

Our Identity in the Word

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[0:00] Let's go ahead and pray for a moment. Let me get into the Word here. Father, we love you. We praise you. We gather here today as believers in Christ.

And some may be not believers yet, but they're seeking you. You've drawn them here. You put something in their heart that has attracted them to you. And you are drawing them and starting to make sense of things in their life.

And maybe even making sense of the absence that they feel in their life because you're not part of their life. And today may be the day that you just illuminate their heart and mind and inflame their will to respond.

And I'm just praying today, Lord, that as the Gospel is communicated, that your Holy Spirit will speak and awaken someone today. And for those that are believers today, that are here, that are serving you, or that have given their life, they've turned from sin and trusted you.

You've opened their heart and mind. They've been changed. They've been awakened from the dead. And they're wanting to serve you. They're trying to serve you. And today just needs to be a day of clarity and encouragement.

[1:14] I pray that today will be that for them. For those that are strong and walking with you today and that are serving you with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength, I just rejoice with them.

And together, Lord, I pray that you would just inspire them to greater things. That as a church body together, as we start forming and coming together in that way, I just pray that the Holy Spirit would give us visions for great things as we look at your word together.

And that you would show us great and mighty things that we have done. As we look into your word and see those things, as your Holy Spirit brings those things to life. It stirs our hearts in ways that we can't stir ourselves.

So, Father, I pray that you would do just that. Even as we sing and worship and fulfill the command to sing songs to one another, hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs.

I pray that even as we open your word and Holy Spirit speak. And that you will just draw us to our face before you. We'll just confess that you're Lord and we're not.

[2:24] And that we will honor you in our worship. But Lord, that we'll honor you with a life of worship beyond this meeting time together. So, Lord, be with us today as your word is proclaimed.

I pray that we bring clarity to it. And may your Holy Spirit speak to us as we each meet today. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'll just turn to Acts chapter 2 verse 42.

As we're looking at a familiar passage. We're going to look at this for a few weeks. I will cut off when it's cut off time. And I'll try to honor that so that I don't have to reach in the parking lot.

Because at noon we do have to leave. Amen. So, that's one beautiful thing about renting this space. And I think some of you may appreciate too much. I was thinking about this this week.

Because I think you saw it in the news. That this week there was some actress. I don't even know who she is. And she said something about another person.

[3:36] Where she was said to have misgendered that person. I don't know who these people are. Emma Roberts. I don't know who that.

I couldn't figure out in the baseline. I didn't know who I did. And the other person goes by the name of Angelica Ross. And Angelica Ross apparently is a transgender person.

And this Emma Roberts. In some way disparaged her. By referring to her. Or him. See, it's confusing.

As a her. Him as a her. Or her as a him. However, when. And the question really hit my mind. Because I've experienced this too.

Where I've seen someone lose transgender. And I know. I can clearly see that they are a man. Right? And it's. By all accounts.

[4:32] I'm looking at a person in every way. They're masculine. Even though they may be wearing. Women's clothing. And makeup. And males done. Whatever. I'm looking. And I'm seeing.

And I'm clearly seeing. That this is a man. And we're already getting comfortable. Right? In our culture. It's just. There's this. Discomfort. Talking about.

God's words. Huh? There's no discomfort. In God's words. Talking about these things. We need to talk about this. I see this. And I see it. I'm saying to myself. That's a man. And the person. They say. No. I'm a woman. And I'm saying. I know you're saying you're a woman. But you are in fact. Actually a man. No. I've had surgery. And so. I'm a woman now.

And I'm saying. No. You can have surgery. And in fact. You're still a man. And you can put on makeup. It's still a man. I had my little driver's license changed. And this is what one told me.

[5:26] One time. I had my driver's license changed. The state can tell you that. And you're still a man. I changed my name. I changed my identity.

I changed everything about me. I even sound like a woman. I said. No you don't. You don't sound like a woman. You don't look like a woman. You may be acting as a woman.

You're not a woman. And I can say that with some authority. Even as I saw a quote by Dr. Paul McHugh. A former psychiatrist.

A psychiatrist. He's a teacher. Rather. At John Hopkins University. Who said. Trans men. Transgender men. Do not become women. Nor do transgender women.

Become men. All. All. Including Bruce Jenner. He said. Become. Feminized men. Or masculinized women. Counterfeits.

[6:20] Or impersonators. Of the sex. With which they identify. Chief. Psychiatrist. John Hopkins University. And so.

So. What he's speaking from. Is. The genetic standpoint. From what he says. Is. That they are in fact. No matter. The outward appearance. No matter. What you see.

Every chromosome. In their body. Says that they are a man. Or a woman. And if you dig them up. One thousand years from now. And look at the cells.

That are recovered. You will be able to identify. That this was in fact. A man. Or this was in fact. A woman. Just.

By sheer genetics. A man is. A man. Genetically. But he's also a man structurally. Look at bone density. And muscular structures.

[7:14] Besides basic. I mean. Go in there. This is a family show. But. But the reality is. Is that you can tell. That this is actually. A man. That were actually a woman.

And you can tell. Even behaviorally. We can look. At things. In our culture. Even like. The fact that. The majority of those. Incarcerated.

The great majority. The vast majority. Are men. Now we could conclude. That this is just. Discrimination. Against men. Who are oppressed. In our culture.

And they're acting out. On their oppression. Or. We can't. Conclude. Because of testosterone. In their body. They are more. Aggressive. They tend to have. Tendencies. That women.

Don't tend to have. And so we can look at it. Genetically. We can look at it. Structurally. We can look at it. Behaviorally. But even.

[8:08] Especially. And even more so. When we come to the word of God. We find out. By revelation. That there is.

In fact. Male. Male. Male. Female. Female. Female. Because the scripture says. That God created them. In Genesis. Male. Male. Male. Male. Male. Male. Male. He created them. This way.

With only these two distinctions. So now. Not only genetically. And structurally. And behaviorally. But by revelation. God has declared.

What we are. That there is. Male. And female. And based on that alone. We can have confidence. And know. That there is a reality. To this. We can stand on.

Why am I saying all that? Because. There are many. Organizations. That call themselves. A church. They can call themselves.

[9:03] A church. They can try to act like a church. They can put on churchy things. And still not. Be a church. Because the reality is.

Genetically. And structurally. And behaviorally. And by divine revelation. We know. What they are to be. And what they are to be doing. And so.

As we come together. As believers. In Christ Jesus. Our goal. Is not to be. Revolutionary. In this. Our goal. Is to come to the word of God.

Where God has. Revealed. His truth. And come to the conclusions. About what we are. Supposed to be. And what we are. Supposed to do. And when we come to those.

Conclusions. We can stand on that. With authority. Because it doesn't matter. What anyone else says. Because as we come to the revelation. Of God's word. He's been clear.

[9:58] And that gives us confidence. We've been talking. We've been talking. Some coming. This morning. About. Talking about. A church that had. A pastor. That's a woman. How do you. Approach those things. What do we do.

About these issues. Well. We have to come to God's word. And see what God's word. Says. About the issue. Because if God. Reveals some things. About these issues.

The authority of God's word. Speaks into all of this. So as we're trying to decide. What are we going to be. As cornerstone church. As we come together. And covenant together.

What are we going to be. What are we going to do. As a church. What do we. What do we think. We're going to become. Better look to God's word. Because God has some things. To say about this.

Church. Is not a church. As we've discovered. Based on. Where it is. It's not in a house. Or in a building. At a temple.

[10:53] In a synagogue. That's not what makes it a church. Church. Church is not a church. Because it has a sign. Or because it has t-shirts. And a logo. I mean.

I know. Sometimes that's a priority. It's like. Hey. We don't have t-shirts yet. Let's. Let's establish what we believe first. And then. Let's make some t-shirts about it. Okay. Well.

You're not a church. Because you have a logo. You're not a church. Because you've got coffee mugs. And stationery. We've got to look to God's word. And decide what God's word says. About being a church. And say.

You know what. We're going to be that. Right. And I'm going to look at God's word. And say. What does it mean to be a believer? And I'm going to look at God's word. And say. Man. I'm going to be that. That's what I'm going to be.

And we've got to be dogmatic about this. And when we are. What's going to happen is. It's going to draw the line in the sand for us. And cause some distinction. To say. You know what. I don't know.

[11:47] I don't know if I should be in this place. Or not. Because I don't know that I believe that to be true. You may say. I don't want to be that kind of church. And. Because.

I think I've got a good idea. About what we ought to be. And my response is going to be. Every time. And most of the people in this room. My response is going to be. Show me. In the book.

If you could show me in the book. This is one of the beautiful things. About this group. That. As I'm trying to discern. What the. What the core values of our group is. And talk to the men.

As the men got together. Sunday night. A few weeks ago. And I was listening. To everything. I was writing down everything. That they said. And the women got together. And. And. Brandy wrote down everything. That they were saying.

I was putting these lists together. And one of the primary. Primary things. About this group. Is. A dogmatic. View. Of God's word. Has been supreme.

[12:41] Over all things. Amen. That is something. That we are. We are going to be dogmatic about. You might say. Well I just don't. I think. I think we ought to look to culture. I think we ought to look to these other things.

You can do that. You just can't do that here. Right. This is. This is a group. That is really. Hungering. To be a part of. A church.

That's going to elevate. God's word. And say. God's word is the. Authority. Not the pastor. Not the elders. Not the denomination.

Not the. The church bylaws. God's word is the authority. And church is a church. Because it's one genetically.

Because we are called out by God. And given life. He gives us new birth. In Christ. He calls us. To be believers. From the dead. Aren't you glad? Are you glad?

[13:35] How many of you. Are glad. That he raises the dead? I'm glad. Because he raised me up. Genetically. I'm born again. Structurally. Form of membership.

And government. In the church. Is by design. It's in God's word. He tells us. How to do this. Because it's not left to our imagination. We don't even have to be creative. We just have to read the book.

And say. What does it say? And start jotting those things down. Say. Let's do that. Yeah. And behaviorally. Fulfilling our purposes. What are we doing.

As a church. Do we just get to decide. Hey. I think we ought to do this. I've got to. I want to. I think we ought to dress up as clowns. And have tattoos. And whatever. I don't know. What are we going to do?

What are our purposes? So we started by saying. Just what Jesus said. He said. On this rock. I will build my church.

[14:32] And he made a distinction. There's something about his church. That's going to be unique. And different. And he's establishing something. The church of Christ. Does not belong to man.

Or denomination. Or you or me. It belongs to Christ. He has the copyright. He has the deed. He has the receipts. He has the blueprint.

And I would add. The possession is 90% of law. And he has the church. In his hand. It's his. You don't need to hear. My opinion. About what the church is.

We need to conclude. What he says about the church. Because it's his church. Just like everything. In my Christian life. I need to determine. What his word says. And I'm going to determine.

That's what I'm going to be. Someone said. False teachers. Will promote false doctrine. Leading to false worship. Of a false god. By false converts. In a false church. But if we know.

[15:27] What's true. We'll be guarded. From that. We'll be protected. From that. So we go to the book. So today. We're looking at. What we're going to be. What we need to be. In the eyes of the Lord.

Through his word. How we behave. So we come to Acts. Chapter 2. Beginning in verse 42. As we get. A picture of the true identity.

Of the church. In fact. We're going to see several features. This morning. That we need to establish. We're going to be. We're going to start with one. I think we're going to get through one today.

And there's several others. That are going to follow. And that's going to be leading us. Through the next. Few weeks. We'll see. We'll see how. How much I get done. In a short amount of time.

Okay. So let's. If you found a place. Let's stand. And read this together. Again. In chapter 2. Verse 42. Very familiar passage.

[16:24] There's always danger. Familiar passage. Right. Take for granted. A lot of things. So we're going to look. Look at it freshly. And see what God has to say to us today.

Okay. Beginning in verse 42. 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. Many wonders. And signs. Were being done. Through the apostles. And all who believed.

Were together. 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.

[17:20] 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. These are the words of the Lord. Father. May you bless. The reading of your word today. May you speak to us.

As we look at the future. So. All right. And I pray today. That you would just. Burn. These things. Into. Our hearts. And may this. Be.

Not only what we desire. But may this be. What we are. Pray this. All in Jesus name. Amen. So the context.

Acts 2. The movement of the Holy Spirit. Has begun. Pentecost. A very. Unique. Special movement. Of the Holy Spirit. Referred. Pentecost. As a.

[18:21] A defining moment. For the church. A moment. Of birth. For the church. In some ways. We. Look at this. This letter. And this letter.

Is. Is. Titled. The Acts of the Apostles. But. It may rightly. Be titled. The Acts of the Holy Spirit. Because really. It is the tracing.

Of the Holy Spirit. That word. Through the apostles. And in the life. Of the church. As the church. Is given life. I mean. This is. The. The moment.

Of the. The rattling. Of the bones. And in the epistles. You see the flesh. Come on. And an army. Rise. Right. This is. This is. This is. This is.

The prototype. Of the church. Because. There is. No church. This is. The church. Being born. And so. There's a lot. Of things. That we see. Here. Happening. Historically.

[19:15] In the development. Of the church. That are going to. Become. Come into. Full swing. In the epistles. And you're going to see them. At work. In the epistles. And it's. And it's going to be. Beautiful to see.

Because you're seeing it. In prototype. In embryonic. Form. Here. But all of the essentials. For life. Are there. And all of those.

Essentials. Are going to be. Played out. Then. In the epistles. As you watch. The church. Now. Function. And work. And this is. Important. For us. Because if we don't.

Understand. Our function. We're going to come together. For a lot of things. But we're never going to be. Edified. In the way that God. Has designed us. To be. As a church. You. Are part.

Of the body. Of Christ. If you're a believer. And you're in this. Body. God. Has designed you. To function. In a certain way. Just like. He's designed a man.

[20:07] To function. In a certain way. A woman. To function. In a certain way. He has designed. Each of us. To function. In the body. In unique ways. Roles. To fulfill. Jobs.

To do. These are our purposes. That we glean. From the text. And so. When we look at this. We've got to keep in mind. That at this moment.

The church. Doesn't know. How to be the church. You realize that? I've been a church before. They've been going to the synagogue. They've been.

In prayer meetings. Together. But they don't know. How to be the church. All we know. From the text. Is something dramatic. Happened. In them. And they became something.

And started doing something. The Holy Spirit. Came upon them. That was. Dramatic. And all of a sudden. The transition is.

[21:03] Peter preaches the gospel. And it says to us. Just the verses. Immediately. Before this. It says. And they were baptized. Those that received the message. And they were added.

To the group. They were added to them. And now. This group. That is assembling. All of a sudden. Starts doing some things. Some very. Identifiable.

Humane. Things. They devoted themselves. To the apostles. Teaching. And the fellowship. And then the expansion.

Of the fellowship. Which we'll talk about. Probably next week. Is into the breaking of prayer. And the prayers. Grammatically. This isn't the four things. It's actually just two things.

And two of those. Seem to be. Expandable. All who believed. Were together. They had things in common. They were selling. Their possessions. Belongings. Distributing. To the process.

[21:59] That anyone had a need. They actually loved. One another. They met needs. They sold their own possessions. To take care of each other.

They received their food. With glad and generous hearts. Praising God. Having favor of the people. The Lord added. In the number. Daily. Those who were being saved. The result. The work of the Holy Spirit. In this group. The result was what? People were being saved. The gospel was being preached. People were being saved. Lives were being changed. So notice how he starts this. This is the key to this text. Okay. The first few words. He says. And they devoted themselves. Devoted themselves. To have. To have. This phrase. To have. This phrase. Has to do. With identity. So I started. With male. To be male. Confused about identity. This is about identity. There are churches. That are very confused. About their identity. This church. Is not confused. About their identity. They devoted themselves. To something. The word literally means.

[22:59] To have. To persist in something. To busy oneself. To be engaged in something. Devoted to something. Spend much time in something. Hold fast to something.

Continuing it. Persever. So much so. That it becomes. Your identity. So. Here are some things. That they've visited themselves in. They've continued in. They've persevered in. So much so. That they're known. By these things. They are identified. By this. I remember.

Christmas time. My kids. Get on the app. For QT. And. It was Jolly Town. Okay. And so. I've told some of you this before.

They got on there. And they. Figured out. How to work the system. In Jolly Town. Because there were prizes. Given away. So they. They would go in. And they. Win a prize. And then they.

[23:55] Go in. And win another prize. All you'd do. Is make a purchase. And you'd win something. So. So they figured it out. What is the absolute. Cheapest thing I could buy. And so. They found the 25 cent.

Pack of gum. They go in. They buy one. 25 cent. Pack of gum. Win. A. Four dollar energy drink. And. Then. When they. Purchase it online.

All the purchases online. Enable you. To win another prize. And so. They would win a four dollar energy drink. And then. A slice of pizza. And then. Something else. And so. So.

It was within the rules of the game. And they were playing the game. And they learned to play it very well. QT. Lost. That game. And the next year. They made new rules.

And. And. And. My boys figured it out. You know. The other rules. It was played by the rules. And they. Played by. Being good legalists. And they went through. And they. They were stocking up on Jolly Town.

[24:51] And. So. They were going to the store. And. And. One. One of the guys. Said. I mean. He said. Well. I'm planning on my prize. He said. Well.

Do you have a purchase here? Yeah. I have a purchase. It's an online purchase. Oh. What's your name? It's. My name is Chandler. Bicevich. Oh. You're the gun guy.

Right? I mean. In the store. I mean. You're the gun guy. Right? I think it was Warren. I don't remember which one of you was. Was it you? Was it you? You didn't have a hair. I know.

I'm sorry. Identified. Because of what you do. Identified. Because of your activity. That you're persisting in. The name. Their names were going all up for QT.

I'm sure they were talked about. In the corporate office. When they decided to change the rules. Because. Of how much they were winning. Coming out in sacks of groceries. You know. Just. When just winning. Endless amounts.

[25:48] It was a jolly town for them. I will say. But when. When. Luke is using this word. He's using a very specific word. To say. This. These are. Are.

Features. Of their identity. That were so much their identity. That when you see this. These things. You immediately associate them. With the thing. Right?

And so what are they doing? They're devoting themselves. To something. So much. That they are characterized. By. The teaching. Of the apostles. In their gathering.

By the fellowship. And the prayer. And the breaking of bread. By. The sharing. Of common needs. In the body. And making sure. That the body. Is cared for. And by their evangelistic seal.

That results. In the saving of souls. The preaching of the gospel. Is taking place. Through this church. Through these believers. They're so known by this. That these features.

[26:47] Are. Their identity. It's important for us. As the church is coming. We see the prototype. The fundamental features.

Are seen. To fall through this passage. And we need to look at this. And say. You know what? That's what we need to be. That's what we. That. That needs to be. Our identity.

They devoted themselves. To what? The apostles teaching. Here's the word. Didache there. Implying. Instruction.

Or doctrine. The early church. Was. Very serious about this. In fact. The early church. Later. Compiled. Different collections. Of those teachings.

Into a book. They called. The didache. The teachings. And. Early believers. Would. Would. Study. These things. And look. To the scriptures. And see. If these things are so.

[27:43] And say. Man. This is what we are. This is what we're going to be. They weren't. Steeped. In the philosophies. Of their day. They were steeped.

In the teachings. Of the apostles. They weren't steeped. In the psychology. Of their day. They were steeped. In the teaching. Of the apostles. It was the teaching.

Of the apostles. That grounded them. And rooted. Their lives. Not just together. But personally. Their life. In the Lord. Is rooted. In the word of God. The teaching.

Of the apostles. Was what. Identified them. As the church. And what. It's. And for us. We have to look at this. It's not just the teaching. Of the reformers.

Although. We glean a lot. From that. It is not just. The teaching. Of popular teachers. In our day.

Although. I love. G3. And I love. Those things. It's not.

[28:36] The popular bloggers. And the. The discernment ministries. That define. Who we are. It is. The word of God. It is. The teaching. Of the apostles.

That needs. To identify us. Above. All of those things. We need. To make sure. That the things. That we believe. Are lining up. With. The scriptures. One of my professors.

In seminary. Had a riot. And when he. Reminded. Our seminary students. When we were. You know. Learning our. New testament class. Got coming together.

And. Debates going on. About Augustine. And this and that. And man. Some of the. Debates. Were pretty fiery debates. You know. Especially when you're talking about.

Predestination. And all those great topics. But. What he reminded. All of us. As students. Was. He said. Some of you are spending.

[29:32] All your time. In Augustine. Some of you are spending. All your time. In Calvin. And all your time. In Luther. When you should be. Spending your time. With Moses. And David.

And John. And Paul. And the reality. Is. For us. As believers. In Christ. This. Is where.

Luther. And Calvin. And all of the. Reformers. Got their inspiration. Because they were. Looking to the word of God. Guess what. We'll find the same kind of inspiration. If we'll open our bible.

And start studying. And start looking at these topics. Seriously. And not shying away. From the difficult subjects. I was talking to a guy. One time. Trying to encourage him.

In his Christian life. Inviting him. To do some bible study. What I do. You know. How do you grow. As a believer. Get in the word. And I just remember.

[30:29] I just remember. So vividly. And sit down. And say. Well look. I'm just not. Really interested. I'm not. I'm not. Planning on being. I'm not really.

Graham or anything. And. I had to. You know. Answer it. A slightly. Sharp way. Just to get his attention. I said.

Dan. I'm not. I'm not really asking. To be. Billy Graham. I'm just wondering. If you're saved.

Because. If you're saved. If you've been. Born again.

If you're regenerate. Then. You shouldn't have. A hunger. In your heart. For something. That is going to be. Your identity. Right.

Because you've been called. Not to just be a. Convert of Christ Jesus. You've been called. To be a disciple. Of Christ Jesus. And to be a disciple. Means. Not just that you've.

[31:22] Changed one allegiance. To another. Does mean that. But the implications. Are way deeper than that. You have been called. To be a disciple. Of Jesus Christ. Meaning. That you are going. To be a lifelong. Student. Of Jesus Christ. You're going to be. A student. Of his word. Learning his word. And making applications. In your life. In every aspect. Of your life. That's right. To be a disciple. Jesus said. As he said. In Luke 9. 23. As he said. To them all. If anyone. Would come after me. Let him deny himself. And take up his cross. Daily. And follow me. Following Jesus. Is. To be a disciple. It means. That we take up our cross. And die daily. So that we. Come into his presence. And we're renewed. In his presence. We get into his word. Daily. As a diet. For our life. Because. Without instruction. For his word. I don't know how to make it. Through this day. To be a disciple.

[32:21] Is the great commission. To make disciples. Go therefore. And make disciples. Of all the nations. Baptizing them. In the name of the Father. The Son. And the Holy Spirit.

We're making disciples. Not just converts. It sets the precedent. For the importance. Of doctrine. Theological understanding.

Within. The Christian community. For us. If. If this is the first thing. Of their identity. If this is the first part. Of the. The identity. That you can recognize.

The church. By. And how important. Ought this to be to us. As a body of believers. How important. Ought this to be to me. Personally.

I have to ask myself. The question. Am I a student. Of the word. Am I somebody. Whose life. Is actually. Characterized. And identified. By being a student. Of the word.

[33:16] Do people know me. As somebody. That's always in my Bible. Do people know me. By somebody. That's always learning. From scripture. And listening to teachers. As they teach the scriptures.

Is it the main thing. On my podcast. That I'm listening. To the. The exposition. Of God's word. Or the teaching. Of God's word. Or am I just listening. Entertainment. Or am I just on social media. Just absorbing. Every cat video. That comes up. What am I identified by? The early church. Saw this as their identity. We see that. In the epistles. Fleshed out. These are the bones. Rattling right here. As the Holy Spirit. Is being poured out. In the church. And we see. The result of that. Is a hunger.

For God's word. Whenever they got together. It was characteristic. Of them. To be around. The scriptures. And the teachings. Of the apostles. So Paul.

[34:11] Instructs Timothy. When he's telling him. How to be a pastor. And he tells him. In 1 Timothy 4.13. He said. Until I come. Devote yourself.

To something. What? There's that word again. Devote yourself. To something. Timothy. You're going to be a pastor. In this church. In Ephesus. In a hostile city.

That's not going to receive. The teaching of God's word. You're going to be in a hostile place.

Where sometimes. Even within the church. They're not going to receive. God's word. But you. As a pastor.

As an elder. In this church. Need to devote yourself. To something. Be identified. By something. Something needs to be. So close at hand. In your life. That it becomes.

Your identity. What is that going to be? Until I come. Devote yourself. To the public reading. Of scripture. To exhortation. And to teaching. This.

[35:04] Timothy. Must be the characteristic. Of your life. If there is any pastor. Any elder teacher. That is. Leading a congregation. That is not characterized. By a love for God's word.

Flee. Run for your life. If pop psychology. Is the guide. For the day. Flee. Run for your life.

Because. This is an indicator. That this. May. Actually. Not be. What it says. It is. The identity. Of this group.

Is at risk. Because. If this person. Is not characterized. By teaching the word. And this congregation. Is not characterized. By a love for God's word. I got news for you.

It may be called. A lot of things. But it is. Difficult. To call it. A church. Amen. Titus 1.9. Said the same thing.

[35:59] In this other. Pastoral epistle. We must hold firm. To the trustworthy. Word. As taught. So that. As a pastor. So that he may be. Given. That he may be.

Able to give instruction. In sound doctrine. And rebuke. Those who contradicted. As. As qualification. For an elder. This was the qualification. How should the church. Function. What should be. Characteristic. Of this group. And it's not just. The pastors. It's. I'm trying. It's here. It's not just. Characteristic. But pastors. Colossians 3.16. Says. That we. As believers. As Paul. Is talking. In the church here. He says. Let the word of Christ.

Dwell in you. Richly. Teaching. And admonishing. One another. In all wisdom. In other words. It's not just. To be characteristic. Of the pulpit.

[36:57] It is to be. Characteristic. Of the pews. A love. And a passion. For God's word. It's the precedent.

Is your life. Identified. By what you. Are so closely. Connected with. So much so. That people. See you. As a student.

Of Christ. And learns. God's word. And loves. God's word. And lives. God's word. So close to him. Your identity. Is wrapped up. In the teaching. Of the apostles.

I think of this. Because of. How important. This is. Even practically. Why is this. The first thing. I mean. Think of. In lists. First thing.

Is the priority. Okay. He's giving priority. To this. In the list. It's first. It's foundational. Their identity. Is foundationally. In the apostles teaching.

[37:55] I was thinking. If this. People understand. This. Even. Even. Nationally. Politically. I was thinking. Of the. Ronald Reagan's. Quote. I think. It was 1967.

As governor. He said. Freedom. Is a fragile thing. And it's never more. Than one generation. Away from extinction. Wouldn't you believe.

That would be true. Yep. Have we just. Seen. This dramatic. This dramatic. Shift. In our culture. Where all of a sudden. A lot of that. Is just being lost. In the book of Judges.

It tells us. And we see. In Judges. Chapter 2. And the people. Serve the Lord. All the days of Joshua. And all the days of the elders. Who outlived Joshua.

Who had seen. The great work of the Lord. And what he had done. For Israel. And then we're told. In the generation. That follows him. And there arose.

[38:53] Another generation. After him. Who did not know. The Lord. Or the work. That he had done. Why? Because they're not being taught. They did not know. The work.

They didn't know. What God had done. And what happened. It says. In Judges. 2. 10. They abandoned. The Lord. One generation. What happens.

To the church. In one generation. Of a church. That does not preach. And proclaim. God's word. As the authority. It's lost. It's a drift.

Atheists understand this. I mean. You think. You think. Even. 1935. In Germany. Hitler said. He alone. Who owns the youth.

Gains the future. He understood this. You teach the youth. And in one generation. You captivate their mind. One generation. You've lost. Something.

[39:57] In August 2014. Lawrence Cross. Delivered a speech. In Australia. As an atheist. He understood it.

He said. He said. If we plant seeds of doubt. In our children. Religion will go away. In a generation. Or at least. Largely go away. And that. I believe. Is what our obligation. Is to do.

As a leader. In Australia. They understand this. They understand. What happens. When you. Lose something. All it takes. Is one generation. Losing sight.

Of their identity. And that next generation. Will be identified. By something. Entirely different. This is where. We should not be discouraged.

As believers in Christ. In this generation. Even when. We see the statistics. As George Barney says. Generation Z. In the United States. Is the first. Post. Christian.

[40:53] Generation. In America. The first. Truly. Post. Christian. Generation. You say. Man. That's discouraging. No. It's not. Not for us.

Because. This is where. Our identity. Shines. We get to shine. The light of Christ. Our identity. Becomes distinct. We are people. Rooted. And grounded. In the word of God. And now. It's unambiguous. Who we are. We get to shine. The light of Christ. And say. This is what we believe. And thus. Says the Lord. And it's something new. And altogether. Different. For this generation. Because. They have lost sight. Of what. Is true. Even the effects. Of it. On our culture. See. So let me give you. A few.

Reasons. Why this is important. For our identity. Number one. It establishes. The authority. Of scripture. This establishes.

[41:49] The authority. Of scripture. For us. As a church. This is the identity. Of the church. That's what we're going to be. 2 Timothy 3.16. All scripture.

Is breathed. By God. And it is useful. For teaching. Rebuking. Correcting. And training. In righteousness. That the servant of God. May be thoroughly equipped.

For every. Good word. The scripture. Is the root. It establishes. The authority. And gives us. Our direction. Number two. it becomes the substance for discipleship.

We're not just teaching people how to be a better man or a better woman. We're teaching what God has said about being a man and being a woman. That's discipleship. We're teaching what it means to proclaim the gospel.

We're going and making disciples, and even as Ephesians 4 says, we're doing this to equip His people for works of service so that the body of Christ might be built up. Discipleship in the church has its substance as the Word of God.

[42:55] We are not just a coffee clap, although we do love our coffee. And we do clap from time to time. But that's not what we're about.

That's not our identity. There are churches that get together, and the ladies get together, and they do wine tasting, and they do everything else. They'll do everything under the sun except get into the Word of God. They're men's group all over the country.

They'll get together. They'll shoot guns. They'll talk about cigars. They'll talk about hard liquor these days. But they'll do everything in the world except get into the Word of God. And without that passion for the Word of God, without the teaching of the Word of God being central to discipleship, we need to ask ourselves, what are we?

This is not our identity. It is the substance for discipleship. Number three, it provides accountability and correction in community. Accountability and correction in community.

That's why Paul told Timothy, preach the Word. We're in 2 Timothy 4.2. Be prepared in season and out of season. What are you going to do with the Word, Timothy?

[44:04] Correct, rebuke, and encourage with all patience and careful instruction. This is what you're going to do with the Word. Because that's who we are. This is our identity.

It's racked up in the Word of God. This is the Word of God. Every breathed Word inspired for our benefit so that we will have revelations of God.

But I don't have to guess about what a man is or what a woman is because God said what they are. I don't have to guess what it means to be a disciple because God's Word says what it means to be a disciple.

I don't have to guess what it means to be a church because God's Word says what it means to be a church. What the Gospel is. How did Jesus preach the Gospel?

Right? Luke chapter 24, what did He do? At the beginning of the Scriptures. On the road to Emmaus, remember they're walking along and every night they talk about, did not our hearts burn within us when He talked about all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures?

[45:08] And Jesus gave them the Scriptures. The Word of God is living and powerful. The Word of God is the substance for our disciples. It provides the accountability for us in the community.

So we're preaching and hold each other to it. Encourage each other in it. Teach each other's kids. Encourage our families together.

In community. In community. Faith. Purpose.

Purpose. It's the means of experiencing the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is illuminating the Scripture. It's what He does. And we've been promised the Holy Spirit within us.

I have indwelt within me as a believer in Christ. The Holy Spirit of God. I am a temple of the Holy Spirit. And, as we saw in 1st or 2nd Corinthians, I can't remember, a couple weeks ago, we are a temple of the Holy Spirit together.

[46:12] Uniquely. And so I am a temple of the Holy Spirit, we are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the means of illumination for us as we open the book. So when you see the Holy Spirit being poured out in the early church, is it any wonder that this becomes the hunger of the group?

Men and women who have been filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and what's the first thing that identifies them? And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. It's the means of experiencing the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, the advocate of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and remind you of everything I have sent to you.

Notice the phrasing there, even describing the work of discipleship in the Great Commission. We're to make disciples, teaching those to obey whatsoever He has commanded.

What did He say? I'm giving you the Holy Spirit, so He'll remind you of everything that I've said to you. The commands of Christ. It's the Holy Spirit who's going to give us understanding, 1 Corinthians 2, 12.

[47:25] And this is going to lead to transformation in our life. Aren't you glad? He grows us and causes us to thrive, and the Holy Spirit is beginning to work. How many of your lives were changed when you started studying the Bible?

Started growing, and you're vague all of a sudden. You were saved, you heard the Gospel, you were saved, and flopped around here or there. And all of a sudden, somebody pointed you to the book, and you started getting into the Scripture.

And all of a sudden, you were in life. You tasted the Holy Spirit, and you have yet to go back, right? Once you taste it, there's nothing like it.

Romans 12, 2 says, Do not conform to the pattern of this world and be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

It leads to transformation. It enables you to see that's why it's important. So what's going to make us a church? No?

[48:26] Church is a church because it's one genetically called out once, born again, called together. It's going to be one structurally in how it forms its membership.

Membership is important. Talk about that more, but I'll just say it a side note. I was thinking about it this morning. Every analogy in Scripture falls apart if membership is not a formal, identifiable membership.

That's correct. You say, what? What do you mean? We're described as a flock. What shepherd does not know the sheep that are in his flock?

He knows how many he has. He knows which ones are his. We're described as a family. How many of you don't know how many people are in your family? Right?

Right? I mean, there's some kid in your house and you're like, hey, who's that? I said this to Warren the other day. I was like, how'd you get in here? Who are you? What are you doing?

[49:31] I noticed you're hanging around a chamber a few years ago and you're still here. Right? No! He's my son! I know who he is!

It was funny. The joke is funny because it was so ironic, right? I don't know if I explain the joke. It's not funny. But he understood. We laughed together. He said similar things. Yeah, you were that guy who didn't play kids with me.

You know, he knows who I'm feeling. I didn't know who they are. For a household, for an army, what commander doesn't know who's in his truth?

But every analogy, just, my body, we're the body of Christ. Oh, I left my arm at home. No! I mean, maybe you've got a prosthetic and you left it somewhere.

I don't know, but in reality, you know the parts of your body and somebody messes with your body, then you know it. It all falls apart. It's by design.

[50:31] How we're structured in membership and how we're structured in government, how we govern this body, is actually important to God. And he's revealed things about this in the book.

How are we going to be characterized? We're going to be characterized because the Word of God is so close at hand in how we form our government, how we observe membership, how we do the ordinances, how we function together in worship and in prayer and everything else, that people are going to look at us and say, man, those people are serious about the book.

Those are, like they used to call the old Baptists in America, people of the book. Maybe we'll start a movement, church plants that are so dedicated to God's Word that we will just be known as a movement of people that love the book.

behaviorally, our first fundamental feature is the teaching and learning of the Scriptures.

Martin Luther said, the sure mark by which the Christian congregation can be recognized is that the pure gospel is preached there. For just as the banner of an army is the sure sign by which one can know what kind of Lord and army have taken to the field, so too the gospel is the sure sign by which one knows where Christ and his army are in camp.

[52:13] Likewise, where the gospel is absent and human teachings rule, there no Christians live but only pagans, no matter how numerous they are and how holy and upright their life may be.

For as Calvin said, wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there it is not to be doubted.

A church of God exists. A church identified by love or worth. So as we come to invitation time today, invitation is the end of the service where we respond to God.

Now, you may do that in your seat. You may be right where you're sitting and the Lord reminded you of some things. Maybe you're already strong where you've reinforced that in your heart today. Yes, I'm going to be strong and I'm going to reinforce that in our church. Maybe you've drifted away from being identified as someone who is in the book or by the book.

[53:30] The teaching of the apostles should be the identity of your life. It won't be the identity of our church. It's not the identity of our lives. Spurgeon said, when someone hugs me, may I bleed bit line, bleed high with air.

Is that what characterizes us? Maybe you're here today and you've never heard clearly the gospel. You didn't realize that Christ has come according to the scriptures, not just come. He came according to the scriptures. He was foretold. When He came, He lived a perfect life like the scriptures said He would.

And just as Adam saw Him coming, just as Moses saw Him coming, just as Abraham saw Him coming, just as David saw Him coming, John the Bible said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

When He came, He came. Human form, fully God. He died in the cross as a substitute for my sin.