

The Local Church

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[0 : 00] your Bibles now. We'll dive right into the scripture here for a few moments. Find Acts chapter 7. Acts chapter 7. If you weren't with us last Sunday, we started a little study here, a little thought about the local church.

And really, I want to start this morning almost not quite backtracking, but there was some, I just want to clarify some terminology. And then we'll kind of review briefly what we've studied and bring a few more thoughts out about the local church. The word church in your Bible shows up in a variety of ways, a variety of applications of that word. And it's, the word every time, it's about a, it's a congregation or it's an assembly of people. It's never a building.

It's never a reference to an organization like that, but rather to an assembly of people, believers specifically, but in the most sense of the word, but not, not exclusively. Let's look at Acts chapter 7. And I'll show you that here's one of the references of this word in the Bible, verse 38.

Verse 38, it says, This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount sign. That says Moses. It says that Moses was with a church. What church was Moses part of?

Well, he's referring to the nation of Israel. And the first, not the first time, but rather in history, maybe the usage of it as it applies is to a nation of people as they're leaving or exiting Egypt and heading toward a promised land. The parallels to what we know and are is impressive to consider that they were redeemed by blood and out of bondage and that they had a promise ahead of them, a land promise to them, and that they were pilgrims and strangers and they were traveling through, they were sustained by God through the whole thing from manna and the bread of life. You could see how that parallels us pretty well. But calling that nation a church, that's a reference to Israel, not to any local church, not to any pastor and deacon board and elders and any of that, just Moses, Aaron, the people of Israel traveling through. So the parallel is nice to see that, but nevertheless, I want you to see the word itself is not applied to a building or a denomination or anything else right there. It's just applied to

[3 : 05] Israel. Now come back to Acts chapter 2. So to begin this morning, we're going to look at the terminology and the uses of the word church. And I could have started off here last week. It may have been helpful, but really the thoughts last week just kind of, we dove right into a different direction.

And so now we'll kind of backtrack and just clear up and make sure everybody understands when you read that word in your Bible, what the context will give you the light of what it's referring to. So the word church, all right, Acts chapter 2, verse 47. Here it says, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. This is a setting early after in chapter 1, Christ ascends, the Holy Ghost in chapter 2 descends. So the day of Pentecost, you're just talking within the, like the very season of Christ's death, burial, resurrection. Just two months later at the max, and this is taking place. And they're, and Peter's preaching and the apostles are preaching and teaching what they know to preach and teach.

And they're, they're doing this in the temple in verse 46, because that's all they know as a place of worship. And so in verse 47, it talks about the church. Well, the temple's not the church.

So what is, it's a refer, reference to people. It says that in verse 47, having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. And so here's an assembly of people growing in number. These are Jews. And as they're growing in number, they're not really accepted in the temple. And their doctrine is not accepted in the temple. And so they kind of get pushed on. Look at chapter eight. They don't just get pushed on. They get a little more than a push.

[5 : 05] Acts chapter eight, verse one. And Saul was consenting unto his death. That'd be Stephen in the previous chapter. Stephen's one of the deacons of that early church in Jerusalem. And they

kill him.

That'll tell you something about the, well, all right. To his death. And at that time, there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Verse three says, as for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committing them to prison.

So here's a local church, an assembly of believers, of Jewish believers in Jerusalem that are not being accepted by the Jews, by those followers of Moses. And they're scattering them. They're persecuting them. And Saul, as we know him, the apostle Paul, is leading the charge. Now look to chapter nine.

And this is where Saul is converted. And come to verse number 31. We read in chapter eight that they were scattered. And they went to throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. So Judea is, Jerusalem's in Judea. And so they're spreading across that area. That's in Israel. North of that is Samaria. North of that is Galilee. These are regions, the three major regions of the land.

Now look at verse 31. After Paul, Saul is converted and he's no longer persecuting the Christians. Verse 31 says, then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

[6 : 58] So there's churches, plural this time. It's not just the church at Jerusalem. There was one church as this all started off. One. And as it spread and with the persecution, this was of the Lord, no doubt, spread that thing across all of where? This is all Israel.

Those three localities there or regions, Judea, Galilee, Samaria, that's Israel. Now they go as far as, you can skip over to chapter 11 and see that they went much further than just Israel. But there were many local churches then cropping up over time in Israel. All right. Acts chapter 11.

Notice verse 19. Taking us right back to that persecution we read. Now they which were scattered abroad about the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phineas and Cyprus and Antioch. So now we're getting up into Syria. We're getting outside of Israel.

So these Jews, these believers, these disciples of the Lord as they're known, are spreading out and they're starting their own meetings and congregations and, as it were, churches. So these are local churches, as we'll call them.

So turn to the right. Keep going to the right. Look at 1 Thessalonians. Here's a book we can pull a thought from. There's so many instances of this. I won't take you through every mention of a particular local church. There's certain ones they're meeting. Matter of fact, I'm just looking across the page at Colossians 4 verse 15 and you'll notice somebody's got a church in his house.

[8 : 44] And you'll notice in verse 16 there's a church of the Laodiceans. There's another one. And so now 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's a local group in Thessalonica. There was one in Jerusalem. There was one in Laodicea. Peter writes about the church at Babylon. Churches are spreading and popping up rather. Believers are spreading. Churches are popping up. These are local churches. Come back to Galatians chapter 1.

Galatians chapter 1. So the word church in your Bible is a reference one time there to the nation of Israel leaving Egypt, the church in the wilderness. It's also a reference to local assemblies, many of them around Israel, around the greater region, around the continent. Here we are in Galatians chapter 1.

And here's a reference to not Galatia. That's not a city. That's a region. You'll notice in verse number 2. And all the brethren which are with me unto the churches, plural, unto the churches of Galatia. So he writes this letter and sends it off to churches, plural, to many of them. So these are, we could run some references here. There's churches of Galatia. There's churches of Macedonia. There's churches we've already read of Judea, Samaria of Galilee. There's, he calls sometimes the churches of Christ. Sometimes he uses the term the churches of God. So there's multiple, plural, many, many, many churches popping up. Believers getting together and assembling in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are what we call local churches. They're associated with the locality. They've, this has been the focus of the comments the last, last week up to date. Now there's also another way that the word church is used to be something else. And let's take a look at that and understand that. So come back to Matthew chapter 16. The word church can mean more than these two things we've noticed. This will be the first time that the word shows up in your King James Bible, Matthew chapter 16.

[11 : 25] And we'll, we'll run a few references here. We'll be in Ephesians here in a moment after this, but the first mention, let's get that down in verse number 18. The Lord's talking to Peter. He says, and I say unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my church. I will build my church. Oh, Jesus is the son of a carpenter, right? So he's going to build a building. Is that what's going on? No, he's not building a building. He never built a building. And for that matter, it's again, it's a reference to people. He's going to build something made of people. There's, well, I don't know if we'll get to these references or not. Come to Ephesians now. We'll go to there because every time the word church shows up in the book of Ephesians, it's a reference to the same thing.

Christ is not talking about a building and he's not talking about the Jews that came with Moses through the wilderness. And he's not talking about just some local establishment or, or isolated group in Jerusalem. It may have started that way, but what we've already seen is it took off and went and popped up all over the place. Churches, plural. But when Jesus Christ says, I will build my church, is there one church that belongs to Jesus? If so, where is it? Because he said that singular, my church.

So, if, if that's a local church, as some people teach to their ignorance and folly, if that's a local church, then where is it? Some will say, well, he's referring to the one that started in Jerusalem. That's the one he built. And from there it spread. And that's what we're supposed to do is, and that can make sense if you talk yourself into it. But we're going to see something here that, that kind of connects a whole lot better than just talking your way around that. Ephesians chapter one, and let's take a look here at how it's referred to. I'll just say it like this. It's referred to, it can, the word church can also refer to a larger body and an all-inclusive body of believers.

No matter what sex, what age, what race, what status, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ and you're born again, washed in the blood, forgiven of your sins, you're placed into the body of Christ.

[13 : 47] That's the book. That's what it says in 1 Corinthians 12. And when you're placed into the body of Christ, you're placed into what he calls his church. So, it's a different usage. You're not placed into some membership at Jerusalem. When you get saved, you don't get placed into the, just like by the spirit automatically, the closest church in Burbank or over in, that's not how that works. You're placed into something bigger than that. Look at Ephesians chapter one and look at verse 22, where the Bible says, and hath put all things under his feet. Well, the context has him raising from the dead and then being given dominion of everything. And so, God has put all things under his feet, that is the son. And he gave him, Jesus Christ, to be the head over all things to the church.

Notice the next phrase, which is his body. Notice the next phrase, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Now, how can that be applied to a local church in Silmar? How can I take that?

How can that be applied to the local church at Ephesus? Let's go to Ephesus. Let's go find that church. Because that church, if we're going to believe this doctrine some teach about the local church, that church is his body. And that church is the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

Well, what are the rest of them then? Well, the point is here that this is not isolated to one locality. This word church is a reference to something much bigger. And I'll give you a hint. It's not the Roman Catholic Church.

They call themselves the Holy Mother Church. That's baloney. That's not true. That's not Bible. That's supposed. And they worship Mary, by the way.

[15 : 42] So, this is his body, the body of Christ, as it's called, the church. All right, stay in Ephesians and look at chapter 5. Flip over to chapter 5 and you'll see clearly this can't be a reference to one local church or to every single individual local church combined.

Ephesians 5 and we'll start in verse 23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.

And he is the savior of, look at it, the body. So, there again, twice we see the church and the body. The same designations for the same thing. Verse 24.

Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands and everything. Husbands, love your wives. How? Even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, singular.

Remember, he said, I'll build my church. He loved the church. He gave himself for it. It is his body. It is the fullness of him that filleth all in all. What in the world could that be applied to?

[16 : 49] To Ephesus? To a few, to Timothy leading a few, 20, 30, 40, 200 people? Is that the fullness? No. Keep reading.

In verse 26. He gave himself for it. Why? That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

He continues to talk about the husbands and the wives. And in verse 29, he says at the end of the verse, He says, Even as the Lord, the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.

And he's referring, and I won't read it all, but you can skim that, and you'll see this relationship of the husband and wife, and this picture is, is picturing a greater relationship of Christ and his church. He calls it a great mystery in verse 32. But I speak concerning Christ and the church, the church, the church, his body, the church. Not talking about a locality at all.

[17:58] It's talking about something much bigger. Turn back to 1 Corinthians. Actually, keep your place. Let's look over at chapter 2 while we're here. And then we'll move. Chapter 2 of Ephesians.

I just wanted to point out this in verse number 19. When you receive Christ, you're placed into the body of Christ, into what we'll call the universal church.

It's an indivisible, or sorry, it is indivisible. It is an invisible body, as well as an indivisible body. It is a spiritual body made up of all believers.

Look at verse number 19 of chapter 2. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and notice this, and of the household of God.

Of the household of God. So he's talking specifically to these believers at Ephesus, and he tells them, you are of something bigger than you. You're of the household of God now.

[18:56] So that's the church. That's his body. Let's move to the left to Galatians chapter 6, and then we'll go back to 1 Corinthians. Galatians 6, and notice verse number 10.

Galatians 6, 10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Is that just talking about those churches, your local church? No. I can be of the household of faith in 2023, just like Paul was talking to somebody, almost 2,000 years ago, and they too were of the household of faith, and I've never met them, and I've never been anywhere near this land.

But we're all of the household of faith in Christ. Okay, 1 Corinthians 12. This is our last verse on this. 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

So to just again reiterate, the word church can mean different things. It meant the nation of Israel in the Old Testament traveling through the wilderness in Acts 7.

[20:10] It referred to that congregation. It refers to local congregations all over the region, all over the world that are in Christ, that are gathering together to worship Jesus Christ, and those are local churches.

That's kind of been what we were talking about last week, and now just clarifying the terms, there's also a greater body. In one sense, you want to say, well, all the local churches come together to make one church, and that's kind of true, but not exactly, because you could be a member of a local church and not be in Christ.

You know, you could actually be lost and tell everybody, and so I'm not trying to make anybody lose their salvation or doubt it. I'm just suggesting it's possible that somebody who's not in Christ could be in here, and it's also possible, actually very likely, that there are people that are in Christ who are not here.

Let's just imagine somebody gets saved in jail. They've never joined a local church, so are they saved? Yeah, they're part of the household of faith. They're in Christ.

They've been baptized by the Spirit into a spiritual body called the church, the body of Christ. All right, 1 Corinthians 12, and look at verse number 12.

[21:26] For as the body is one, that is, your body, is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body.

Illustration, so also is Christ. Christ is made up of many members. Verse 13, Verse 13, For by one Spirit are we all baptized into, notice it says, one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit, for the body is not one member, but many.

And he goes on to talk about your physical body and give the illustration stronger, all the way to verse 27, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Now, here's the point I want you to get out of here, is not just, number one, that you're baptized, or that you're placed into Christ's body, his invisible spiritual body.

This is a spiritual interaction that takes place upon salvation. On Wednesday, we looked at spiritual circumcision a little bit in Colossians 2, and in that same passage, he used the word baptized.

[22 : 38] Because you've been baptized, your soul's been cut apart from the body of the sins of the flesh, and it's been baptized into, or placed into, just like you get dunked into water here, to represent your old man being put to death, and your new man being raised to walk in newness of life.

That's a picture, and an outward identification for everybody to see. This is me now. New creature. That guy's dead. Just like you get put into that water, just as a symbol, what really takes place spiritually is that you're placed into the body of Christ.

And you're not coming back up out of that one. You're into that one. And that's what he says in verse 13, for by one spirit are we all baptized into one body. There's no reference to water anywhere in this chapter.

Nobody's getting wet. Anywhere, when you trust Jesus Christ, you're getting placed into the body by the spirit. Okay, now the other point there is that it says Christ is one body.

One body. It is not many bodies, singular, all over the place, plural, to make one body. No, this is, Christ is one body.

[23 : 51] And if you're in Christ, whether you're part of a local church or not, you're in the body. So this is the other reference to the word church. The third reference is to the greater, bigger, larger body of Christ, which is made up of all believers, alive and dead, in Christ.

In Christ. From ages past to today, we're in Jesus Christ. Paul said, where did he say that? He said that in Galatians, no, in Romans 16, he said that there was people, he greeted, greet this one, greet that one, he says, which were in Christ before me.

Before me, there was people that were in Christ. Matter of fact, he says he persecuted the church of God. All right. So there's the terminology. And I want you just to know and understand, there's a difference between a local church, a temporary, earthly, that can be dissolved, church, and then the greater body of Christ, eternal church.

It's important to notice those differences. Some people don't teach that. They believe that there is no such thing as a universal body of Christ. They think it's all local church, everything. And that's just a mistake.

It's not, it's not right. Okay. So the terminology I want to clarify. Now, just to review last week, we talked about the inception of the local church, kind of hit a little bit of that just now with how the scattering took place.

[25 : 20] And so Paul went, then after that, and it went to different regions. And what Paul does is start writing letters. And as he writes these letters, he tries, he realizes there's some things wrong over here.

And I need to set some things in order. And he tells Titus, you go and appoint elders in every city and put it, set things in order. And so that there was common for these new churches sprouting up to not know what's the correct function is or the correct order of service, so to speak, how to behave in the house of God.

As it says, Timothy, the pillar and ground of the truth. There's a, a need for Paul in that early stages to, to help get things straightened out that were mixed up and messed up.

Somebody see what that is, huh? And it's not uncommon for that to be the case. It's the case when a baby starts up, right?

It starts up kind of dumb and doesn't know how to behave itself. And so it needs to be trained and led the right way. And so same thing with local churches. Now, the point we made last Sunday and studied was that churches started with that tendency or possibility for mistakes and for errors and for just confusion.

[26 : 38] And then it, it led forward into getting established, getting things in order. And then it went a little bit to what's been prophesied to our day where there's a falling away and they're heaping to themselves, teachers having itching ears.

They're turning away their ears from the truth. And so the church, while it started in that early phase, it grew up and then it started falling away. And that's where we live today. So we talked about that a little bit last week.

And then I gave you some thoughts about the modern attitude toward the local church. The modern attitude being, what can you do for me? If I come to your church, what do you have to offer me? And that's, that's, that's sunk in. It's sunk into a generation. It's been promoted. It's been, I said last week, I don't blame every single person, although there's a selfishness and a pride about that. I don't blame everybody for that because I think churches have marketed themselves to be that way. They've promoted themselves to say, here's what we have. Come and visit us and check out this.

[27 : 44] We have a new kid center. Look what your kids are going to do during church. If the kids are having fun, then mom and dad can stay and give their tithes and sit there and fill a pew.

And the, the pitch has become an amusement park for Christians and Christians are, have been trained to be entertained. They've been taught what's in it for me.

It's all about you. That's the marketing scheme of our world. And it's become, it's in the churches. So there's a, a carnality to it. I said it last week.

Churches have branded themselves as an amusement park for worshipers. And instead of feeding the word of God, it's the entertainment of music. And of that video light show atmosphere has come up so high.

The word of God has gotten so low, so minimal and there's something wrong. And it's been wrong like that for a long time. And so we, we talked about that and how it's gotten in and it's in this generation.

[28 : 45] It's in our Bible believing local churches. And I want to stand up and try to kick against it and try to keep it out of here and keep it out of you so that you understand you don't come here for you.

Now you benefit from it. I'll tell you that in a second here. And I'm going a lot longer than I wanted to on this. You'll benefit from being in church. You should, it should help you, but that's not why you walk in the door.

You don't get up in the morning to get something for you. You get up in the morning and come here to give something to him. That's who it's about. And, uh, I'm really trying to move on here.

So the, uh, the attitude toward the local church. And I told you last week, some things about what the local church is not, that it's not a social club. It's not an activity center.

It's not a benevolent, what did I call it? Society, like charitable organization just to help the community. I get, I get emails and calls from LA that call this church because we're on a list of churches in the area.

[29 : 48] You know, let me just have a role. and, and they call and they want to know, they want me to fill out a form to tell them what, what we do for the community. Now, I don't fill it out.

I just delete the stupid email. I don't really care to fill out their forms and to update them on what we do. Uh, if I did, I would, I would tell them what we do and it would have nothing to do with what they're expecting.

But I just figure why, why bother? But that's what they think a church is. The lost world thinks a church is helping people and just feeding the poor and doing those kind of things.

And no, if they want to do that, fine. But no, that is not your, your, your, uh, purpose and role. Now, real quickly, I'll just throw a few things at you here to wrap this up this morning.

The purpose and the role of the local church. And I'll put it in three categories. First to the Lord. What is the purpose and function and role of this thing for him? What is it for you?

[30 : 46] And then what is it to or for the world? Now there's a very common line and it is this. Evangelize the sinner, edify the saints, and glorify the savior.

That's a really common little condensed theme or thought. And it's good. And maybe it's backwards because it starts with the world and then to us and then to him. But that's not a big deal.

I don't want to park on that. And there's scripture. There's so much scripture to, to put all together. I'm not going to do that to you. I'm just going to condense it down to a few statements. Number one,

the purpose and role of the local church is to, for the Lord, for God is to glorify the Lord, to glorify him, to please him.

He deserves that. He's earned that. He deserves whatever he desires. He deserves. And he desires glory. And he desires worship.

And it pleases him. And that's one reason, if not the primary reason, that the local church exists. He's worthy of our worship and our obedience.

[31 : 47] And he's not getting it from the lost. He's not getting it from them. He's not even getting it from some of the saved. So, that's one. And by the way, the church today is not a replacement of the Old Testament temple, and the Jewish setup, and the sacrifices, and that unique style of worship.

That was something he set up, and we'll come back into play if you read your Bible. We are not replacing that and wiping that away. This is something unique for today. The local church. Now, the purpose is to glorify God. Another idea of the purpose of why we exist is for the work of God in this age. To fulfill his will on this planet.

What does he want? What is he trying to see accomplished? That's our job to do that. And as we come together, we unify to do that. We strengthen each other to do that.

Not just to help you, but to help us please him. So, coming together, there's strength in numbers. And you have a natural proclivity to join with people.

[32 : 52] Even if you're, you know, some weirdo. Much more than weirdos. Even if you're just, you know, a hermit. There's still, in the new man, a need and a desire to come together with people.

And to glorify the Lord. And so, for God, we can fulfill his work today and his will. And I'd say there's many facets to that. So, I'm not going to just try to say one or two or three things that would encompass.

But in a broad sense, that's a purpose and role of the local church for the Lord is to glorify him and to fulfill his will and work in this earth today. Now, for you, for believers, what's the local church purpose and role for you?

It's to help you grow spiritually. That's one. To help you grow in the Lord. To edify the new man. To encourage you.

And to uplift you. We all live in this world. We all live where it's sinful. Where it's lieth in wickedness. We all deal with that and hear that and have our eyes just bombarded with that.

[33 : 59] It's good to get together and to be edified with one another. You come in here and you feel guilty if you're going to start talking about some filthy movie you watched. You're not going to talk about that too loudly in here because there's just a sense of that doesn't belong here.

That garbage belongs out there. Don't bring that in here. You know that in your new man. You know we don't behave ourselves unseemly. And whether you do out there or not, you don't do it in here. When we come together, it's to uplift and to provoke one another to love and good works. When you come in here, you come in here to realize and understand you're not alone. You're not out just trying to serve God in this world and just trying my best, God, like you're on some island.

You come here and you realize I'm not the only one. And that helps you. That should strengthen you. That'll just prod you to keep on. Somebody gets up and gives a testimony that they handed out a tract to somebody.

That tells you, hey, I didn't do that this week. And it kind of reproves you when you hear that somebody else did that. It encourages you to do what you should be doing. You get that here.

[35 : 05] You don't get that sitting at home watching TV. You get that. You get to grow. You get edified. You find out that you're not supposed to live for Jesus Christ by yourself. He gave you brothers and sisters.

He gave you a church family to encourage and help and strengthen you and to pray for you and to mourn with you and to rejoice with you. The Bible says that we're to honor and prefer one another, to comfort and pray for one another.

You get all of that in a local church. If you don't have a local church, I'm preaching to the choir, I know. Look what you're missing. Look what should be availed to you.

Another thought here for believers, you get trained up in the Word of God. You do that in your local church. Some people think they can do that on YouTube. And yeah, that is something different in this age that never was there before.

And yes, there's been ministries in the past that there have been tape ministries, there have been CD ministries, there's been online Bible institutes, those kind of things. That's growing more and more with accessibility.

[36 : 08] And in ages past, you'd have to fill out a little form. I did this when I was a young man. I remember having a catalog and checking the box of the tapes I wanted to order and sending in my \$3 per tape and getting about four or five tapes at a time and listening to preaching and listening to it over and over and over again and accumulating over time a whole box full of these cassette tapes

and then CDs and then it all transitioned.

I was feeding myself on the side but that's not the local church that I was part of. The local church I was part of every Sunday morning, every Wednesday, every time we met together which was several times a week, I would get fed the word of God.

And I was just, when there was times where my heart was really tuned into the Lord, there was times where I was resentful inside, bitter, when there wasn't preaching. When it was something else, I was like, oh man, I wanted to hear from God.

I wanted to get in the Bible. I wanted to be fed. And sometimes there was just different things that would take place in a service which is fine. I'm all about it but I remember feeling like, man, I really was kind of looking forward to hearing some Bible preaching because I needed it.

But it was just me. That was the way I was, you know, the Lord was dealing my heart and was training me up and equipping me and I was hungry for it. And so God will use the local church to train up men and equip them for spiritual warfare.

[37 : 40] All of us, to be honest. But even specifically, men that the Lord's putting His hand on. He'll move them a direction and He'll do it in a local church. You need reproof.

You need rebuke and you need exhorted because the world is not going to do that for any one of us. But the local church will and the pastor will, God willing, the Word of God will and the Spirit of God in here will.

You ever listen to a sermon on YouTube or on any other forum and say, man, that was good but there's something about listening to that sermon.

I can't quite put my finger on it. I don't want to say this to be doctrinally true but it feels to me like it reaches the head and very little of it gets to the heart.

It feels like in the audio, in the ears, it just, it does not have the effect, I know this, doesn't have the effect of being in the seat, in the congregation where the brothers and sisters are gathered, where the Spirit of God is there and arrest your attention, where it's clean, where it's quiet, where you're not distracted by what you're seeing, by what you're doing, while you're listening, by driving or whatever else you're doing.

[38 : 58] And there's something about being in the place, in the locality, while the Word of God is coming forth, that you can receive it with your heart.

and it cannot be duplicated or manufactured by re-listening to it online. And I listen to stuff a lot and I enjoy it but most of it, I've noticed, it just is going right in here.

Most of it, it's just hitting me in the head, oh, that was good. I never heard that before. But rarely is it ever getting down into here and dealing with me.

Even if it's good, even if it's like hard, sometimes when it's hard, it's just like, man, that was hard, that was really cool. But it never, it rarely feels like it grips me.

But when I'm sitting in the pew, oh, it's like the Lord's right there. And he starts, the preacher doesn't even have to say much of anything.

[39 : 59] If the Lord's going to deal with me, he does it. And it's just like, I'm here. I could run away from it but there's something about being in the building when it's live, when it's happening.

And I'm getting way off here but for believers to counter the influence of the world and to redirect our thoughts to the truth and to eternity and to our purpose and role of glorifying God, that's something you can get here.

Now, I've got to stop here because I'm already going longer than I wanted to this morning. Maybe I'll finish this next week or not. I'll see. I wanted to take a break from Sunday school a few minutes early because this is our last Sunday with a couple of our brothers here.

Greg and Vic are taking off and moving. And so rather than doing some big celebration and meal, we're going to do a little something, a little honey bun cake and watermelon out there and give you a chance to fellowship in between the services.

And so I wanted to give you more time but I kind of got rambling. Sorry about that. So let's take a break right now and we'll come back a few minutes after 10 and go enjoy some of that.

[41 : 07] You guys don't stay in here. Go out there. Thank you. Thank you.