



Preface

From my earliest days of attending church, I can remember our pastor saying nearly every Sunday: 'Churches are like hospitals.' I've given this statement a great deal of thought throughout the years and have come to recognize the truth in it. Churches *are* communities appropriate for sick people. That having been said, no hospital anywhere grants admittance to people plagued with infirmities and then allows them to remain as they are. Such is not a hospital, but a *hospice*. The objective of a *hospital* is to identify the problem, diagnose its source, determine and administer the appropriate remedy, and then watch for transformation. Patients are not allowed to occupy a bed, refuse medication, and then justify their right to remain there. Why not? Because a hospital exists to make people better, not keep them the way they were when admitted.





Connected Christianity

Is this not also, in large part, the aim of Christian ministry? To make people healthy and strong? Vibrant and vital? Is it not the ambition of the gospel to make people increasingly more Christian? If so, then it must be understood there are certain issues so essential to the ongoing development and health of the Christian life that it is the God-given duty of gospel ministers to speak to them again and again. The subject before us falls precisely into this category. It is one indispensable to spiritual health. To neglect it will forever impede growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Consider now these words taken from the great high-priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus – from the chapter described by Martin Luther as ‘The Holy of Holies’ in all of the Word of God:

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth (John 17:17-19).

