

The Body of Christ

SECRET CHURCH

KNOW HIS WORD. KNOW HIS PERSECUTED
TM

Study Guide

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TM

For millions of believers around the world, faith in Christ and belief in the teachings of the Bible are not only discouraged, but actually dangerous.

KNOW HIS PERSECUTED.
KNOW HIS WORD.

Periodically, Secret Church gatherings are held to engage in an intense six-hour Bible study as we identify with and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters across the globe.

The objective of Secret Church is for you to pass along what you learn in these gatherings to others, so that you can make disciples of Christ in all nations for God's glory.

secretchurch.org

What Is Secret Church?

Secret Church began at The Church Brook Hills based on time Dr. Platt had spent with brothers and sisters in underground Asian house churches. In those contexts, they gather together at the risk of their lives for 8-12 hours at a time simply to pray, worship, and study the Word. It's simple, raw, dangerous, and satisfying...all at the same time.

The leaders at Brook Hills began asking if they could do the same thing and decided to try it. They set up a Friday evening where people could gather from 6p.m. until midnight for two main purposes: to worship through intensive study of the Word, and to identify with our persecuted brothers and sisters by praying intentionally for them. Simply six hours of straight teaching and prayer.

At the first gathering there were about 1000 people, and after that it began to grow. "Secret Church" now takes place with standing room only. One of Dr. Platt's favorite sights as a pastor is to look out across a room packed with people at midnight with their Bibles open just soaking in the Word of God.

Beyond These Walls

We're glad you've decided to participate in Secret Church. But even if no one showed up, it would still be worth the effort. Actually, this Bible study will hopefully benefit far more people than just those who were in attendance.

Here's how.

Whenever we gather together for Secret Church we record the teaching sessions. Those recordings are then transcribed and translated into many different languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic, and others. The foreign-language versions of Secret Church are made available online as translations are completed. But that is just the beginning.

Most Christ-followers around the world don't have access to seminaries or Bible colleges. In fact, Christ-followers in many parts of the world have no formal Christian teaching at all. Pastor David will lead additional Secret Church studies, creating numerous hours of Bible teaching on various biblical and theological issues. We will then be able to distribute those resources worldwide. The sessions together will compose a portable seminary, so to speak, with minicourses in biblical training accessible to anyone.

At each Secret Church gathering we take up an offering. All of the proceeds go to support persecuted Christians worldwide through ongoing ministry initiatives and by providing Secret Church Bible teaching materials in multiple languages. Imagine a house-church leader in Asia or the Middle East now able to hear hours of Bible teaching as he listens to Secret Church in his own language. With your help, this can become a reality.

If you would like to make a donation to Secret Church or would like any of the Secret Church resources in another language, visit our website at ***Radical.net***.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Ways We Often Cheapen The Church...

- In our independence, we ignore the church.
- In our pragmatism, we pollute the church.
- In our missions, we minimize the church.
- We elevate our traditions over God's truth.
- We value our preferences over God's priorities.
- We practically define the church according to our personal comforts.

Why We Must Cherish The Church...

- Because we love the glory of God.
 - God desires for His glory to be the foundation of our community in this world.

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

(John 17:20-23 ESV)

- God desires for our community to be a reflection of His glory in this world.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV)

- Because we adore the Son of God.
 - Jesus established the church.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(Matthew 16:18 ESV)

- Jesus purchased the church.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

(Acts 20:28 ESV)

- Jesus identifies Himself with the church.

And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
(Acts 9:4 ESV)

- Because we treasure the Spirit of God.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17 ESV)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
(Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV)

- Because we value the gospel of God.
 - The church is designed to declare the gospel.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

- The church is designed to defend the gospel.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
(2 Timothy 1:13-14 ESV)

- The church is designed to display the gospel.

... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord...
(Ephesians 3:10-11 ESV)

- Because we desire satisfaction in our lives.
 - God created us to enjoy life in Him.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
(Genesis 1:26-27 ESV)

- God created us to experience life with others.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
(Genesis 2:18 ESV)

- Because we want salvation for the lost.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
(John 13:34-35 ESV)

None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women...
(Acts 5:13-14 ESV)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
(Acts 9:31 ESV)

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
(Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

So Where Do We Go From Here?

- Who is the church?
 - We want to know God's definition of the church.
- What does the church do?
 - We want to follow God's design for the church.
- How is the church led?
 - We want clarity on the organization of the church.
- Where is the church going?
 - We want confidence in the future of the church.

WHO IS THE CHURCH?

God's Definition of His People

Definition of the Church...

- The church is the body of people called by God's grace through faith in Christ to glorify him by serving him in this world.
- The body of people...
 - The church is a gathering.
 - Ekklesia: Mentioned 114 times in the New Testament.
 - Twice it refers to an Old Testament assembly.

This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.
(Acts 7:38 ESV)

*"I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."*
(Hebrews 2:12 ESV)

- Three times it refers to a secular assembly.

Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.
(Acts 19:32 ESV)

But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.
(Acts 19:39 ESV)

And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.
(Acts 19:41 ESV)

- 109 times it refers to a Christian assembly.

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:
(1 Corinthians 1:2 ESV)

Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.
(2 Thessalonians 1:4 ESV)

- Those whom God has called out.

*...including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 1:6-7 ESV)*

- Those whom God has called together.

*...so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
(Romans 12:5 ESV)*

*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
(1 Corinthians 12:26 ESV)*

- The church is an earthly assembly with a heavenly destiny.

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
(Hebrews 12:22-24 ESV)*

- The church is people.

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
(1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV)*

*As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"
(Romans 9:25-26 ESV)*

- The church is a family.
 - We are sons and daughters.

*...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
(Galatians 3:26 ESV)*

“Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”
(2 Corinthians 6:17-18 ESV)

- We are brothers and sisters.

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.
(1 Timothy 5:1-2 ESV)

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?
Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.
(1 John 3:14-18 ESV)

- The church is a bride.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
(Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV)

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.
(2 Corinthians 11:2 ESV)

- The church is a building.

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.
(1 Corinthians 3:9 ESV)

- The church is a house.

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.
(Hebrews 3:3-6 ESV)

- The church is a temple.

*If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.
(1 Timothy 3:15 ESV)*

- God's Spirit dwells within the church.

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
(Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV)*

- God's glory is displayed through the church.

*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
(1 Peter 2:4-5 ESV)*

- The church is a field.

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers.
You are God's field, God's building.
(1 Corinthians 3:6-9 ESV)*

- The church is a tree.

*But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.
(Romans 11:17-24 ESV)*

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
(John 15:5 ESV)

○ The church is a priesthood.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
(1 Peter 2:4-9 ESV)

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
(Revelation 1:5-6 ESV)

*...and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."*
(Revelation 5:10 ESV)

○ The church is a body.

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.
(1 Corinthians 10:17 ESV)

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
(Ephesians 1:22-23 ESV)

■ We are a unified body.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
(Ephesians 4:4-6 ESV)

○ We are a diverse body.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many.
(1 Corinthians 12:14 ESV)

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
(Romans 12:4-5 ESV)

Called by God's grace through faith in Christ...

- What we were in our sin...

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
(Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV)

- We were dead.

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."
(John 3:3-8 ESV)

- We were living in darkness.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.
(John 3:20 ESV)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
(2 Corinthians 4:3-4 ESV)

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...
(Ephesians 5:8 ESV)

- We were children of disobedience.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.
(Romans 5:12-14 ESV)

*And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."
(Genesis 8:21 ESV)*

- We were captivated by sinful desire.

*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed...
(Romans 6:16-17 ESV)*

*God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
(2 Timothy 2:25-26 ESV)*

- We were condemned to hell.

*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
(John 3:18 ESV)*

- What God did by His grace...

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,
to the praise of his glory.
(Ephesians 1:3-14 ESV)*

- The Father planned our salvation.
- The Son purchased our salvation.
- The Spirit preserves our salvation.
- What we now are as the church...

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:19-25 ESV)

- We are recipients of a new covenant.
 - We have access to God.
 - Old Covenant...
 - The command: Stay back in fear.

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them."

(Exodus 19:16-22 ESV)

- The provision: An annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.

"And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you.

You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins."

(Leviticus 16:29-30 ESV)

- The elements...
 - A priest entering an earthly sanctuary.

But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

(Leviticus 16:3-4 ESV)

- The blood of a spotless animal.

Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself.
(Leviticus 16:11 ESV)

Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness.
(Leviticus 16:15-16 ESV)

- A sacrifice that would need repeating.

And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Moses did as the LORD commanded him.
(Leviticus 16:34 ESV)

- The effect...
 - A reminder of all our sin.

But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
(Hebrews 10:3-4 ESV)

- New Covenant...
 - The command: Draw near in faith.

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
(Hebrews 12:18-24 ESV)

- The provision: An abiding sacrifice in the death of Christ.

And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
(Hebrews 10:10 ESV)

- The elements...
 - A priest entering a heavenly sanctuary.

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.
(Hebrews 9:24 ESV)

- The blood of a sinless man.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
(Hebrews 9:13-14 ESV)

- A sacrifice that will last forever.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
(Hebrews 10:11-14 ESV)

- The effect...
 - The removal of all our sin.

"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.
(Hebrews 10:17-18 ESV)

- Our guilt is gone.
- Our conscience is clear.
- We have an advocate before God.
 - Jesus is the eternal king who forever rules us.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
(Hebrews 10:11-14 ESV)

- Jesus is the high priest who forever represents us.

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.
(Hebrews 7:23-25 ESV)

- We are members of a new community.

...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:22-25 ESV)

- Together, we draw near to God in faith.
 - We come before Him with sincere desire.
 - We come before Him with confident assurance.
 - We come before Him with cleansed hearts.
 - We come before Him with purified bodies.
- Together, we hold fast to God in hope.
 - The barriers to our hope...
 - We will face trials.
 - We will face temptations.

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

(Hebrews 10:32-34 ESV)

- The basis of our hope...
 - The faithfulness of God to His promises.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

(Hebrews 6:13-20 ESV)

- The return of Christ for His people.

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

(Hebrews 9:27-28 ESV)

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.
(Hebrews 10:35-39 ESV)

- Together, we motivate one another to love.

...addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
(Ephesians 5:19-21 ESV)

- We gather with one another regularly.
- We encourage one another continually.
- To glorify Him by serving him in this world.
 - We have been filled with the power of Christ.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
(Ephesians 1:15-23 ESV)

- Christ has all authority.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,...
(Colossians 1:19 ESV)

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,...
(Colossians 2:9 ESV)

- He is the risen Savior.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.
(1 Corinthians 15:3-5 ESV)

- He is the exalted King.

...having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.
(Hebrews 1:4 ESV)

- He is the sovereign Lord.

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:10-11 ESV)

- The church has the fullness of Christ.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.
(Colossians 2:9-10 ESV)

- All the authority in all the earth belongs to the church.

So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.
(1 Corinthians 3:21-23 ESV)

[God has] raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
(Ephesians 2:6-7 ESV)

- We are now a display of the glory of Christ.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

- God's design is to use the body of His Son to show the glory of His Son to all creation.

...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
(Ephesians 3:10 ESV)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
(Ephesians 6:12 ESV)

- God says, "Look at the church and you will see my Son."

Description of the Church...

- The church is universal and local.
 - The church in a house...

*Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus,
who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.*
(Romans 16:5 ESV)

*The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca,
together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.*
(1 Corinthians 16:19 ESV)

- The church in a city...

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. . .
(1 Corinthians 1:2 ESV)

- The church in a region...

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
(Acts 9:31 ESV)

- The church in the world...

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . .
(Ephesians 5:25 ESV)

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.
(1 Corinthians 12:28 ESV)

- The dominant emphasis in the New Testament is on the local church.
 - Out of the 114 times *ekklesia* is mentioned in the NT, at least 90 of them refer to specific local gatherings of believers.
 - The local church is a clear expression of the universal body of Christ.
- The church is both visible and invisible .
 - The invisible church: The church as God sees it from heaven.

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."
(2 Timothy 2:19 ESV)

- Includes all true believers.
- The visible church: The church as we see it on earth.

*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. . .*
(2 Thessalonians 1:1 ESV)

- Includes some false believers.

Their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.
(2 Timothy 2:17-18 ESV)

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.
(Acts 20:29-30 ESV)

"Many sheep are without and many wolves are within."
Augustine

- The church includes both New Testament believers and Old Testament believers.
 - Old Testament gatherings...

On the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'
(Deuteronomy 4:10 ESV)

This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.
(Acts 7:38 ESV)

"I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."
(Psalm 22:22 ESV; Quoted in Hebrews 2:12 ESV)

○ Old Testament faith...

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.
(Hebrews 11:24-28 ESV)

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.
(Hebrews 11:39-40 ESV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. . .
(Hebrews 12:1 ESV)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
(Hebrews 12:22-24 ESV)

○ Key differences...

- Old Testament believers trusted in the coming Christ.
 - New Testament believers trust in the crucified Christ.
- Old Testament believers are ethnically distinct.
 - New Testament believers are ethnically diverse.
- Old Testament believers lived under their own government with God-given laws.
 - New Testament believers live among the rulers of the nations.
- Old Testament believers are required to circumcise their male offspring.
 - New Testament believers are required to baptize all believers.
- The church includes both Jews and Gentiles.

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. . .
(Ephesians 2:14-20 ESV)

- The church is unified and diversified.

...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

(John 17:21-23 ESV)

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...

(1 Corinthians 1:2 ESV)

- We work for unity in the local church.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

(1 Corinthians 1:10 ESV)

...complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

(Philippians 2:2 ESV)

- Division is dangerous.

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

(Romans 16:17-18 ESV)

It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

(Jude 1:19 ESV)

- Division is deadly.

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Galatians 5:19-21 ESV)

- We work for unity in the universal church.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:4-6 ESV)

- The church and the Israel of God...

And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.
(Galatians 6:16 ESV)

*For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.
His praise is not from man but from God.*
(Romans 2:28-29 ESV)

- We are descendants of Israel's father.

He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.
(Romans 4:11-12 ESV)

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.
(Romans 9:6-8 ESV)

As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"
(Romans 9:25 ESV)

- We are heirs of Israel's promise.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.
(Galatians 3:29 ESV)

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew

strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.
(Romans 4:13-25 ESV)

- We are recipients of Israel's blessings.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
(1 Peter 2:4-10 ESV)

- The church and the kingdom of God...
 - The church is not the kingdom.

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
(Acts 8:12 ESV)

And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.
(Acts 19:8 ESV)

And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.
(Acts 20:25 ESV)

...proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.
(Acts 28:31 ESV)

- The kingdom creates the church.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 5:3 ESV)

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven,
but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”
(Matthew 7:21 ESV)*

*Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.
(Matthew 13:40-43 ESV)*

- The church proclaims the kingdom.

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
(Matthew 24:14 ESV)*

- The church is the instrument of the kingdom.

*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.
You received without paying; give without pay.
(Matthew 10:8 ESV)*

*The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”
(Luke 10:17 ESV)*

- The church is the guardian of the kingdom.

*“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
(Matthew 16:19 ESV)*

- Jesus will return for his church.

*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
(Matthew 24:30-31 ESV)*

*Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.
(1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 ESV)*

- Jesus will consummate his kingdom.

*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.
(1 Corinthians 15:24 ESV)*

Devotion to the Church...

- Is church membership necessary?
 - Membership in a local church is not biblically commanded.
 - Membership in a local church is biblically implied.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
(1 Corinthians 12:21-26 ESV)*

- Membership is implied by church gatherings.

*The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.
(1 Corinthians 16:19 ESV)*

- Membership is implied by church discipline.

*"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."
(Matthew 18:15-17 ESV)*

*I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."
(1 Corinthians 5:9-13 ESV)*

- Membership is implied by church leadership.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
(Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
(Acts 20:28 ESV)

...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.
(1 Peter 5:2-3 ESV)

- Membership is implied by church accountability.
 - The church is accountable for choosing leaders.

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.
(Acts 6:2-6 ESV)

- The church is accountable for preaching the gospel.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
(Galatians 1:6-9 ESV)

- The church is accountable for identifying members.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."
(1 Corinthians 5:12-13 ESV)

- The church is accountable for sending missionaries.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
(Acts 13:1-3 ESV)

- Is a church covenant valuable?
 - Definitions...
 - A covenant defined...
 - A written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.
 - A church covenant defined...
 - A clear expression of a church's commitment to love one another as a community of faith.
 - Foundations...

"Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.
(Nehemiah 9:38 ESV)

- The church is a community grounded in the Word of God.

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.
(Nehemiah 8:1-6 ESV)

- The church is a community sustained by the grace of God.

"Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day. Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly."
(Nehemiah 9:32-33 ESV)

- The church is a community promoting the good of one another.

*“The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes. We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.
(Nehemiah 10:28-30 ESV)*

- The church is a community demonstrating the glory of God.

*And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.
(Nehemiah 12:43 ESV)*

○ Illustration...

As members of The Church at Brook Hills, we affirm this covenant with one another by God’s grace, for our good, and ultimately for God’s glory.

Having been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ac. 2:38; 16:31; 20:21; Rom. 10:9-10) and to surrender our lives to Him (Lk. 14:25-33), and having been baptized as Christians in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19; Ac. 2:41; Rom. 6:1-4), we covenant together to glorify God (Is. 43:7; 1 Cor. 10:31) by making disciples (Mt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2) of all nations (Ps. 67:1-2; Rev. 7:9-10).

- *Together, we will draw near to God in worship (Heb. 10:22; Rom. 12:1-2). We will delight in the glory of God (Ps. 16:11; 37:4; 63:1-11), depend on the presence of God (Ex. 33:14-18; Mt. 28:20; Jn. 15:5; Jas. 4:8), grow in the knowledge of God (Php. 3:10; Col. 1:9-12; 2 Pet. 3:17-18), and submit to the Word of God as the all-sufficient authority in our lives and in His church (2 Tim. 3:14-4:5; Ps. 19:7-11; 119:105-112).*
- *Together, we will hold fast to the hope we profess (Heb. 10:23). We will regularly participate in communion as we solemnly and joyfully remember the past work of Christ on the cross, celebrate the present work of Christ at the Father’s right hand, and anticipate the future work of Christ in His return for His bride (Lk. 22:7-23; Ac. 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23-32).*
- *Together, we will spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24). We will meet with one another consistently (Heb. 10:25), pray for one another regularly (Php. 1:3-6), and serve one another selflessly (Rom. 12:9-13). We will share each other’s joys and bear each other’s burdens (1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 2:3; Gal. 6:2). We will edify one another with our speech (Eph. 4:29-32) and encourage one another with our example (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Php. 4:9). We will humbly and gently confront one another and receive correction from one another in accordance*

with a New Testament understanding of church discipline and restoration (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 6:1). We will give cheerfully and generously to the support of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations (2 Cor. 8-9).

- *We will submit to the leadership of elders who have been entrusted by God to serve and care for this body by teaching the Word of Christ to us and modeling the character of Christ before us and we will affirm deacons as leading servants in the church (Heb. 13:17; Ac. 6:1-7; 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-20; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). If we move from this local body, we will as soon as possible unite with another local church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word (Heb. 10:25).*

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all (2 Cor. 13:14).

Amen.

Summary of the Church...

- What is the church?
 - The church is the body of people called by God's grace through faith in Christ to glorify him by serving him in this world.
- What is a local church?
 - The local church is a local body of believers in Christ covenanted together to glorify God by serving him in this world.
- Christians and local churches...
 - As followers of Christ, we commit our lives to one another as members of local churches...
 - For the good of ourselves.
 - For the good of other Christians.
 - For the good of non-Christians.
 - For the glory of God.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH DO?

God's Design for His People

Seven Activities of the Church...

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

(Acts 2:38-47 ESV)

- The church evangelizes.
- The church baptizes.
- The church teaches.
- The church nurtures.
- The church worships.
- The church prays.
- The church multiplies.

The Church Evangelizes

- The church beholds the glory of Christ.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

(Acts 1:3-11 ESV)

- He is the risen Savior.
- He is the exalted Lord.
- He is the coming King.
- Passion for the kingdom is fueled by passion for the king.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

(Daniel 7:13-14 ESV)

But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

(Acts 7:55-60 ESV)

- The church proclaims the gospel of Christ.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(Acts 1:8 ESV)

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another,

"What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

(Acts 2:1-14 ESV)

- The church proclaims the gospel in the power of Jesus' presence.

[Jesus] said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
(Luke 24:46-49 ESV)

- He is with us.

"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:20 ESV)

- He dwells in us.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."
(John 14:12 ESV)

- He enables our obedience.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
(Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV)

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD." So I prophesied as I was commanded.

And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD;

I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

(Ezekiel 37:1-14)

He empowers our proclamation.

- We announce the good news.

The just and gracious Creator of the universe has looked upon hopelessly sinful man and sent His Son, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross and to show His power over sin in the resurrection so that everyone who turns from themselves and trusts in Him as Savior and Lord will be reconciled to God forever.

- Gospel Threads...
 - The character of God.
 - The sinfulness of man.
 - The sufficiency of Christ.
 - The necessity of faith.
 - The urgency of eternity.
- Gospel Testimonies...

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.
(1 Pet. 3:15-16, ESV)

- God awakens people's hearts.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.
(Acts 13:48 ESV)

- The church proclaims the gospel in light of Jesus' purposes.
 - We are worshipers.
 - We are witnesses.
 - Old Testament anticipation...

But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"
(Numbers 11:29 ESV)

And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, and he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered..."
(Numbers 24:2-4 ESV)

"The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue."
(2 Samuel 23:2 ESV)

*And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind."
(Ezekiel 11:5)*

*"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls."
(Joel 2:28-32 ESV)*

- New Testament realization...

*But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb."
(Luke 1:13-15 ESV)*

*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"
(Luke 1:39-42 ESV)*

*And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David..."
(Luke 1:67-69 ESV)*

*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.
(Acts 2:2-4 ESV)*

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders..."
(Acts 4:8 ESV)*

*And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.
(Acts 4:31 ESV)*

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."
(Acts 9:17-20 ESV)

But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.
(Acts 13:8-11 ESV)

- The church proclaims the gospel in obedience to Jesus' plan.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
(Acts 1:8 ESV)

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
(Acts 6:7 ESV)

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.
(Acts 8:1-5 ESV)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
(Acts 9:31 ESV)

"Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.
(Acts 28:28-31 ESV)

- Old Testament: God's blessing promised for all nations...

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

(Genesis 11:1-9 ESV)

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(Genesis 12:1-3 ESV)

- New Testament: God's gospel preached to all nations...

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

(Matthew 24:14 ESV)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

(Matthew 28:19 ESV)

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

(Revelation 7:9-10 ESV)

The Church Baptizes

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
(Acts 2:41 ESV)

*And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
Then they asked him to remain for some days.*
(Acts 10:48 ESV)

On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
(Acts 19:5 ESV)

- The Foundation...
 - We are recipients of a new covenant...
 - Baptism is a declaration that we belong to Jesus.

“Being a Christian involves a personal, vital identification with Jesus Christ, and this union with him is dramatically set forth in our baptism.”
John Stott

- We are members of a new community...
 - Baptism is a declaration that we belong to each other.
- The Questions...
 - Why are Christians baptized?
 - We follow the example of Christ.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
(Matthew 3:13-17 ESV)

- We obey the command of Christ.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...
(Matthew 28:19 ESV)

- We unite with the body of Christ.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
(1 Corinthians 12:12-13 ESV)

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
(Ephesians 4:4-6 ESV)

- What is the meaning of baptism?
 - A celebration of the grace of Christ.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
(Romans 6:1-4 ESV)

- He died on a cross as our substitute.
- He rose from the grave as our Savior.
- An illustration of the Gospel of Christ.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.
(Romans 6:5-10 ESV)

- Into the water = Identification with His death.
- Out of the water = Participation in His resurrection.
- A proclamation of the glory of Christ.

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.
(Colossians 2:11-15 ESV)

- In the church.
- Beyond the church.
- How are Christians baptized?
 - The biblical mode of baptism is immersion.
 - The precedent of Christ...

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven,
“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
(Mark 1:9-11 ESV)*

- The pattern of early church leaders...

*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.
And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.
(Acts 8:36-39 ESV)*

- The picture of the Gospel...

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
(Romans 6:4 ESV)*

- Who should be baptized?
 - Everyone who has been born again.

*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.
(Colossians 2:11-12 ESV)*

- Old covenant: Circumcision followed physical birth into a physical community.
- New covenant: Baptism follows spiritual birth into a spiritual community.
 - Spiritual regeneration precedes physical immersion.
 - External demonstration follows internal transformation.
- When should Christians be baptized?
 - As soon as they trust in Christ for salvation.

*But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.
(Acts 8:12-13 ESV)*

*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.
(Acts 8:36-38 ESV)*

*And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight.
Then he rose and was baptized...
(Acts 9:18 ESV)*

*“Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
Then they asked him to remain for some days.
(Acts 10:47-48 ESV)*

*And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.
(Acts 16:15 ESV)*

*And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds;
and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.
(Acts 16:33 ESV)*

*Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.
(Acts 18:8 ESV)*

*And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.
(Acts 22:16 ESV)*

- As soon as they can most wisely testify to their salvation.

The Church Teaches

*And they devoted themselves to **the apostles’ teaching** and the fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
(Acts 2:42 ESV)*

*“If Jesus Christ is the head of the church and hence the source and goal of its entire life, true growth is only possible in obedience to Him. Conversely, if the church becomes detached from Jesus Christ and His Word, it cannot grow however active and successful it may seem to be.”
Os Guinness*

- The church is a community formed by God’s Word.
 - We are saved by the Word.

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
(Romans 10:17 ESV)*

- We are sanctified through the Word.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)

- We are servants of the Word.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
(2 Timothy 4:1-5 ESV)

- The church is a community focused on God's Word.
 - The church reveres the magnitude of God's Word.
 - The church knows the significance of God's revelation.
 - God reveals Himself as the Word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
(John 1:1 ESV)

And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.
(1 Samuel 3:21 ESV)

- God reveals Himself through the Word.
 - Creation is formed by His Word...

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
(Hebrews 11:3 ESV)

- Storms are stilled by His Word...

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.
(Mark 4:39 ESV)

- Fevers are cooled by His Word...

And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.
(Luke 4:39 ESV)

- Demons are cast out by His Word...

*But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"
(Mark 1:25 ESV)*

- Sins are forgiven by His Word...

*And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
(Mark 2:5 ESV)*

- The blind are made to see by His Word...

*And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well."
(Luke 18:42 ESV)*

- The dead are raised to life by His Word...

*When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."
(John 11:43-44 ESV)*

- The entire universe responds to His Word...

*To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.
(Isaiah 40:25-26 ESV)*

*"The design of the universe...is very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religions, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he'd run across did not have proper respect...for the author of the universe."
Charles Misner*

- The church knows the seriousness of man's proclamation.

*In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.
For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
(2 Corinthians 4:4-6 ESV)*

- The preacher exposes the voice of God.

*And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind."
(Ezekiel 11:5 ESV)*

- The preacher exalts the greatness of God.

*Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.
(Psalm 78:1-4 ESV)*

*And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.
(Nehemiah 8:5-6 ESV)*

*In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?
(Psalm 56:4 ESV)*

*In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise. . .
(Psalm 56:10 ESV)*

*I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.
(Psalm 119:48 ESV)*

*I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.
(Psalm 138:2 ESV)*

- The church respects the authority of God's Word.
 - Apart from the Word, the preacher is helpless.

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."
(Isaiah 43:1 ESV)*

- Apart from the Word, the church is powerless.

*Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.
(Proverbs 29:18 ESV)*

- The church recognizes the relevance of God's Word.
 - The Word speaks to contemporary needs.
 - The Word speaks with eternal promises.
 - Promises of success.

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
(Joshua 1:8-9 ESV)

- Promises of blessing.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11 ESV)

- Promises to guide.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
(Psalm 119:105 ESV)

- Promises to comfort.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.
(Isaiah 40:1-2 ESV)

- Promises of peace.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:4-7 ESV)

- Promises of wisdom.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:14-17 ESV)

- Promises of salvation.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

(Romans 10:17 ESV)

- Promises of satisfaction.

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—

(1 Peter 2:2 ESV)

- Why would we want to listen to anything else?
- The church realizes the purpose of God's Word.
- God's agenda in Scripture:
 - To tell us about the glory of Christ.
 - To transform us into the image of Christ.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

(Genesis 1:1 ESV)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26-27 ESV)

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

(Genesis 3:22-24 ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

(Revelation 21:1 ESV)

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.
(Revelation 22:1-5 ESV)

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.
(Psalm 17:15 ESV)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
(Romans 8:28-30 ESV)

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
(2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

[Jesus] will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
(Philippians 3:21 ESV)

[We] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
(Colossians 3:10 ESV)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.
(2 Peter 1:3-4 ESV)

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
(1 John 3:2 ESV)

- The focus in the church's worship: Human tips or Divine text?
 - When we focus on human tips instead of the divine text...
 - We rob ourselves of the truth that is necessary for realizing God's purpose in our lives.
 - We rob God of the glory that is due His name.

"Many pastors can preach whole messages with little more than a tip of the hat to a clause or two taken from a biblical context that few, if any, recognize. Even more pastors have decided that using the Bible is a handicap for meeting the needs of the different generations; therefore they have gone to drawing their sermons from the plethora of recovery and pop-psychology books that fill our Christian bookstores. The market-forces demand that we give them what they want to hear if we wish them to return and pay for the mega-sanctuaries that we have built."

Walter Kaiser

- When we focus on the divine text instead of human tips...
 - We fill ourselves with the truth that is necessary for realizing God's purpose in our lives.
 - We glorify God by becoming like Christ.
 - The Word feeds the character of Christ in us.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

(John 15:5-7 ESV)

- The Word instills the conscience of Christ in us.

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ESV)

- The Word produces the conduct of Christ in us.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

(James 1:22-25 ESV)

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

(Colossians 1:27-29 ESV)

- The church reveals the effect of God's Word.
 - The Word elicits conviction.

*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,
“Brothers, what shall we do?”
(Acts 2:37 ESV)*

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
(Hebrews 4:12 ESV)*

- People realize the gravity of their need.
- People realize the greatness of God’s provision.
- The Word explains conversion.

*And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
(Acts 2:38 ESV)*

*Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out. . .
(Acts 3:19 ESV)*

*Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible,
the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.
(Acts 8:22 ESV)*

*And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”
(Acts 16:31 ESV)*

*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. . .
(Acts 17:30 ESV)*

*...testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Acts 20:21 ESV)*

*[They] declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.
(Acts 26:20 ESV)*

- Repentance: We turn...
 - From our sin.
 - From ourselves.
- Belief: We trust in Christ...
 - As the risen Savior.
 - As the reigning Lord.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.
(Romans 10:9-10 ESV)

- The Word establishes a craving.
 - As we are led by the Spirit...
 - We long for the Word.

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.
(1 Peter 2:1-3 ESV)

The Church Nurtures

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching **and the fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*
(Acts 2:42 ESV)

- What do members of the church have in common?
 - Common spiritual foundation...

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.
(Acts 4:32 ESV)

- We share in the body and blood of Christ.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?
(1 Corinthians 10:16 ESV)

- We share in the Spirit of Christ.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
(2 Corinthians 13:14 ESV)

- We share in the gospel of Christ.

...because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
(Philippians 1:5 ESV)

- We share in the sufferings of Christ.

*...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection,
and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...*
(Philippians 3:10 ESV)

- We share in the life of Christ.

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
(1 John 1:3-7 ESV)

- Common social interaction...

*And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.
And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*
(Acts 2:43-47 ESV)

- We care for one another.
- We serve alongside one another.
- We give to one another.
- We restore one another.
- We care for one another...
 - We receive mercy from God.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12:1-2 ESV)

- We reflect mercy toward one another.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
(Romans 12:9-13 ESV)

- We love one another.

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(John 13:34-35 ESV)*

- We host one another.

*Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.
(1 Peter 4:9 ESV)*

- We greet one another.

*All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
(1 Corinthians 16:20 ESV)*

- We receive one another.

*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
(Romans 15:7 ESV)*

- We honor one another.

*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
(Romans 12:10 ESV)*

- We serve one another.

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
(Galatians 5:13 ESV)*

- We instruct one another.

*I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.
(Romans 15:14 ESV)*

- We wait for one another.

*So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—
(1 Corinthians 11:33 ESV)*

- We forgive one another.

*...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
(Colossians 3:13 ESV)*

- We submit to one another.

*...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
(Ephesians 5:21 ESV)*

- We spur on one another.

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...
(Hebrews 10:24 ESV)*

- We build peace with one another.

*Be at peace among yourselves.
(1 Thessalonians 5:13 ESV)*

- We bear one another's burdens.

*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
(Galatians 6:2 ESV)*

- We encourage one another.

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
(1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV)*

- We comfort another.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.
(2 Corinthians 1:3-7 ESV)*

- God uses our suffering for our sake.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.
(2 Corinthians 1:8-11 ESV)

- God uses our suffering for others' sake.

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.
(2 Corinthians 7:6-7 ESV)

- God uses our suffering for His sake.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
(2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ESV)

- We pray for and confess to one another.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.
The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
(James 5:16 ESV)

- We esteem one another.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
(Philippians 2:3 ESV)

- We edify one another.

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.
(Romans 14:19 ESV)

- We teach one another.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
(Colossians 3:16 ESV)*

- We are kind to one another.

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
(Ephesians 4:32 ESV)*

- The gladness of the family reflects the glory of the Father.
- We serve one another.

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.
(Romans 12:3-8 ESV)*

- We are a family designed by grace.

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. . .
(1 Peter 4:10 ESV)*

*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.
(1 Corinthians 15:10 ESV)*

- We are a family diversified by gifts.

*If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
(1 Corinthians 12:15-26 ESV)*

- Where everyone counts.
 - No one is inferior.
 - We guard against self-depreciation: “You don’t need me.”
 - No one is superior.
 - We guard against self-exaltation: “I don’t need you.”
 - No need to compare.
 - No need to copy.
- Where everyone contributes.
- We give to one another.

“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD’s release has been proclaimed. Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release. But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess— if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today. For the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you. “If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.”

(Deuteronomy 15:1-11 ESV)

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

(Acts 2:45 ESV)

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

(Acts 4:32-37 ESV)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

(2 Corinthians 8:1-9 ESV)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

(2 Corinthians 9:6-15 ESV)

- We give out of an abundance of grace.
 - We give willingly.
 - We give based on God's blessing.
 - We give (at least) according to our ability.

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

(Mark 12:41-44 ESV)

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

(1 Corinthians 16:2 ESV)

- We give generously.
 - Generous giving to God...
 - Results in greater giving from God.
 - God gives enough for us...
 - And He gives abundance for others.

"In 1731 Wesley began to limit his expenses so he would have more money to give to the poor. So he decided to live on 28 pounds a year. He records that one year his income was 30 pounds, and his living expenses 28, so he had 2 pounds to give away. The next year, his income doubled, but he still lived on 28 pounds and gave 32 pounds away. In the third year, his income jumped to 90 pounds, and then in the fourth 120 pounds, but again, he lived on 28 pounds and gave 92 pounds to the poor. Wesley preached that Christians should not merely tithe, but give away all extra income once the family and creditors were taken care of. He believed that with increasing income, the Christian's standard of giving should increase, not his standard of living. He began this practice at Oxford and he continued it throughout his life. Even when his income rose into the thousands of pounds, he lived simply and quickly gave his surplus money away. One year his income was slightly over 1400 pounds; he gave away all but 30. He was afraid of laying up treasures on earth, so the money went out in charity as quickly as it came in. When he died in 1791, the only money mentioned in his will was the miscellaneous coins to be found in his pockets and dresser drawers. Most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his lifetime he had given away."

Charles Edward White

- We give cheerfully.
 - We are not forced by God to give.
 - We are freed by God to give.
- We give as a demonstration of the Gospel.
 - We sacrifice our rights for others.
 - We spend our resources on others.
- We give to promote thanksgiving to God.
 - Giving unites the people of God.

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.

(Romans 15:26-27 ESV)

- We give regularly to the church.

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

(1 Corinthians 16:2 ESV)

- The church deals responsibly with our gifts.

We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

(2 Corinthians 8:20-21 ESV)

- Giving exalts the goodness of God.
- We restore one another.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

(Galatians 6:1-5 ESV)

- Why not church discipline?
 - "Church discipline is legalistic."
 - Church discipline is loving...

"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

(Hebrews 12:6 ESV)

- "What about Matthew 7:1?"

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?"

(Matthew 7:1-4 ESV)

- Keep going to Matthew 7:5...

"You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

(Matthew 7:5 ESV)

- "People will leave the church."
 - This is God's church to grow not ours.

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test

the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,
(Acts 5:1-14 ESV)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
(1 Peter 2:9 ESV)

- “The church doesn’t know how to practice church discipline.”
 - Then the church needs to learn how practice church discipline!
- What is church discipline?
 - Two facets of church discipline...
 - Formative church discipline...
 - Continual training believers receive from the Word in the body of Christ as their lives are transformed into Christlikeness.
 - Restorative church discipline...
 - Corrective care taken by the body of Christ in matters of unrepentant sin in a brother or sister’s life.
 - One foundation for church discipline...
 - The grace of God.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
(Titus 2:11-14 ESV)

- Approaching church discipline...
 - We need childlike humility.

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 18:4 ESV)

- We need a deep concern for holiness.

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
(Matthew 18:6 ESV)

- We need compassion for the hurting.

*So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
(Matthew 18:14 ESV)*

- We need forgiving hearts.

*Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."
(Matthew 18:21-22 ESV)*

- Applying church discipline...

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."
(Matthew 18:15-20 ESV)*

- Step One: Private correction.

*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
(Ephesians 4:29-32 ESV)*

- Step Two: Small group clarification.

*"A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."
(Deuteronomy 19:15 ESV)*

- Step Three: Church admonition.
- Step Four: Church excommunication.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn?

Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our

Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh,

so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13 ESV)

- For the purity of the church.
 - Church members are accountable...
 - Before God...
 - For each other.
 - Church members must be humble...
 - Pride: Toleration of unrepentant sinners in the church.
 - Humility: Exclusion of unrepentant sinners from the church.

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.

(2 Thessalonians 3:6 ESV)

If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

(2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 ESV)

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him...

(Titus 3:10 ESV)

- Church membership is essential...
 - The church defines who is a member.
 - Isolation from the church reflects separation from Christ.
- For the salvation of the individual.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
(2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ESV)

...among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.
(1 Timothy 1:20 ESV)

- For the glory of God.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.
(Ezekiel 36:22-23 ESV)

- Church discipline in action...
 - Obey with the love of Christ.
 - The goal of church discipline is spiritual restoration.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
(James 5:19-20 ESV)

- Be humble.

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.
(Proverbs 19:11 ESV)

- Be biblical.

But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.
(Titus 3:9 ESV)

- Is there sin that is dishonoring God?
- Is there sin that is damaging the Gospel?

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

(1 Timothy 1:18-20 ESV)

Their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

(2 Timothy 2:17-18 ESV)

- Is there sin that is hurting the unity of the church?

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

(Romans 16:17-18 ESV)

But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

(Titus 3:9-11 ESV)

- Is there sin that is hurting the witness of the church?

Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...

(Philippians 2:14-15 ESV)

- Be pure.

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

(Matthew 7:5 ESV)

- Examine your life.
- Examine your motives.
- Be prayerful.

...correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

(2 Timothy 2:25-26 ESV)

- Be quiet.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
(Ephesians 4:29 ESV)

- Be quick.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
(Matthew 5:23-24 ESV)

- Be gentle.
- Be careful.
- Be intentional.
- Trust in the authority of Christ.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
(Matthew 18:18 ESV)

- Pray according to the promise of Christ.

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.
(Matthew 18:19 ESV)

- Expect the presence of Christ.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."
(Matthew 18:20 ESV)

- Honor the cross of Christ.
 - We want a Christ who pardons...
 - But do we want a Christ who purifies?
 - When we tolerate sin in the church...
 - We trample on the sacrifice of Christ.
 - The death of Christ on the cross...
 - Transforms our lives in the church.

"I never got away from Jesus, and him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great doctrine of Christ and him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other. I find my Indians begin to put on the garments of holiness and their common life begins to be sanctified even in small matters when they are possessed by the doctrine of Christ and him crucified."

David Brainerd

The Church Worships

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
(Acts 2:42 ESV)*

- Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts.

*And you shall say to him, "The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far, you have not obeyed."
(Exodus 7:16 ESV)*

*"For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites," says the LORD.
(Isaiah 66:18-21 ESV)*

*"Reverent corporate worship then, is not optional for the church of God....Rather, it brings to expression the very being of the church. It manifests on earth the reality of the heavenly assembly."
Edmund Clowney*

- Foundational Component of the Church's Worship...
 - The Lord's Supper
 - Baptism demonstrates our initial identification with Christ and His church.
 - The Lord's Supper celebrates our continual identification with Christ and His church.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying,

"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.
(Luke 22:7-23 ESV)

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
(1 Corinthians 11:23-32 ESV)

- Who should participate in the Lord's Supper?
 - Believers share in the work of Christ as they partake of the Lord's Supper.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?
(1 Corinthians 10:16-18 ESV)

- Unbelievers see the work of Christ as they watch the Lord's Supper.
- Where should we have the Lord's Supper?
 - The only biblical requirement: gathering of the church.

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.
(1 Corinthians 11:18 ESV)

When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.
(1 Corinthians 11:20 ESV)

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.
(1 Corinthians 11:33-34 ESV)

- When should we have the Lord's Supper?
 - The command: Observe it often.
 - The question: What about weekly?

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.
(Acts 20:7 ESV)

- How should we understand the Lord's Supper?
 - A traditional misunderstanding: a change of substance that results in salvation.

"By consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity
(cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651)."
Catechism of the Catholic Church

"If anyone says that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema (Session 6, Canon 9)."
Council of Trent

- A biblical understanding: a symbolic meal that reflects salvation.

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all...
(Romans 4:16 ESV)

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
(Galatians 1:6-9 ESV)

- Why should we celebrate the Lord's Supper?
 - To remember...
 - The body of Jesus.
 - The blood of Jesus.

And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."
(Exodus 24:5-8 ESV)

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.
(Leviticus 17:11 ESV)

- To reflect...
 - On our sin.
 - On His promises.
 - We feast on His forgiveness.
 - We feast on His faithfulness.
- To renew...
 - Our commitment to Christ.
 - Our commitment to each other.

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.
(1 Corinthians 10:17 ESV)

- To rejoice...
 - He has set us free.
 - He is coming back.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."
(Revelation 19:6-9 ESV)

- Fundamental Values in the Church's Worship...
 - Humility

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
(Revelation 19:1-10 ESV)

"In my opinion, the great single need of the moment is that light-hearted superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple. The holy art of worship seems to have passed away like the Shekinah glory from the tabernacle. As a result, we are left to our own devices and forced to make up the lack of spontaneous worship by bringing in countless cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people."

A.W. Tozer

- The greatness of God holds our attention, incites our affection, and leads us to humble adoration of God in worship.

"It is delightful to worship God, but it is also a humbling thing; and the man who has not been humbled in the presence of God will never be a worshiper of God at all. He may be a church member who keeps the rules and obeys the discipline, and who tithes and goes to conference, but he'll never be a worshiper unless he is deeply humbling."

A.W. Tozer

- God desires our worship.
 - God orchestrates history to display His glory.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."

(Ezekiel 36:22-23 ESV)

- God ordains the church to enjoy His glory.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

(Psalm 84:1-2 ESV)

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!

(Psalm 84:4 ESV)

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

(Psalm 84:10 ESV)

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

(Isaiah 62:3-5 ESV)

*The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.
(Zephaniah 3:17 ESV)*

- God deserves worship.
 - See the greatness of God in worship...
 - He is Savior.
 - He is glorious.
 - He is omnipotent.
 - He is true.
 - He is just.
 - He is eternal.
 - He is mighty.
 - He is sovereign.
 - He is holy.
 - See the gladness of God's people in worship...
 - We revere Him.
 - We rejoice in Him.
 - We are ready for Him.
- God draws us to Himself in worship.
 - Beware the pitfalls of man-centered worship...
 - The danger of misplaced devotion.
 - The danger of misdirected motives.
 - The danger of misunderstood success.
 - Believe in the power of God-centered worship...
 - God the Father seeks us for worship.

*"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
(John 4:23-24 ESV)*

- God the Son enables us to worship.
- God the Spirit directs us in worship.

*But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all,
the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship
God and declare that God is really among you.
(1 Corinthians 14:24-25 ESV)*

- Community
 - The church gathers together for the purpose of corporate worship.
 - We celebrate with one another.

And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

(Nehemiah 12:27-30 ESV)

So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced.

And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

(Nehemiah 12:40-43 ESV)

- Corporate worship is public enjoyment of who God is.
- Corporate worship is public thanksgiving for all God has done.
- We participate with one another.

Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate. And after them went Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph; and his relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them.

At the Fountain Gate they went up straight before them by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

(Nehemiah 12:31-37 ESV)

- We avoid individualistic attitudes.
- We spurn spectator approaches.
- We encourage one another.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Colossians 3:16-17 ESV)

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

(Ephesians 5:17-21 ESV)

What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?
(1 Corinthians 14:15-16 ESV)

- We express our unity.

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.
(Nehemiah 8:1 ESV)

- We establish continuity with the church throughout history.

And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.
(Nehemiah 12:45-46 ESV)

- We engage together in spiritual battle.

And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.” And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.
(2 Chronicles 20:20-22 ESV)

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened.
(Acts 16:25-26 ESV)

- Clarity

- The church’s worship involves a rhythm of revelation and response.
- God’s revelation...
 - He reveals Himself clearly in the world.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
(Psalm 19:1-4 ESV)

- He reveals Himself comprehensively in the Word.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11 ESV)

- The Word is complete.
- The Word is relevant.
- The Word is good.
- The Word is clear.
- The Word is eternal.
- The Word is true.
- The church's response...
 - The Word transforms us.
 - The Word makes us wise.
 - The Word satisfies us.
 - The Word enlightens us.
 - The Word awes us.
 - The Word makes us righteous.
- When the Word is absent in our worship...
 - Our response is manufactured.
 - The result is pleasing to self.
- When the Word is apparent in our worship...
 - Our response is authentic.
 - The result is pleasing to God.
- Honesty
 - The church's worship requires honesty before God and each other.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
(John 4:21-24 ESV)

- We cannot worship without being honest with God.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

(Genesis 3:6-13 ESV)

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations."

(Malachi 1:6-14 ESV)

"And now, O priests, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it."

(Malachi 2:1-3 ESV)

- Jesus desires to cover us in our sin.
- Jesus desires to comfort us in our sorrow.
- We cannot limit worship to a certain place.

Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

(Genesis 12:6-7 ESV)

*And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not beyond the Jordan, west of the road, toward the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh?
(Deuteronomy 11:29-30 ESV)*

*When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.
(Deuteronomy 27:12 ESV)*

- We misdefine worship according to external circumstances.
- Jesus redefines worship according to internal circumstances:
 - The reality of His presence.

*Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
(John 2:19 ESV)*

*I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.
(Matthew 12:6 ESV)*

- The response of our hearts.

*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me...
(Matthew 15:8 ESV)*

- We cannot worship a God we do not know.
 - Our worship is hollow if it is disconnected from the Word.
- Diversity
 - The church's worship reflects the unity and diversity of heaven.

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
(Revelation 7:9-17 ESV)*

- We need to get in on a global perspective of worship.
- We need to get over the different styles of worship that divide Christians in the church.
- We need to get involved in the joy of continual, worldwide worship.
- We need to get lost in the love God has for each of us.
- We need to get on with the global mission God has called us to.

The Church Prays

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship,
to the breaking of bread **and the prayers**.*
(Acts 2:42 ESV)

*All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women
and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*
(Acts 1:14 ESV)

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."
(Acts 6:4 ESV)

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed" — for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.
(Acts 4:23-31 ESV)

- Who did the church pray to?
 - The God who is sovereign over everything in the world.

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...
(Psalm 24:1 ESV)

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
(Acts 16:14 ESV)

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be

silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.
(Acts 18:9-11 ESV)

- The God who supplies everything we need.

...nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.
(Acts 17:25 ESV)

...whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
(1 Peter 4:11 ESV)

- Why did the church pray?
 - They were utterly dependent on God's power.

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.
(Acts 3:1 ESV)

*But many of those who had heard the word believed,
and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*
(Acts 4:4 ESV)

*And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue
to speak your word with all boldness,*
(Acts 4:29 ESV)

*And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all
filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*
(Acts 4:31 ESV)

*Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom,
whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer
and to the ministry of the word.”*
(Acts 6:3-4 ESV)

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in
Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*
(Acts 6:7 ESV)

*And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And falling to his knees
he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”
And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*
(Acts 7:59-60 ESV)

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church

in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.
(Acts 8:1-4 ESV)

But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem."
(Acts 9:13 ESV)

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized. . .
(Acts 9:18 ESV)

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.
(Acts 10:9 ESV)

"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.
(Acts 10:47-48 ESV)

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. . .
(Acts 16:25 ESV)

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.
(Acts 16:33 ESV)

- They were utterly desperate for God's grace.

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.
(Acts 6:8 ESV)

When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose. . .
(Acts 11:23 ESV)

And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.
(Acts 13:43 ESV)

So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace,

granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.
(Acts 14:3 ESV)

...and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.
(Acts 14:26 ESV)

“But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”
(Acts 15:11 ESV)

And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed...
(Acts 18:27 ESV)

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
(Acts 20:24 ESV)

And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
(Acts 20:32 ESV)

- They were utterly devoted to God's mission.
- How did the church pray?
 - They prayed with structure.
 - They prayed with spontaneity.
- When did the church pray?
 - They participated in concentrated prayer.
 - They participated in continual prayer.
- Where did the church pray?
 - They gathered together to pray.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
(Acts 13:1-3 ESV)

- They scattered apart to pray.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.
(Acts 16:6-8 ESV)

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be

silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.
(Acts 18:9-11 ESV)

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there...
(Acts 20:22 ESV)

- What did the church pray for?
 - For the success of God's Word.

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
(John 14:13 ESV)

- For the needs of each other and the world.
- For the spread of God's worship.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.
(Psalm 2:8 ESV)

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
(Habakkuk 2:14 ESV)

The Church Multiplies

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
(Acts 2:47 ESV)

*But many of those who had heard the word believed,
and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*
(Acts 4:4 ESV)

And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women...
(Acts 5:14 ESV)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.
(Acts 6:1 ESV)

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
(Acts 6:7 ESV)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And

walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
(Acts 9:31 ESV)

And a great many people were added to the Lord.
(Acts 11:24 ESV)

But the word of God increased and multiplied.
(Acts 12:24 ESV)

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.
(Acts 16:5 ESV)

So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.
(Acts 19:20 ESV)

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.
(Acts 28:30-31 ESV)

- Unifying and expanding
 - True biblical community is inseparable from evangelism in the church.
 - True biblical evangelism is inseparable from community in the church.

*“Our relationship with each other is the criterion the world uses to judge whether our message is truthful –
Christian community is the final apologetic.”*
Francis Schaeffer

“Now the Christians, O King, by going about and seeking, have found the truth. For they know and trust in God, the Maker of heaven and earth, who has no fellow. From him they received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds, and which they observe in the hope and expectation of the world to come.

They refuse to worship strange gods; and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them. They love one another; the widow's needs are not ignored, and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence. He who has gives to him who has not, ungrudgingly and without boasting. When the Christians find a stranger, they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as a true brother. They do not call brothers those who are bound by blood ties alone, but those who are brethren after the Spirit and in God.

When one of their poor passes away from the world, each provides for his burial according to his ability. If they hear of any of their number who are imprisoned or oppressed for the name of the Messiah, they all provide for his needs, and if it is possible to redeem him, they set him free.

If they find poverty in their midst, and they do not have spare food, they fast two or three days in order

that the needy might be supplied with the necessities. They observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah, living honestly and soberly as the Lord their God ordered them. Every morning and every hour they praise and thank God for his goodness to them; and for their food and drink they offer thanksgiving. Such, O King, is the commandment given to the Christians, and such is their conduct.”
Apology of Aristedes

- Quantitative Growth and Qualitative Growth

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.
(Acts 11:21 ESV)

And a great many people were added to the Lord.
(Acts 11:24 ESV)

... and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.
(Acts 11:26 ESV)

Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.
(Acts 14:1 ESV)

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch...
(Acts 14:21 ESV)

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.
(Acts 16:5 ESV)

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.
(Acts 17:4 ESV)

Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.
(Acts 17:12 ESV)

And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.
(Acts 19:26 ESV)

- One question in the church: How many people are coming?
 - Another question in the church: What kind of people are we producing?
- Worshiping and witnessing

- They unified through their worship.
- They multiplied through their witness.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?"
(Acts 3:11-12 ESV)

And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of the people of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought.
(Acts 5:21 ESV)

- Our worship is empty if it is disconnected from expression in the world.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.
(Acts 13:1-4 ESV)

- Gathered and scattered
 - Dangerous Misunderstandings:
 - The church views leaders as professional performers and members as amateur spectators.
 - The church measures success more by what happens when we come in than by what happens when we go out.
 - A Biblical Understanding:
 - The church gathers together to train one another in the Gospel.
 - The church scatters apart to penetrate the world with the Gospel.
- Local and Global

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
(Acts 1:8 ESV)

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.
(Acts 8:1-4 ESV)

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.
(Acts 11:19-21 ESV)

- A Dangerous Approach:
 - “But I’m not called to foreign missions.”
 - Reflects an unbiblical understanding of salvation.

Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!
(Psalm 96:1-3 ESV)

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.
(Psalm 67:1-2 ESV)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
(Acts 1:8 ESV)

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. . .
(Galatians 1:15-16 ESV)

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.
(Romans 1:14-15 ESV)

- “Wouldn’t it be better for me to give than to go?”
 - Reflects an unbiblical understanding of the Gospel.
- A Dynamic Alternative:
 - World-impacting disciples.
 - Ever-multiplying churches.

A Case Study in Church Activities: The Church at Antioch

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, [and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

(Acts 11:19-26 ESV)

- They were born in the context of mission.

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

(Acts 8:1-4 ESV)

- They were radically identified with the person Christ.
- They cared sacrificially for local churches around the world.

Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

(Acts 11:27-30 ESV)

- They were diversified in their leadership.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

(Acts 13:1-3 ESV)

- They blessed the Lord through corporate worship.
- They were desperately dependent on the Holy Spirit for direction and power.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

(Acts 16:6-10 ESV)

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

(Acts 18:9-11 ESV)

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself; if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

(Acts 20:22-24 ESV)

- They nurtured an atmosphere for sending people out.
- They advanced the Kingdom through multiplication.
- They grew in Christ at Antioch because of their ministry around the world.

...and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.

(Acts 14:26-28 ESV)

So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

(Acts 15:30-35 ESV)

When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

(Acts 18:22-23 ESV)

- They were ultimately renowned in Scripture for reproduction.

HOW IS THE CHURCH LED?

The Organization of the Church

Organization of the Church...

- The church is an organism...
 - And an organization.
- The church is an institution...
 - Comprised of individuals.
- Christ is Lord of the church...

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly charged the disciples

to tell no one that he was the Christ.

(Matthew 16:13-20 ESV)

...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

(Ephesians 4:14-16 ESV)

... and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

(Colossians 2:19 ESV)

- Yet He gives leaders to the church.
 - Elders, who are servant leaders in the church.
 - Deacons, who are leading servants in the church.

Elders: Servant Leaders in the Church

- The church chooses and follows elders as servant leaders who are wholeheartedly committed to accomplishing the mission of Christ.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.

(Acts 20:28-31 ESV)

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

(1 Timothy 3:1-7 ESV)

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

(Titus 1:5-9 ESV)

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

(1 Peter 5:1-4 ESV)

- Elder, pastor, and overseer are interchangeable terms and titles.
- The New Testament pattern is a plurality of elders in the church.
- Four Responsibilities of Elders...
 - Elders lead under the authority of Christ.
 - Elders belong to the church...

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

(Matthew 18:15-17 ESV)

- They are raised up by the Spirit of God.
- The church belongs to Christ...
 - Elders are responsible to the Son of God.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

(Acts 20:28 ESV)

- Elders care for the body of Christ.
 - Elders protect the flock.
 - Elders nurture the flock.
- Elders teach the Word of Christ.
 - Elders know the Word extensively.
 - Elders communicate the Word effectively.

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor,
especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*

(1 Timothy 5:17 ESV)

- Elders model the character of Christ.
 - The Primary Question: What will happen if the church imitates this leader?
 - In his personal life...
 - Is he self-controlled?
 - Is he wise?
 - Is he peaceable?
 - Is he gentle?
 - Is he a sacrificial giver?
 - Is he humble?
 - Is he patient?
 - Is he honest?
 - Is he disciplined?
 - In his family life...
 - Is he the elder in his home?
 - If he is single, is he self-controlled?
 - If he is married, is he completely committed to his wife?
 - If he has children, do they honor him?
 - In his social/business life...
 - Is he kind?
 - Is he hospitable?
 - Is he a friend of strangers?
 - Does he show favoritism?
 - Does he have a blameless reputation?
 - In his spiritual life...
 - Is he making disciples of all nations?
 - Does he love the Word?

- Is he a man of prayer?
- Is he holy?
- Is he gracious?

Deacons: Leading Servants in the Church

- The church affirms and honors deacons as leading servants who use their gifts to build up the body of Christ.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
(Acts 6:1-7 ESV)

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.
(1 Timothy 3:8-13 ESV)

- Three Responsibilities of Deacons...
 - Deacons meet needs according to the Word.
 - Arise from specific circumstances.
 - Accountable for specific commands.
 - Deacons support the ministry of the Word.
 - Deacons serve elders so they can lead.
 - Deacons lead others so they can serve.
 - Deacons unify the body around the Word.
 - Qualifications...
 - A Mission Mindset.
 - A Christlike Character.

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast

him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

(Acts 7:54-60 ESV)

■ Questions...

- Is this person honorable?
- Is this person genuine?
- Is this person self-controlled?
- Is this person a sacrificial giver?
- Is this person devoted to the Word?
- Is this person faithful?
- Is this person blameless?
- Is this person honoring Christ in the home?
- What about women?
 - Consider the translation.
 - Consider the transition.
 - Consider the elders' wives.
 - Consider the Phoebe factor.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae...

(Romans 16:1 ESV)

How It All Works...

- Every member of the church is a minister of the gospel.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

(Ephesians 4:11-16 ESV)

- Leaders serve the members.

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

(Hebrews 13:7-8 ESV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

(Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.
(Hebrews 13:24 ESV)

Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
(Matthew 23:10-12 ESV)

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."
(Mark 9:35 ESV)

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(Mark 10:45 ESV)

- Their authority is conditional.
 - They must teach the Word accurately.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.
(1 Timothy 5:17 ESV)

- They must live the Word faithfully.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.
(1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV)

- Their accountability is serious.
 - They serve carefully.
 - They serve responsibly.
 - They serve joyfully.
- The members submit leaders.
 - Members obey the Word that leaders teach.
 - Members are under the authority of Christ.
 - Members are ultimately accountable to Christ...
 - In matters of dispute.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.
(Acts 6:1-5 ESV)

- In matters of doctrine.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

(Galatians 1:8-9 ESV)

- In matters of discipline.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

(Matthew 18:15-20 ESV)

- Members imitate the faith that leaders have.
- Members maximize the joy that leaders experience.

*Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown,
stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

(Philippians 4:1 ESV)

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?

Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.

(1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 ESV)

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.

For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

(1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 ESV)

- When leaders serve members and members submit to leaders...
 - The church is edified.
 - Christ is glorified.

WHERE IS THE CHURCH GOING?

The Future of the Church

**As the people of God called by God's grace through faith in Christ
to glorify Him by serving Him in this world...**

- Let us lean on the faithfulness of the Lord.
 - God has always been gracious to His people.

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."
(Exodus 34:6-7 ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
(Ephesians 1:3-6 ESV)

- God has always been sufficient for His people.

The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.
(Psalm 28:7-9 ESV)

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
(2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ESV)

- His purposes will triumph.

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.
(Isaiah 46:9-11 ESV)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

(Romans 8:28-30 ESV)

- His promises will prove true.

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

(Numbers 23:19 ESV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

(Matthew 24:35 ESV)

- Let us learn from those who have gone before us.
 - They knew that God's call on their lives was only due to God's grace in their hearts.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(Genesis 12:1-3 ESV)

- They were not afraid to leave the familiar for the unknown.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

(Hebrews 11:8 ESV)

- They were clearly out of place in this world.

By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

(Hebrews 11:9-10 ESV)

- They patiently trusted in the promises of God.

By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

(Hebrews 11:9-10 ESV)

- They believed that God could accomplish the impossible.

*Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven
and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.
(Hebrews 11:12 ESV)*

- Their lives counted on earth because their eyes were fixed on heaven.

*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them
from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who
speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from
which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better
country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God,
for he has prepared for them a city.
(Hebrews 11:13-16 ESV)*

- Their radical faith led to radical sacrifice.

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the
act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He
considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which,
figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.
(Hebrews 11:17-19 ESV)*

- They were willing to die living by faith.

*And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had
provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.
(Hebrews 11:39-40 ESV)*

- Let us live for those who will come behind us.

*Give ear, O my people, to my teachings; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth
in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers
have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds
of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob
and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next
generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that
they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that
they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was
not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.
(Psalm 78:1-8 ESV)*

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

(1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 ESV)

- Let's share the Word with others.
 - They will receive the Word.

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

(Acts 17:1-4 ESV)

- Let's show the Word to others.
 - They will model the Word.

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.

(1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 ESV)

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.

For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

(1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 ESV)

- Let's teach the Word to others.
 - They will spread the Word.

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

(2 Timothy 2:1-2 ESV)

- Let us long for the end of the world.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
(Matthew 24:14 ESV)

- God's purpose for the church is clear.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

- Over 11,000 people groups in the world.
- Over 6,000 people groups still not reached with the gospel.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
(Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
(Revelation 7:9-10 ESV)

- God's plan for the church is costly.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."
(Matthew 24:9-13 ESV)

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself; if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
(Acts 20:22-24 ESV)

- God's promise to the church is coming.

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
(Matthew 24:30-31 ESV)

- He will return for His church.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
(Revelation 1:4-8 ESV)

- We will reign in His kingdom.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
(Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

- We will rejoice forever in our God.

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.
(Revelation 22:12-21 ESV)

Recommended Reading

If you are interested in further study of on the church, the following resources are recommended. Please note, however, that though these books are recommended, Dr. Platt does not necessarily agree with everything written in every one of them. We urge you to read and learn from these books, but at the same time, be wise in your reading to discern biblical teaching from writers' thoughts.

- On the Church...
 - Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*
 - Edmund Clowney, *The Church*
 - R.B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*
 - John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*
 - Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*
 - Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating the Church*
 - Thabiti Anyabwile, *What is a Healthy Church Member?*
 - Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*
 - Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*
 - Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion*
 - Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church*
 - Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*
- General Theology Books...
 - Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology or Bible Doctrine*
 - Daniel Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church*
 - Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*

About the Teacher

Dr. David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, is deeply devoted to Christ and His Word. David's first love in ministry is disciple making—the simple, biblical model of teaching God's Word, mentoring others, and sharing faith. He has traveled extensively to teach the Bible alongside church leaders throughout the United States and around the world. Atlanta natives, he and his wife, Heather, made their home in New Orleans until they were displaced by flooding following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

A lifelong learner, David has earned two undergraduate and three advanced degrees. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism (ABJ) from the University of Georgia and a Master of Divinity (MDiv), Master of Theology (ThM), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He has previously served at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as Dean of Chapel and Assistant Professor of Expository Preaching and Apologetics and as Staff Evangelist at Edgewater Baptist Church in New Orleans. He has authored several books, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*, *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God* and most recently *Follow Me*. He is the founder of Radical (Radical.net), a resource ministry dedicated to serving the church by making disciples of all nations.

David and his wife, Heather, live in Birmingham, Alabama with their children.

About Radical

Radical exists to serve the church in accomplishing the mission of Christ.

We long to see the church making disciples who make disciples who make disciples throughout the world – from our neighbors across the street to the unreached people groups across the globe – all for the glory of God.

Radical is a parachurch ministry that serves alongside the local church, providing multi-lingual biblical resources birthed in the context of a local church that we hope will support disciple-making in other local churches around the world.

Radical serves these churches by providing resources in multiple languages, organizing events, like Secret Church, and facilitating opportunities through multiple avenues that all aim to encourage followers of Christ in the global purpose God has designed for us as His people. Many of our resources come from the ministry of David Platt, who serves as one of the pastors of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama.

To learn more about Radical visit our website, Radical.net.

Additional Resources

PAST SECRET CHURCH RESOURCES

Past Secret Church resources (DVDs, CDs, and Study Guides) are available for purchase online at Radical (Radical.net).

ONLINE RESOURCES

Secret Church resources, including audio and video recordings of the teaching sessions, downloadable study guides, and links to additional information about the persecuted church are available on the Secret Church website (SecretChurch.org) and through the Radical website (Radical.net).

TRANSLATED RESOURCES

Secret Church resources and other message series have been translated into multiple languages. Audio recordings, transcripts, and study guides can be downloaded from the Radical website in the Resource Library (Radical.net). Current languages include Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, Indonesian, Russian, Farsi, French, Vietnamese, Thai, and Amharic. New resources and languages are continually being added to the website.

BOOKS BY DAVID PLATT

David Platt is the author of several books: *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*, *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God* and most recently, *Follow Me*. These books are available online at Radical (Radical.net).

If you would like additional information about the books, visit RadicalTheBook.com, RadicalTogether.com and FollowMeBook.org. All proceeds from book sales go toward promoting the glory of Christ in all nations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources such as sermons, Small Group Guides, Family Worship Guides, and more are available on the Radical website (Radical.net).

Notes

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