate with and hope to continue to partner with to build the kingdom. These churches partner with us in youth ministry programs, worship ministries, and small group training. They have housed our offices, gone through the revitalization process with us, and have done worship services together. And so we want to thank them and thank God for them as we pray for their ministries and our partnership going forward. It's not about our kingdom, it's only about God's. **The Pursuit Of All Other Kingdom's Must Cease In The Pursuit Of God's Kingdom.**