

## One Brick At A Time

Sometimes we get to thinking for ourselves, and adopt a key principle of the world. The church might do something we don't want it to do, or not do something we think is really important. So we don't go. We think of other options. Or we might even leave.

It is important to realize that the church is made up of living stones, and every one of them is important to the whole. The key to this thought is that the whole is the more important, and depends on our being faithful to Christ to be complete.

“Orthodox Church officials in Russia discovered in 2008 that one of their church buildings had disappeared. Poof—gone! The 200-year-old building northeast of Moscow had gone unused for a decade, but the Orthodox Church, which was experiencing growth, was considering reopening the church building, and that's when they discovered their building wasn't there.

They had to get to the bottom of this. After investigating the matter, the church officials did not blame aliens from outer space for the missing structure. Rather, they said the perpetrators were villagers from a nearby town, whom they said had taken and sold bricks from the building to a businessman. For each brick, the thieves received one ruble (about 4 cents).

This two-story church facility did not go from being a building to not being a building in one bulldozing stroke. Rather, the bricks were apparently chiseled out one by one by lots of people.” ~Preaching Today

In the same way, some churches—built not of bricks but of "living stones," that is of Christians—are not reduced in one fatal stroke but rather by Christians one by one choosing not to be involved.

Over the years I've seen my fair share of people going away. This is a sad, but sometimes necessary part of being the church. We have to say goodbye to people we have loved and worked with for sometimes many years.

But my joy in the church has been to also see the opposite of this tragic story happen. When people find their place in a loving, growing congregation, another brick is laid, and the church grows and loves even more.

When people visit, and then join in membership to be a part of that church, the bricks continue row after row as the church never stops being built, and has an infinite numbers of length, width, and height.

The real tragedy of the above story is that the church took so long to visit the sanctuary of that church, to check on its progress and stability, that it was long gone by the time they got there. This points up the need for regular times for the church to reach out to members just because they are the church.

Sometimes we think we have to great things all the time. We don't consider something successful unless it is big and grand and glorious to all who pass by.

But the reality is that the church, is built one brick at a time. Peter the apostle of our Lord writes to the church, "you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. I Peter 2:5

We must find the mix of humility and hard work which allow that spiritual house to be built with us as the solid and faithful bricks that God wants us to be. Too often we see the work of the church something quite ordinary. But it is much more than that.

"One day a traveler, walking along a lane, came across 3 stonecutters working in a quarry. Each was busy cutting a block of stone. Interested to find out what they were working on, he asked the first stonecutter what he was doing. "I am cutting a stone!" Still no wiser the traveler turned to the second stonecutter and asked him what he was doing. "I am cutting this block of stone to make sure that it's square, and its dimensions are uniform, so that it will fit exactly in its place in a wall." A bit closer to finding out what the stonecutters were working on but still unclear, the traveler turned to the third stonecutter. He seemed to be the happiest of the three and when asked what he was doing replied: "I am building a cathedral." ~ Charles Hanley

Cathedrals such as this one could take more than thirty or forty years to be built. Most of the builders would never see the end result of their labor.

We need cathedral thinkers in today's world, people who can think beyond their own lifetimes and see the grand things that God is building one brick at a time. A little love here, a touch of forgiveness there. We must think higher than our own desires and see the big picture of what God is in the midst of doing.

One brick at a time, we build a beautiful church. And God smiles with us as we finally realize what he is doing.