

Standing Strong and Filling Gaps

[1 Thessalonians 3:6-13](#)

Paul has invested so much in his church that he is burdened for the strength and faith of his people. We can take from his letter that we are to be a people connected to the local church in a way that pushes us to fill gaps and serve and love others well—both inside and outside of the church.

Application

1. Matt mentioned three ways that we do not remain strong: we get discouraged (expectations don't come through for us), distracted (chasing the world and immediate gratification), and overcome by sin (we like to dabble but Satan likes to dominate). Which of these do you struggle with the most and why?

If it is in the category of being overcome by sin, where are you dabbling and thinking that you are in control? Where can you instill boundaries and discipline in this area?

2. For whom do you earnestly pray like Paul does for his people—that you have invested in and felt so burdened by that you don't have to remember to pray for them? If no one comes to mind, why do you think that is?
3. The local church fills in gaps for us. Matt identified two gaps in our congregations: a Bible knowledge problem (not growing in knowledge of the Scriptures) and a conduct problem (e.g., letting our children be in charge of our home, cavalier and dismissive attitude toward alcohol, unkindness in marriage, redefining sexuality, etc.). How are these gaps related? Which do you see as a gap in your own life? What steps are you taking to put yourself in a position to be served by the local church in a way that fills those gaps?
4. We should be depleting ourselves to let God fill us back up. Are you looking for ways to deplete yourself to care for others? In what ways might you be hoarding good things or friendships and serving yourself?

5. We need to love other people outside the church, speaking into the culture and loving them while not affirming sin or beliefs that are untrue. How are you already loving others outside the church? What has been the most challenging part of doing this?

Key Points

- The church builds people and fixes people; if you have the choice, let the church build you instead of having to fix you because of the consequences of your sin.
- Even when you feel like no one is paying attention to you, people are aware of what you think and feel and you have an impact on them.
- Distraction—chasing the world for fulfillment in the moment—erodes your soul over time.
- We like to dabble, but Satan wants to dominate; establishing a boundary to stay away from something that can destroy you is not legalism.
- Two gaps we have as a church are that we do not know the Bible and we have a conduct problem.
- We should be so connected to the local church that our gaps are filled and we are depleting ourselves to love, serve, and care for others..
- We should manage our lives and resources based on the anticipation of the return of Jesus. If you knew for a fact that Jesus was coming tomorrow, you would be courageous, willing to sacrifice and serve, generous with your time, money, and words, and enduring of hardships and suffering.
- Leaning on the return of Jesus reshapes the way you think and act.

Scripture References

[Ephesians 4:11-12](#)

[Luke 12:37-40](#)