

## A Church without Walls or Boundaries

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August 12, 2013

This week Pastor Heather is visiting family in England. Our Church Leadership Intern, Teresa Ferrete, delivered a great message yesterday about the need for redefining church. The young adult technical and music teams also did a great job in support of our Sunday Celebration in Pastor Heather's absence.

### What's Your Concept of Church?



People have a variety of experiences and concepts about “church” and historically the buildings we designate as places of worship conjure up certain themes in our minds. Teresa's message was leading us to consider whether our concepts about church are limiting to God or allowing God to work freely in the world. Some of the words we might associate with a church or place of worship are comforting, but perhaps at the same time confining:

- God's home
- Sanctuary
- Safe haven, safe harbor or refuge
- A place of protection or hiding place
- A place of peace or quiet
- A pocket of grace in a troubled world

Teresa then spoke of her own experience growing up as a Unificationist where church was often held in non-traditional buildings such as a home, a school, a storefront or a hotel. She understood the meaning of church not in terms of a building or place, but as the people who are striving to be “Temples of God”. This is one of the fundamental ideas taught in the Divine Principle, yet we often forget who we are and slip back into the comfortable pattern of segregating “God time” to a certain day of the week.

### We Need a Fresh Perspective



*“It's a beautiful prison”*

Maybe God feels trapped in the Sanctuary. In the past people may have needed church walls for protection or safety, but that kind of safety has it's own confinement as illustrated in a short movie clip we watched from The Hunchback of Notre Dame. As much as we would not want to limit our experience of happiness and peace to a building, God also would not want our relationship with Him/Her to be limited by such walls.

God is invisible and beyond time and space. God is everywhere all the time; but perhaps we have to liberate God to feel welcome outside our concepts and comfort zone. Instead of viewing God as primarily our comforter, provider and caregiver, perhaps we need to allow God to be our partner in life. The one dearest to our heart with whom we share all of life's goodness.

### Going to Church Is Like Going to the Gym

There are still reasons to go to church because church is a place where we can learn about God, make good relationships and establish some spiritual practices. Physical practice is connected to spiritual practice in that whatever we do in our physical lifetime is either contributing to our spiritual development or not. Participating in church related activities is one way of focusing our attention on the internal or spiritual in the same way that going to the gym is a way of focusing on physical development and health.



You can join a gym but only make a halfhearted effort, not utilizing the trainers or equipment to their maximum potential. You can do the same with church, paying lip service to God but not maximizing the potential benefit you can get or give there.

Whether we're talking about the gym or the church it's not really the building or equipment that's important, it's your intention and how much effort you make toward the desired result.

If you have the motivation and desire you can get all the exercise you need without special clothes, equipment or a gym. Walking and many other exercises can be done without any accessories, but many of us are lacking in motivation and therefore we seek assistance and support. There's nothing wrong with that, as a matter of fact that's a step in the right direction. But the goal of a

good trainer would be to help you design a healthy lifestyle that you can eventually maintain without assistance.

That would be the goal of a good church too, to inspire, help and support you in developing a healthy spiritual lifestyle that you can eventually maintain without assistance. Church is like a gym for our spiritual heart and muscles. We need a holistic approach to God and our spiritual life just as we need a holistic approach to physical health.

### **Become a pocket of grace for God and others**

Every person strives to create happiness and a successful lifestyle but we often fall short of our own expectations. In a relationship with God we find grace for our imperfections and the joy that God infused in this beautiful world. As we develop our spiritual heart and ability to love others we can become a pocket of grace for others, a person through whom God can love others. This would be true liberation for God, to be able to give and receive love freely through people and not be confined to a building, place or time.