

The Glorious Church: Its Foundation, Identity, Mission, and Destiny

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[0 : 00] We're going to go to the Word of God, to Ephesians 5, if you've got your Bible. Ephesians 5. And of course today people think Pentecost Sunday, the manifestation of the church, the birthday of the church, some call it.

But of course we know the church was there in kind of picture form through the Old Testament. Then through the Gospels we see our Lord ministering to the church, the disciples. But on Pentecost Sunday we think of the church as manifested, as revealed, as glorified, as empowered. And we think of the church this morning and we're talking about the church and what it means for us today. And of course some people look at the church in general and they've got this kind of negative idea, this fault finding, this critical view.

And it's easy to sit back and be a critic of the church and find some fault. But I've heard it said, if you've got your hands to the oars, you don't have time to rock the boat. It's good to be behind the church, isn't it?

To get involved in a good church like this one. So we're going to go to Ephesians 5 from verse 25. It reads, Let's pray.

[1 : 31] Lord, we thank you for your church, that we can be a part of this church family this morning, this gathering, this assembly, this congregation of your people. And Lord, that we can come and sing your praises and come together and fellowship and build relationships with fellow believers and encourage others that might not yet be a believer.

Lord, that we can come and hear your word and read your word and speak your word. Lord, and that your word would have its work in every heart.

We pray that you would be glorified in your church, in this church, as we gather and as we come to your word. Lord, let it be feed to our soul. We ask in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Amen. The church. It's not a building. It's a gathering. It's an assembly. It's God's redeemed people getting together and fellowshiping with each other.

And the church is not some building of bricks and mortar. It's not a denomination. Not a social club for self-help. It's a holy, precious assembly of God's redeemed people.

[2 : 39] And that's what you are today as you look at this world of sin, of trouble. We can come to the truth of the gospel and know the saving power of Christ's salvation.

And we can have faith as we glorify our precious Savior together. And the church is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament. So we'll only cover 99 of them this morning.

No, not really. We can only scratch the surface, really, as far as what the Bible says about the church. But it's at the heart of God's plan, isn't it? The precious church of God. The glorious church, as this verse tells us one day it will be.

And the church, it is his program. It's his purpose. It's a living organism. Growing, designed to reflect his glory. As ultimately we'll see his face.

Where it means I'm advancing his kingdom on this earth. And seeing lives transformed as we're reaching out, as we heard before. And it's been said your local church is like a bank.

[3 : 40] The more you put into it, the greater the interest. So it's good to get behind the church, isn't it? Get behind the work of the church and God. It's the congregation in this local region.

Let's take a look at the church as far as its foundation, its identity, its mission. It's a mission to develop daring disciples and its ultimate destiny to be that spot-free, radiant bride of Christ, as we've just read.

And we see in these verses it tells how he has set it apart to be loved. That he might sanctify, cleanse it. That he might present it ultimately to himself.

That glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But that should be without blemish. That's God's ideal, isn't it, for the perfect church. And we are in that perfect church. It's still being perfected, but it is that church, isn't it? And so firstly we look at the foundation. The foundation of Christ's glorious church.

[4 : 40] We see the church rests on that foundation who is Christ. That unshakable foundation. Our Lord Jesus says in Matthew 16, 18, I will build my church.

My church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Think of that church. It's got a wonderful, glorious promise there. And our Lord's promise was in response to Peter's confession. Where he says in Matthew 16, 16, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. That was the foundation, that confession of faith in Christ.

And we think of the church where there's a rock underneath us. Amen. It's Christ. That confession of Christ. And that rock that we're built on is Christ's identity as the saviour.

It's not some human effort or power. And the Lord Jesus, as we read in 1 Corinthians 3, 10 through 11, he's the cornerstone. He's the head of the body.

[5 : 38] Colossians 1, 18. Think how it reads there. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That in all things, he might have the preeminence.

He's the one who makes the church glorious, isn't he? The head of the church, the owner of the church. It's his. He says it's my church. And what's more, he's the builder. I will build my church. And to him, we want to direct all the glory and honour, don't we? Consider the value of the church, how precious it is that it tells us in Ephesians 5, he gave himself for it.

That he laid down his life, shed his very lifeblood to redeem the people of God, to set us free from our sin, to save us for eternity. And this was no casual act, the work of our Lord, our Redeemer. He shed his lifeblood. So highly did he prize you, his precious blood-bought people, that you are so valuable to the Saviour, so beloved. And we ought not take lightly the value of the church.

[6 : 42] It's a very precious body of people. And we think of the love that he showed as he tells us, husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church. There's a beautiful picture there, isn't there?

That he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word of God. There's a washing, there's a cleansing. Every time we open these pages and read these words and put them in our heart, there's a wonderful washing of water by the word that he might present it as a glorious church.

A glorious church. We see our Lord's love as he first ministered and he revealed his mission in Luke 4 from verses 16 through 21 as he stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth.

And he read from the words of the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming that the Spirit had anointed him. And for what reason? To preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering a sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

And when you think of it, our Lord's mission, that's our mission now, isn't it? That we are part of his mission. That he calls us to that work of continuing his mission, reaching out to the lost, the brokenhearted, the captives, to see the blind, the bruised, receive the good news, the gospel.

[8 : 14] The power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. And we think about the church, what it's meant to be. As we get to know one another in a local church body such as this, there's a community here.

There's a relationship that we build together. And we're a community of God's saved people by the grace of God. We've all got that common, wonderful knowledge that it's God's grace that makes us his saved people.

And we can be sinners that have found forgiveness and our lives are still being transformed, still being perfected as that glorious church ultimately. This is the church, the church that Christ died for. You're blessed to be a part of it. You're blessed to have that privilege to come and fellowship and get together. I know I was talking with someone not long ago who used to work and live in the nation of Saudi Arabia.

And he was telling me how the believers there, they had to kind of surreptitiously kind of sneak one by one. They couldn't go in couples or groups.

[9 : 16] They had to go one at a time into a house. And this house was where they met. That was their building as a church. It was just some simple, humble home.

And the walls of the home, they put eggshell cartons on the walls to deaden the noise. They couldn't sing up loud like you can here this morning. They had to, I don't know how they would sing.

Maybe they whispered the songs because they couldn't be heard. Because it was illegal to be a believer in that area. And if you walked around with a cross or something or carried a Bible, you'd be identified as someone who they would grab and put away in prison and hold them captive because it was illegal to be a believer in that place.

And in this little house where they met, they had a little hole in the ground where they would bring their Bible along that day. And then they'd put their Bibles in this little hole in the ground inside the house for next Sunday because they'd just get by with their phones through the week to read their Bibles on their phones because having a Bible was illegal in that land.

Think of it, brother, sister, the freedom that you have, the blessing that you have just to come to get together as God's people in this visible kind of uniting together as the congregating of the body of Christ in this local community.

[10:44] What a privilege you have to fellowship. Don't take it for granted. So think of it as we think of the church as the church that Christ died for. And he's founded it with his love.

And he's commissioned every one of us, as we heard the challenge before, how we can go witnessing, whether kind of more informally or more as an organised thing, to go and reach the lost with the gospel, to take the gospel to this hurting world.

We're commissioned to share his love. And the church's foundation, it is Christ's love. It's centred upon Christ. It's not some human institution, but it's a divine creation.

Our Lord Jesus says, I will build my church. This is not some man-made church, some man-made assembly or institution or organisation.

This is the church of Christ. This is his church. And it's not some human man-made thing. But Christ is the builder. He's the owner. He's the director. And of course, the church's purpose, really, your purpose as a gathered people is to glorify your precious Lord and Saviour, not to serve human agendas.

[11:53] It says, Ephesians 3.21, it says, Unto him be glory in the church. By Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Unto him be glory.

And that's the manifest mission, isn't it? The manifest meaning of the church, that we will give glory in our assembly unto him. And so the church is his.

And the church is meant to align with his will, his mission, that he would be the head, to live out his purpose and plan in every aspect of our life and as a congregated people as well.

So we see the foundation. It's Christ. Secondly, we see the identity of the church. We can see it as three things I put to you, three pictures I put to you this morning, three ways we can see the identity of the church.

The New Testament paints the church in these three pictures, if you like, as a family, as a flock and as a force. Each of those revealing a distinct facet of what the church is about, its identity, its calling.

[12:57] Firstly, consider the family of God. Ephesians 2.19, No more strangers and foreigners, it says, Now, household, it means family.

That we are fellow citizens and saints. In other words, holy ones. And of the household, of the family of God. Brothers and sisters.

We like to call ourselves that, don't we? Brother, sister. Because that's that connection that we have with family. And we think of the church as the household of God. It's the family of God. It's a community, beloved by our Lord, and bound by brotherly love.

There's love, brotherly love. Something special. And Hebrews 13.1, I love this one. I know you're into memory verses here, and that's a blessed thing. And here's a memory verse for you today. It's four words. You probably already know it. Let brotherly love continue. Amen. Hebrews 13.1. Let brotherly love continue. That's an easy one to kind of lodge in the brain, isn't it?

[14:00] Into the heart. Let brotherly love continue. That's the family that we're meant to be. And we're meant to provide that shelter, that support in a dangerous world, fostering accountability and mutual care.

We think a family is special, isn't it? There's a connection. We're just woven together. We're knit together in love. There's that care, that mutual care, that caring for one another, that brotherly love. Let it continue. We think of the church, you could put it, there's unity, diversity and mutuality. So the three little things we could talk about. Unity, diversity, mutuality.

Think of the unity of the church. We're one body. Amen. We're one body. There's a unity here that's a special, precious kind of closeness, isn't there? The unity. We're one in Christ.

We're one body. There's a diversity. One body has many members. So, hey, we don't all look the same. You don't like to be the clone of the pastor or you don't have to kind of be copycats or cookie cutter kind of Christians that you've all got to conform to what one person might say you should be.

[15:04] But we're all different. We've all got something to offer. And it's good that we're different because that way we can complement each other. So there's diversity. One body has many members. And then there's mutuality.

Mutuality. One body with many members, mutually dependent upon each other. Hey, the hand cannot say to the eye, I don't need you. You know, the nose can't say to the ear, I don't need you. We need each other. There's a mutuality. There's a blessing. There's a strength there that comes to the church. We're mutually dependent upon each other. And you think of the church as we come, as we want to be a strong church, a biblical church.

And that's what we want to be, isn't it? I'm sure that's your heart here. And there's a balance between conviction and kindness. Conviction and kindness. That makes the family thrive, doesn't it?

It makes relationships work. One preacher was told, be as firm as a rock on your position on the truth, but be as sweet as honey from the rock in your disposition when striving for the truth.

[16:06] It's a good thought, isn't it? Firm as a rock, your position for the truth, but sweet as honey from the rock in your disposition. In other words, your mindset, your attitude, the way you are with people, that you've got a sweet disposition.

So there's conviction, there's kindness. They go together, don't they? We want to be a strong church, but a loving church too. A strong church, but a welcoming, embracing church. Receive one another.

And this is the family of God. That's what we're part of. Every member has a role, a part to play.

And we all work together too. Now it's been said that with a steam locomotive, someone reckoned with a steam locomotive, you know the choo-choo, the choo-choo, the steam locomotives, they say that 96% of its power is used to move itself.

Only 4%, 4% of its power is used to pull the load. Interesting thought, isn't it? 96% is that engine pulling itself, the weight of its own engine.

And 4% used to pull the load. And it's kind of a sad picture, really. Some churches operate like that, where most of the energy is spent on internal maintenance rather than the mission.

[17:18] The mission. The mission should be centre, shouldn't it? Should be what drives us. It should be what we put our energy, our resources, our strength, our time into.

The mission. The mission, that's what matters. In another analogy, you can liken the church members to four types of bones. This is a kind of funny one as well. Four types of bones.

There's the wish bones, who hope someone else will add. Oh, I wish someone would do something.

The wish bones. Then there's the jaw bones, who gab on, they talk, but they do little.

The jaw bones, gab, gab, gab, but they don't actually do anything. Jaw bones. And then there's the knuckle bones, who criticise, you know, they like to use their knuckles. Their knuckle bones, you know, just like to cause a stir and fight and strive and criticise.

We've got some people like that lately. Knuckle bones, it's a shame they're putting their energy into criticism instead of serving, instead of being a blessing. And then you've got the backbones, the backbones who carry the load, the backbones of the church.

[18:25] It's been said that there's a lack of backbones, isn't there? People actually shoulder the load. Yeah, I'll put my effort into this. I'll carry that weight for your brother.

I'll carry your burden. I'll be a burden bearer. I'll be one who's a backbone of the church, who carries the load. It's been said that church is filled with willing people, some willing to work, and some willing to watch them.

Now, let's not fall on the few, but let's all get behind the plough. Let's all get in the team, in the work team, that the work doesn't fall on the few. So God calls every believer, every believer, that's you, every believer to be a backbone, a backbone, as it were.

We're meant to contribute to the family's mission with diligence and with care and with love. So the church is a family. And we could think also the church is a flock, a flock guided by the good shepherd.

Think of our Lord, and he tells of the truth, that he is the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. That's John 10, 11.

[19 : 34] We see the good shepherd, Psalm 23. We see the church is pictured as a flock of sheep, and as God's flock, with Christ as the good shepherd, who feeds, he leads, he protects his sheep.

And I happen to have some sheep in my backyard, so I kind of get a bit of a picture of that. Maybe some of you have got some knowledge of sheep as well. We think about sheep, they're not always the brightest animal, but we want to be a, as you think of the picture of our Lord as the shepherd, he takes the trouble, doesn't he, to help the sheep, to pick them up and get them back on track again. And we think about the church as a flock, that we should be a flock that is hearing the shepherd's voice. Amen. He says, my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.

We want to hear the shepherd's voice, don't we? That we can come and hear the word of God, and hear what the Lord is putting on our heart to do. And we can be those sheep that follow the shepherd, and that we can grow in our faith, and our fruitfulness, and that the church will be a healthy flock, that hears the shepherd's voice, that follows him into the green pastures, and we're nourished and strengthened as he leads us beside the still waters, where he takes us to those green pastures, where we can be strengthened for his service.

So a family, a flock, and then we think about the church as like a force as well. And this is something, we don't always capture this, that the church is meant to be this force, that force that can be a powerful, impacting force.

[21 : 07] And it tells of that in Matthew 16, 18, where again it says, our Lord says, I will build my church, and it says, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

It's got this picture of this church that is smashing down these gates. You've got the kind of picture, if you like, of an invading force with a battering ram, smashing down the gates, and invading a city of the enemy.

And you can think of this picture of this gate-breaking force, of this army, that's got this big battering ram, and bashing down this gate, and making it fall, and then storming the city.

And you think, what is it picture here for us? It tells of the church, hey, we're meant to be like this, that we're meant to be a gate-breaking church, that we're designed to storm the gates of hell, and rescue the captives.

It's like, there's gates that are holding people in this captivity, and we're meant to be bashing down those gates. And in Genesis 22, 17, it tells of, possessing the gates of your enemies.

[22 : 13] Possessing the gates of your enemies. And that picture there is intending to mean, that you completely conquer your enemy. That's the picture of it. So this is the picture for the church, as we smash down the gates, the gates of hell, that we're actually conquering, and completely conquering, the enemy.

Because when the gates of the city were breached, the attacking army had won, and the city was conquered, because the gates had not prevailed. That's the picture there.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Think of the world, and the captives, as it were, that are held captive. Think of, you know, you could picture it as it's pictured in movies and such, where there's prisoners of war, and someone goes in, and breaks the gates, and sets the captives free. Without Christ, all humanity is held captive, like in this place, or this prison camp, if you like, this garrison, that they're held captive in, they're confined in, they're captives, without hope, behind the gates of hell.

And the picture here is that we, as the church of God, as this advancing, invading force, can storm the gates of hell, and rescue the people, that are still, as it were, in the clutches of the enemy.

[23 : 30] You could picture that. And, of course, the picture here is that the gates of hell will not prevail. That's the point. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church of God. The Lord's advancing victorious church.

That's the picture of it. And, we could think how it pictures that eternal impact that we can have on our world. Of course, our Lord says, ye are the salt. Ye are the light.

There's a sense where we salt that stops corruption. We light that dispels the darkness. God has designed his church in this special way, to be this force to be reckoned with.

Now, people were asking one time, what was the most important thing that a church does to attract people? And some people are thinking more about the resources or the amenities. What is the most important thing that a church can do to attract people?

And the number one response was to provide parking. Well, that's, it is important to have a place to park your car, but you wouldn't think it'd be number one. But that's apparently what this survey found.

[24 : 30] The number one thing is to provide parking. Number two was the nursery. You've got to have a place for the little crying babies. And the pastored in the pits or number six or so. Well, there's all these other important things that people thought they, they assume that these things are important about a church style, comfort, music, air conditioning, friendliness.

But the true priority, when you really think about it, when it really boils down to it, the true priority ought rather to be, how are they handling the scriptures? What are they preaching? What are they teaching? That should be what matters, shouldn't it? How do they handle the truth? Is the truth even there? Are they preaching even the gospel? And we're meant to be that church that, that has something that's important.

And it's the truth of God, isn't it? The truth of his word. So we're meant to be a force to be reckoned with because this world needs truth, doesn't it? We see a people that are held captive as it were, that they are in darkness, that we're meant to be that force to be reckoned with, a people driven by truth, with a love for the truth, and the love of Christ will constrain us, a zeal for the truth.

When you think of the world, it's consumed with lies, there's confusion, you're seeing what the media, the world media goes on about, and the tide of evil has just swept this world. And some assemblies these days are all caught up in more about, maybe the amenities, hey, it's nice to have a nice building and such things, but then they get into all the offerings of, how can we attract people with entertainment, and make church like a circus show, or some kind of carnival.

[26 : 08] Hey, it's good to have some excitement, but they're getting right off track, because they've missed the point, that we're meant to be about the truth. The church is meant to be the pillar and ground of the truth, meant to be the truth, should be front and centre, the foremost thing.

And so for some, they've lost their way. Think of the city gates again, their key defences, to breach them meant total victory, in biblical times. And think of how can we be that church, empowered by our Lord, as we think of Pentecost, that they were empowered, why?

To be witnesses unto him, empowered to be reaching the lost, empowered by Christ's victory at the cross. You're empowered by the spirit of God, each one that knows the saviour, you're filled with his spirit at salvation.

And we think of the world, in its darkness, that prison camp, that is the world, as we like, you know, the prison planet, that we live, where drug abuse prevails, domestic violence, there's godlessness, there's deception, there's doubt, there's much misery, that we are meant to be, as the ones snatching the souls, as brands from the fire, as Jude 1.23 pictures it.

And so as the church is that pillar and ground of the truth, upholding biblical truth, in a world consumed by lies, we think of the boldness that we need.

[27 : 28] As we look through the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, you could say, the action of the church in the book of Acts, we think of some of the things that stand out, one of the things that stands out is boldness.

This mission that you are called to, hey, it's bigger than mission impossible, this is the mission, this is the mission that matters. It calls for a boldness, doesn't it?

In Acts 5.41, it tells that the believers rejoicing, that they had the privilege, they were counted, it says, worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And they were daily preaching Jesus in the temple. Boldness, it occurs apparently some eight times in the book of Acts. They were bold in the Lord. Acts 14.3, bold in his name.

Acts 9.27, 29, they spake boldly, it says, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had one clear message. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is one name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.

[28 : 36] Acts 4.12, think of the church's global impact too. It's bigger than any worldly enterprise, than any worldly system or organisation. And there's countless representatives.

You're part of that, of that great enterprise of the church of God, the kingdom of God, to advance it. And you've got a God-given mission, people of God. Think of it, that you're part of that.

The church is called to be salt and light, to make an eternal impact. And Matthew 28.19, our Lord says, go ye, into all the world. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.

And when you think of it, brother, sister, this morning, the go ye, means go me. We can say, hey, I'm there. Go ye, that's me. I'm in that verse.

Go ye. Our priority, it's not the parking, or the programs. The church's true priority, is the scriptures. It's the word of God. That's what we want front and centre, to lift it up, to stand for the truth, the word of God, to tremble at his word.

[29 : 36] So we've seen the foundation of the church, it's Christ. We've seen the identity of the church, family, flock, force. Thirdly, we see the character, the character of the church.

Think of the church, the character of the church. It's called to be a holy, sanctified people, cleansed by the washing of water, by the word of God, made to be ultimately holy, without blemish.

Our Lord says, be ye holy, for I am holy. 1 Peter 1.15, the word of God, is the holy standard of the church, isn't it? Not cultural relativism, not trying to fit in, to change to the world's standards, but to stand fast, with the unchanging, eternal standard, of the word of God.

Look back in church history, and see the people of God, see the church of God, in time past. You hear of people, such as the Waldensians, the Waldensian believers, in the dark ages, the remnant church, our forebears.

They died, these believers, with Bibles tied around their necks, as they were tied to the stake, and burnt for their faith, for their love of the scriptures.

[30 : 51] Millions died, so we can have these words, in our hands today. We should be glad, and grateful for that. Think of Revelation, it speaks of martyrs, slain for the word of God.

That was why they were slain, for the word of God. And God's word is central, to the church's identity. And brother, sister, when we think of the, the ones who've gone before us, we think of, that we are walking in their tread, that we are walking the same path.

But yet, many are content, to play church, in a world, that's starving, for the word of God. How we oughtn't to be, rather stirred, stirred to think, hey, if it came to the crunch, would I be like the Waldensians?

Yeah, I'll go to the stake, if it be there, if it be God's will. If we were, called to, take a stand. Would we make that stand? The identity of the church, it's the word of God.

And, the church must be a place, where, we're, caring about the word of God, and we're manifesting the word of God, in, in our homes, in our hearts, that, in our lives, we'd have a passion for the truth, that impacts how we live.

[32 : 03] Like those who've died, for it, before us, that, when it comes to the crunch, when it comes to our funeral, one day, that, the, the one officiating will say, yeah, that one loved the word of God.

That one loved and obeyed the word of God. That's something that, they, they lived it. And, and we think of the church, it's glorious. It's destined to be that glorious church. Hey, it already is, because you're saved.

Isn't that glorious? The glorious church, you think of one day, he'll present it to himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And the glory of the church, it's not numerical growth, but it's the spiritual growth, of every believer.

It's every single soul here, that you grow, that you grow, that we grow, that we are growing together, as that glorious church. And we're gifted as well, that every believer has something to offer.

Mobilize every believer, with your God-given gifts for ministry. Think of 1 Corinthians 12, 27, it reads, now, you are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

[33 : 05] You've got a special role, just like any part of the body, has that distinct function. God's got to function, for you. Of course, we need to avoid two errors, seeking sign gifts, that no longer are used, in the church age.

Some go on about gifts, that actually are not relevant, they're not for this time. But then you commit the other mistake, of neglecting the gifts, that God does give. And so we want to avoid that error too.

Many churches are like kindergartens, where believers are, remaining immature, and they're clinging to the feeding bottles. You know, still wearing the dummies. But rather, God wants us, rather, each one, find your place to serve.

Find that role, find that function, that God puts on your heart to do, and fulfil that, so you can contribute. Every member, plays its part. And we think of a growing church, that in this growth that matters, is obeying the word of God.

That will be a growing church, that will be a going church, that will obey the go ye. It's a sad fact, that they say, 89% of Christians, have never even given out, a gospel tract.

[34 : 16] 89% have not given out, a gospel tract, highlighting this failure to act. Now, hey, I'm not wanting to condemn, anyone here this morning, but hey, think about it.

Maybe there's some gospel tracts, I'm sure there would be here. And you know, ask Brother Steve, grab a gospel tract, have it in your hand, in your pocket, in your purse, in your wallet, in your bag, and sow the seed.

Take that opportunity. Hey, it's not that hard, to give out a gospel tract. But, 89% of Christians, haven't even done that. Think of the call, that we have, brother, sister, your call, as the church of God.

He says, go ye, reach the lost. You think of missionaries, there's one called, John McKenzie, who prayed, Lord, send me, to the darkest spot, on earth. Another missionary, praying, cried, Father, give me these souls, or I die.

Do we have that passion? We're saved, to save others. And, really, it helps us grow too. It's been, told how, there was a man, in this blizzard, and it looked like, things were hopeless.

[35 : 21] It was, horrible weather, and there was no way out, it seemed. And he was there, with another soul, who looked worse off, than him. And this man, he saved himself, by reviving the other soul.

Because he, took pains, to keep the other fellow warm, and to revive him, and it made him, stay alive too. It's the same with us, isn't it? Spiritually, hey, if we get involved, in reaching souls, it kind of energises us too.

Gives us a bit more, spiritual life. We find life, through service. In ministering to others, the church grows spiritually, and we can be, a radiant testimony, to the glory of God, to the grace of God.

Another aspect, we think of the church, we think of the mission, the mission of the church. What is it? Really, it's to develop, daring disciples daily. God's blueprint, for the church.

We see it in Acts, is that they develop disciples. Daring, devoted, daily committed, disciples. The early believers, it tells them, hey, there wasn't much to brag about them.

[36 : 24] In Acts 4.13, it tells of them, that they were ordinary, uneducated men. There was nothing to, big note them, these folk, that were the early church, when you think, who the Lord chose, wasn't the, highfalutin, high status people, was the ordinary, everyday people, wasn't it?

And it says, they were called, unlearned, and ignorant men. That's what they had, the status of. And they took knowledge of them though, that they had been with, Jesus.

They had been with Jesus. That's Acts 4.13. And think of your mission. Jesus didn't command his followers, to make denominations, or make decisions really, but to make disciples, to make disciples.

And that's our call, brother, sister. Wesley said, the church has nothing to do, but to save souls. Therefore, spend, and be spent, in this work.

The church has nothing to do, but to save souls. And George Stewart said, the bringing of one soul to Jesus, is the highest achievement possible, to human life. Hey, I don't know what your plans are, for your life, as a younger person, maybe you've got some big ambitions, some big goals, and hey, good for you, set some high goals, and aim to achieve, and be a success, in human life.

[37 : 51] But, really the most, greatest achievement, you can have, is to tell another human soul, of the saviour. And you can see, another one saved. You can see one, maybe there's people, people in your circle of influence, people that you know, maybe you're the one, you're actually the missionary, that God's sending, to reach that one, because they're in your circle, of influence.

The church is a disciple, making factory. Take the opportunity, to come and learn, when there's Bible study times, get there, and be there, get behind the program, and be a part, of growing together, that you can be, a stronger disciple.

That the church, is focused on people, not programs, that we're transforming, as vessels, into, vessels for God's glory.

The early church, it was marked by unity, it says, oft times they, continued with one accord, in purpose, submission. Acts 1.14, it says, these all continued, with one accord, in prayer, and supplication.

One accord, that's a blessed thing, isn't it? Think of, it says further, this is Acts 2.46, and they continued daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread, from house to house, to eat

their meat, with gladness, and singleness of heart, singleness of heart, praising God, it says, and the Lord added daily, the Lord added to the church, daily, such as should be so.

[39 : 17] They continued daily, with one accord. Have that one accord, amen, that one accord. And, it tells us in Romans 15.6, with one mind, and one mouth, may we glorify God.

Romans 15.6, think of that spiritual unity. Think of the church of God, you could put it, there's four Ps here, if you like to have the, what they call them, the acronyms, the acrostics, the four Ps here, they were praising, praying, there was practical service, and there was proclamation.

In Acts, we see the praising, praising, they were worshipping with gladness, and singleness of heart, Acts 2.47, praising, they were praying, and it was persistent prayer, they were praying, with fervent prayer, in Acts 1.14, praying, there was practical service too, they took care of each other, when there was a need, they put the hand in their pocket, and they met those needs generously, they gave according to their ability, that's Acts 11.29, practical service, and then there was proclamation too, preaching Jesus daily, preaching Jesus boldly, in the temples and homes, in Acts 5.42, and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not, to teach and preach Jesus Christ, notice these things, there was a commitment here, it's not an occasional thing, but daily, daily with one accord in the temple, daily, from house to house, and Paul it says, he was disputing daily, for two years, in Ephesus, so really we should be, you know, there's talk about the seventh day, we should be seven day Christians, you know,

Sunday through Monday, you know, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, we should be seven day Christians, daily, and have that daily walk, that daily mind, and the disciples, they were full time really, they were filled, with the Holy Spirit, and faith, and joy, in Acts 13, 52, it tells how the disciples, were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost, and it's interesting, the fear of God, is another, repeated theme, in the book of Acts, the fear of God, ten times, in the book of Acts, the fear of God, we should take it, seriously, and, we think of the whole, counsel of God, there's all these features there, the church of God, they were clear on their mission, and their mission, was about preaching Jesus, daily, taking Jesus, daily, was centered on Jesus name, which brought salvation, and forgiveness, Acts 10, 43, Peter said, to him give all the prophets, witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive, remission of sins, that was their focus, the name of Jesus, and we think of their boldness, brother, sister, how can we be like them, how can we be bolder, how can we take it, more seriously, how can we get fervent, how can we get serious, about our faith, such we want to be, full on, for the Lord, and we think of their boldness, for our Lord, it was costly, think of the believers, in Acts 5, it says how they were arrested, they were abused, accused of heresy, yet they rejoiced, they were worthy, to suffer shame, for his name, that's Acts 5, 41 again,

Acts 15, 26, it describes the, people of God, as men, that have hazarded, their lives, for the name, of our Lord Jesus Christ, think of it, what are we going to, complain about, in Australia, have we hazarded, our lives, for the name, of Jesus Christ, you'd have to do, something pretty radical, to do that in Australia, wouldn't you, to hazard your lives, for the name, of Jesus Christ, and it says, in the early church, that the name, of the Lord Jesus, was magnified, the name, of the Lord Jesus, Acts 19, 17, think of it, when the disciples, when the early church, was in town, they disturbed, the status quo, calling for repentance, and proclaiming, Jesus is the only way, and their message, was repent, eight times, so have that, mind shift, have that, that mind change, that, that shift, of thinking, that, from unbelief, to faith, to have that, total mind shift, to trust, the Saviour, and that is the only way, to trust him, this daring spirit, must mark the church, we're called to be, outspoken witnesses, not seeking, popularity, but pleasing God, that's what, they have this boldness, to declare, his word, in the marketplace, daily, and beyond, another truth, about the church, is the destiny, think of the destiny, of the church, where we will be, it says one day, he's going to present, the church, that's you and me, to himself, as that, glorious, church, without blemish, the ultimate destiny, isn't it, think of the radiance, of the church, for the meantime, hey maybe we've got, a few blemishes, here and there, as it were, there's maybe some, there are faults, you know,

[44 : 29] I've got someone, lately that's picking, on our church, and hey you can pick, as much as you like, you'll find, you'll find fault, if you look hard enough, you'll find something, you don't like, but one day, it's going to be, without blemish, without blemish, and all of the faults, and carnality of man, all the failings, of preachers, will be, be gone, but the radiance, of the church, isn't it, the radiance, of the church, the purity, the glorious, holiness, the purity, the devotion, the reflecting, of God's glory, that's what we want, that's we're on the way, to that, and it's all glory, to God really,

isn't it, even if, if we get everything right, you know, even if, hey, they can't, they can't pick fault anymore, we've got everything, just so, that they can't, find fault anymore, who gets the glory, Jesus, isn't it, Luke 17, you hear about the lepers, 10 lepers, one healed, leper, one, returned, to glorify God, only one, nine did not, the church, must be like that one, amen, thank you Jesus, for saving me, thank you Lord, it's all glory, to you, all the honour, all the glory, all the thanks, all the praise, is yours, to be like that one, in Luke 17, from 15 to 18, the church must be like, that one leper, that wanted to give, all honour and glory, to Christ, will you give God, the glory, in your life, it says unto him, be glory in the church, the glory is his, even if we get, everything right, even if our church, is so, straight down the line, and there's nothing, that anyone can complain about, that the glory is his, and we're all a work, in progress, for the meantime,

I love 2 Corinthians 3, 18, where it talks about, that one day, we're going to behold, God's glory, but for the meantime, we're changed, into that same image, from glory, to glory, to glory, we're being changed, for the meantime, maybe there's a bit of, bit of adjustment here, there's a little bit, of tweaking yet, you know, maybe there's still, some things, God's tweaking in me, lots, believe me, but you think, from glory, to glory, he's changing me, he's changing you, isn't he, it's all glory, to God, changed into the same image, from glory, to glory, even as by the spirit, of the Lord, we see that, the church is, not perfect, yet, not yet, some assemblies, are straight, there's falseness, there's error, there's unity, with error, some prioritise comfort, maybe they get, the nursery right, and the parking right, but they miss the truth, they miss the word of God, the music's just, so fancy, and, brosematous, but they're missing the truth, the truth is missing, that can be the, real, failure, that we compromise, over the truth, that would be a great error, to compromise, to, prioritise comfort, rather than, the truth of God, and God calls his church, to be rather, that pillar, and ground, of the truth, think of the pillar, that column, that's rock solid, and strong, that foundation, the ground, the foundation, strong, it's uncompromising, that we could stand, against apostasy, and uphold sound doctrine, that we'll be that church, that really stands out, as standing strong, where the word of God, is on it, it's the standard, it's the truth, that every word of God, is pure, we believe the book, from cover to cover, the church is already, glorious in God's sight, by God's grace, that for the meantime, yeah there's some fine tuning, to align with his blueprint, but we think of it, brothers and sisters, you're sanctified saints,

God calls you saints, they even call, the Corinthian saints, and the word saints, it means holy ones, as much as they had, some carnality, God called them saints, and brother, sister, if you're saved today, you're a sanctified saint, of God, and God's transforming you, by his word, he's making you more like Christ, he's mobilising you, to reach the lost, think of it, church of God, this morning, as a family, we love and support each other, don't we, as a family, we love one another, as a flock, we follow the shepherd's voice, yes Lord, I want to, I want to have my ear, hearing the word, I want to have an ear to hear, as a flock, to follow the shepherd's voice, as a force, we're storming the gates of hell, there's still people held captive, we want to ram those gates down, we want to storm the gates of hell, proclaiming salvation, in Jesus name, and that we have been like the believers, at Antioch, where the believers, were first called Christians, it was used as a slur, that they were like Christ, they were Christ like, in their word, in their deed, so must we be, to teach the word of God, to live it out, and in this coming storm, and, we've had some storms, but there's a coming storm, amen, in this coming storm, that God's church, is going to stay strong, a pillar, and ground, of the truth, destined to shine, as God's radiant bride, we're called to be, backbones, backbones, not wish bones, or jaw bones, or knuckle bones, but backbones, carrying the load, for Christ's glory, and one day, we may be remembered, for our love, for God's word, will our testimony, inspire joy, and faith, or, will there be, something lacking, let us strive, as this local church body, let us strive, as whatever congregation, or assembly, you're part of, to be that church, that praises, that praise, that serves, that proclaims daily, the word of God, that one day, as our Lord will come, and he'll present, you, to himself, as a glorious church, as like the spotless, spot free bride, in all of her, majestic, and glorious beauty, and our Lord, is building his church, and the gates of hell, cannot stop, his church, be faithful, as this outpost, as this colony, of this, kingdom, on this, planet, in this region, in this place, our Lord, is building his church, and someone has said, it's easy to criticise, the church, but I need to ask, what am I doing, to make the church grow, and be fruitful, for the Lord's glory, we can sit back, and criticise the church, and find fault, and there's lots of faults, in this vessel, but I should also, ask the question, if the whole church, were like me, what would the church be, if the whole church, were like me, what would the church be, rather, aspire to be, one of the backbones, to be

that fruitful,

Christian, to glorify your Lord, in life, in lead, to be that one, who bears fruit, as a solid part, of a God glorifying church, hey this is a good church, it's got a stand, it's got an uncompromising stand, it's got a legacy, it's got a destiny, and it's a wonderful truth, the word of God, right here, that's faithfully proclaimed, from this pulpit, and, be a part, of such a church, unto him, be glory, in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end, unto him, be glory, hey even if we get everything right, let's not get proud, because that can be a fault too, some churches, that think, I've got everything right, and they sit back, and think, oh well I'll just sit, take it easy now, everything's right, but no, we've all got room for improvement, and, even if we get everything right, unto him be glory, amen, unto him be glory, not unto any of us, that might have some small measure, a part to play, and, when you think about it, brother and sister, we're about to, come to, the, holiest moment, of the church service, it is the moment, when God's people, strengthened by preaching, and fellowship, go out, of the church door, into the world, to be the church, to be the church, we don't go to church, we are, are the church, we are the church, 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,

Lord, we thank you, for this church, as this, glorious church, as one element, of that church, as it were, of the churches, worldwide, like this church, Lord, the like-minded churches, that love your word, of every persuasion, that love your word, that stand strong, Lord, help us to be such a people, that we'll be, mindful, of those that have gone before us, that we'll walk in their tread, think about, fellow believers, in countries where, they dare to fellowship, that every moment, that they gather, is a, at great danger, and peril, they face imprisonment, torture, even death, that they would dare, to fellowship, Lord, help us to, regard the privilege, of fellowship, as such a great privilege, Lord, we pray for this church, and, the ministry here, brother Steve, as he carries the load,

[54 : 07] Lord, others that are helping, to get behind, the program, to get behind, the, the ministry here, Lord, for, your, blessing this church, with, other ministry, and time to come, Lord, for, all of your undertaking, that, Lord, unto you, be glory, in your church, Lord, we thank you, that as much as we got, room for improvement, just now, that it is a glorious church, because, it's filled, with people, who know, the saviour, Lord, we thank you, for the great joy, to be that, family, that flock, and that force, to be reckoned with, Lord, help us to be faithful, and to grow, and to see others saved, too, continue, Lord, to bless, we pray, as we are, only, reliant, upon your grace, it's only by your grace, Lord, that we can meet together, here in this, in this place, that we can congregate, Lord, that we will, take the opportunity, to do that, and not miss out on it, in Jesus name we pray, Amen, Amen, God bless you.