

How Does a Church Know It's Purpose

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Preacher: Robert Elliott

[0 : 00] It is my joy this morning to have with us and to introduce Pastor Rob Elliott as a guest preacher this morning.

! 2008 to 2015, he served as a senior pastor of Milford Bible Church in Milford, Pennsylvania. Pastor Elliott also pastored two associated gospel church congregations in Ontario, Canada for 20 years, during which time he also provided leadership at the regional level for that denomination in Canada.

Pastor Elliott has been happily married to his wife, Beth, for 41 years. And together they have a daughter, Joanna, who lives in Canada, and a son, J.D., who resides with them here in Nassau. But beyond those formal details, on a personal level, I want to say that Pastor Rob Elliott is my friend. He is a dear friend and brother of 10 years.

[1 : 33] Within a few months of coming to the island, I got to meet Pastor Elliott. We were actually celebrating our 25th church anniversary at the time, and though he had been here a short time, he showed up to our reception to celebrate with us.

And that began a deep friendship over the past 10 years. And without any slight to the other relationships I have on the island, I can say that over the past 10 years, I've grown in the depth and strength of my relationship with Pastor Elliott more than I have with any other pastor on this island. If I were to face a challenge, any difficulty, he'd be the first person I would pick up the phone to call. And so it is a real honor that he is able to be with us this morning.

He does not regularly find himself outside of the pulpit of Calvary Bible Church on a Sunday morning. So we are honored to have him to bring God's word to us.

And I expect that his bringing God's word to us this morning will be the same in terms of effect as it has been on my own heart. Over the past 10 years, I can sincerely say that because of my friendship with Pastor Elliott, I'm a better man.

[2 : 54] I love the Lord more. And I'm a more faithful pastor. And so he's a dear brother. Let's welcome him this morning. I know Pastor Moss to be a fine expositor of God's word.

Among my best friends on the elders team at Calvary Bible Church, along with them, I would consider Pastor Cedric one of my very best friends here in Nassau and in this country.

You don't know, maybe or maybe you do, that Pastor Cedric Moss has been instrumental in keeping a pastoral fraternal going monthly right here in the city.

He's the chairman of the fraternal. He's the chairman of the fraternal and sees to it they have a place to meet once a month, a host who usually provides a Bible devotional in a time of prayer and singing often.

And so I thank you for that leadership that the congregation might be unaware of, Pastor Moss. That's a very special time in my own heart. And I trust also the other hearts of other men in the fraternal.

[3 : 58] And so let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the lovely Savior of whom we have sung.

We thank you that he is the head of the church and the head of this church and the Savior of the body. And we pray, Heavenly Father, that these moments spent in the inspired and errant word of God would serve to make us more like Jesus.

Please hide me behind Christ's cross. So that Jesus, in all his sufficient glory, would be properly seen by the man in the pulpit and by the brothers and sisters who are in the pew.

And we ask these things in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. And God's church said, Amen. Amen. And so, happy anniversary, happy birthday.

Happy 35th anniversary, happy 35th birthday. That's a great milestone that you've achieved with God's faithful grace that you've sung of together this morning. Your church was founded, if my math is right, in 1990.

[5 : 07] 1990. What was the world like in 1990? Well, Germany was reunited in that year. The Human Genome Project was launched.

The Gulf War started with Saddam Hussein invading Kuwait. You're going to like this. Back in 1990, a gallon of gasoline cost about \$1.50.

I think it's gone up some since then. The Hubble Space Telescope began to be used. And, more locally, the era of the mega resort began in the Bahamas.

Ready? With the opening of the Crystal Palace Resort. Do you remember? Yeah. It's no more, right? Did Malia swallow that or did something else happen there?

Someone said the Chinese. That's probably accurate. Yes. Bahamar. Okay, that's still accurate. A lot has changed since 1990.

[6 : 09] Some of you here this morning weren't born yet in 1990, but here you are, the precious children of Kingdom Life Church. I see each and every one of you, and I thank God for you and all the potential that resides in each one of you to know Christ and to make Him known to your generation.

Well done. In 1990, I was just three years out of seminary, and my first pastorate, along with my dear wife, Beth, next to Jesus, she's the best decision I've ever made.

There is no doubt in my mind, I say it all the time, and it's true. There, in our first pastorate, I was learning so many things I needed to learn outside of the seminary classroom.

But in life, in the actual ebb and flow of a local church family like this one, I was learning, practically speaking, my purpose as a pastor. What does it say in God's word I'm to do as a pastor?

I remember one weekday, I came home for lunch. It was a small town. I came home and had a nice lunch with Beth, and I looked at her. I said, I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to do this afternoon. And she prayed for me and sent me on my way.

[7 : 14] The Lord will show you what to do. Just go to church and work. And that's been a good advice ever since. But I was so green, you could have stuck me in the ground, and I would have grown. I was so green.

And so I needed to know my purpose as found in God's word. What is the purpose of a pastor? And similarly, on your 35th anniversary this morning, you need to know what is God's purpose or purposes for the church, God's purpose or purposes for the church, universal, and for your localized expression of that universal church.

Every church has to figure that out. And fortunately, God hasn't left us to our own devices to figure out those purposes. You know, King David in the Old Testament, he was a believer who knew God's purpose for him.

It says in Acts 13, 36a, for David, after he had served the purpose of God, not the purpose of David, for David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers.

So David in the Old Testament had to learn his purpose. The apostle Paul, similarly, in the New Testament, Paul had to know God's purpose for him. And he figured that out.

[8 : 27] And he wrote to the church at Ephesus in chapter three, for this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, assuming you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ. A mystery in the Bible is not a whodunit. A mystery in the Bible is a previously undisclosed, eternal truth of God's character and purposes.

And before the New Testament, wasn't fully known that the church of Jesus Christ would include believing Gentiles and not just believing Jews. So he goes on, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, capital S.

This mystery is, watch, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel, Paul writes, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, Paul writes, to me, though I am the least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach, watch, to the Gentiles.

[9 : 47] I think most all of us are Gentiles here this morning. There may be a converted Jewish person. I'm so glad if there would be. The grace was given to me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, of which we've been singing, love the songs today.

And to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for the ages in God who created all things. So David had to fulfill his purposes among his generation.

And similarly, the apostle Paul had to fulfill God's purposes for him as the great apostle to the Gentiles who wrote 60% of our New Testaments. And similarly, Kingdom Life Church, this precious church, needs to continue to be about the business of finding out what the Bible says are God's purposes for Kingdom Life Church.

I don't think this is going to be a revelation of newness to any of you. It's going to be a reminder, hopefully, of why you exist to fulfill the New Testament purposes that God has for you as a local church.

And I hope to share that with you in the moments I have together from God's Word. And so, what is the source of the purposes for this church?

[11 : 03] Where are we going to find the source of the purposes for any church? Well, let me just state that we believers firmly know anything that we do firmly know by knowing the Word of God, period.

If we know anything for sure, then we know it because the Word of God has taught it to us. Amen? What we know is what the Bible says we ought to know, period.

And so, we shouldn't follow our hearts to know what we know. We shouldn't rely on our overnight dreams to know what we know. We shouldn't have feelings-driven thoughts to know what we know. We shouldn't poll our peers for their opinions to know what we know.

We shouldn't depend on any pastor's own bright ideas or Bible-less or Bible-twisted sermons to know what we know. By the way, I tell our church that my opinion isn't worth very much, but my convictions based in Scripture are priceless.

I might not cross the street for Wendy's or McDonald's. That's an opinion. But I would die for my convictions. You could put a gun to my head and say, deny that Jesus Christ is Savior, and I'd say, pull the trigger.

[12 : 13] My opinions, I joke, my opinions plus seven bucks will get you a coffee at ten bucks. No, I mean Starbucks. Ten bucks. My opinion plus seven dollars will get you a coffee at Starbucks.

My opinions and your opinions aren't worth much at all. But what God has revealed to us in His precious Word, the Bible, that is worth priceless.

You can't put a price on it. And so, we come to the whole topic of what would God's purposes be for Kingdom Life Church as you forge ahead into the next chapter of your history as a church.

You better have me take you to the Scriptures, not to some seminar, not to some canned program that's out there for church growth, but to the Bible. And that's where we're going to be today, because the Bible, according to 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, you know the verse perhaps, all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man, I might add, woman of God, may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So here's how it works. Teaching of the Word of God says, this is the way. Reproof says, hey, you're off of the way. Correction says, here's how you get back onto the way.

[13 : 35] And training in righteousness says, here's how you stay put on the way. That's the Bible. That's the Scriptures. And so, focusing in on the Holy Spirit-inspired metaphors for the church is what we'll be doing in our sermon time this morning.

Because these metaphors that God the Holy Spirit wrote into the pages of our New Testament, these metaphors, these comparisons for the church of Jesus Christ are so instructive in us finding out what God's purposes are for us as a church.

More succinctly, maybe I could put it this way. It's the biblical metaphors which describe the church, which declare God's purposes for all of His local church, all of His local churches.

Your church is unique as a precious, unique entity. Calvary Bible Church is a unique, precious entity. All the other churches that preach and believe the Bible in this city are precious, unique

entities.

But we all share the purposes from God that are based on the metaphors that God's Word selects for the church. Okay? So let's get into these metaphors.

[14:47] There are six of them I want to take you through quickly, very quickly. The first metaphor, metaphor one, is that the church is the bride of Christ.

Say that with me. The bride of Christ. The church is the bride of Christ. You've heard that before, I trust. Second to last chapter of the whole Bible, Revelation 21, 9 and 10 says, Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the last seven plagues, and spoke to me, that is John on Patmos, saying, Come, I will show you the bride.

That's the church. The wife of the Lamb. The Lamb is Jesus. So this is one of the many passages that says, God compares this church to the bride of Christ.

Remember that. So think with me. If this church is the bride of Christ, then Christ, who is Christ?

Well, then Christ is the bridegroom, right?

If the church is the bride, then Christ must be the bridegroom. Matthew 9, 15, before the church was birthed in Acts 2, Jesus said unto them, Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?

[16:02] Jesus was calling himself the bridegroom of the church before the church was birthed in Acts 2. And then Jesus went on and said, The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

We live in the days when the bridegroom Christ has been temporarily, spatially taken away from us, and that he's seated at the Father's right hand as I preach. So the first metaphor for the church is that the church is the bride of Christ.

That means Christ is the bridegroom of the church. The second metaphor is that the church is the body of Christ. I see that in many places, but let's just go to Colossians 1, verse 18.

And he, that is Christ, contextually Christ, and he is the head, watch, of the body, watch, the church. Colossians 1, verse 18 says, And he, Christ, is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. So the second metaphor that New Testament gives for the church is that the church is the body of Christ.

[17:11] So think with me, if the church is the body of Christ, then Jesus Christ is the head of the body. That's what it says right in Colossians 1, verse 18. And he is the head of the body, the church.

Another reference to that same effect that Christ is head is Colossians 2, verse 19. We're going to be moving around a lot this morning. Colossians 2, verse 19. And not holding fast to the head, capital H, from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments grows with a growth that is from God.

You as a church have grown spiritually and numerically over the 35 years because you have had and still have a founding pastor that is true to the word of God, which presents Jesus Christ as preeminent to him first as your under-shepherd, but also through his teaching and preaching of this wonderful word that is Christocentric, that you are all being called to live under the headship of Christ as a church.

To have Christ as head of the church, not Pastor Moss as fine as an expositor and pastor as he is, but the head of this church and the head of the church is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the body. Amen? Amen. He is the head of the body. So think with me. Go on to metaphor three. Not only is the church compared to be the bride of Christ and the body of Christ, and now the temple or the building of God.

[18:39] The church is compared to a temple or to a building of God. We go to Ephesians 2, 19 to 22. Paul writing to the church at ancient Ephesus.

Ephesians 2, 19 to 22. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of, watch, the household of God.

That's a family, but it's more than a family, as we'll see. Verse 20. Built. The household of God is built on something. It's built on the foundation of what? Of the apostles and the prophets.

The church is built upon the foundation of the apostolic writings, the New Testament, and the prophets, the Old Testament. And then the personification of that foundation, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

In whom? The whole structure as a building. The whole structure being joined together grows into, watch, a holy temple in the Lord.

[19 : 48] In him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. But today is another Lord's Day installment of the Holy Spirit building Kingdom Life Church to be a temple that God is willing to live in.

And the Holy Spirit lives in each one of you who are redeemed, children of God. That you each one are a temple of the Holy Spirit, a dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit if you're saved.

And so think with me, if the metaphor compares the church to the temple or the building of God, then if you think with me on that, then if the church is the temple and the building of God, then Christ must be the foundation.

Ephesians verses I read said he's the cornerstone. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 3, 10 and 11. 1 Corinthians 3, 10 and 11.

The scene here is the bima, future judgment seat of Christ for believers. It's a judgment seat for reward given or reward withheld. It's not a judgment for heaven or hell.

[21 : 03] That's the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20. This here is the bima, the judgment seat of Christ judgment for believers after the rapture of the church.

And we read in 1 Corinthians 3, 10 and 11, the following. According to the grace of God given to me like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation and someone else is building upon it.

Let each one take care how he builds upon it. That is the foundation. Who is the foundation? We go on. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid.

Watch. Who is Jesus Christ? Christ. The church is a temple or a building of God. And Jesus Christ is the foundation of that structure.

No other foundation. No program of man. No book written by even the brightest pastor in the world. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church being compared to the body or the temple of God.

[22 : 07] But there's more. Not only does the New Testament compare the church to be the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple or building of God, but also metaphor for, if you're hurriedly taking notes, metaphor for, is that the church is likened to a priesthood.

A priesthood. I see that in 1 Peter 2, 4 through 10. 1 Peter 2, 4 through 10. Peter writes, As you come to him, that is Christ, a living stone, rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious.

By the way, young people, when you go to school and there's people around you in your classes, maybe even your teachers that don't love Jesus, they are going to have to figure out what to do with you.

They're going to have to figure out if they're going to come to love the Jesus you love, or they're going to turn away from the Jesus you love. If they turn away from the Jesus you love, pray for them. Don't give up on them, but realize that you're bringing them to a choice about Jesus, even as a young person.

You don't have to be a grown-up to bring other people to a decision about Jesus Christ. So Peter said that Jesus, back then, was a living stone rejected by some men, but in the sight of God, the same Jesus was chosen and precious.

[23 : 34] You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. There it is. A holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it stands in Scripture and quotes the Old Testament. Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and the stone of stumbling, a rock of offense.

That passage is teaching us that the church of Jesus Christ is likened to a priesthood. We're a priesthood because we're part of the church.

So if we're a priesthood, does that not imply that Jesus Christ is our high priest? Sure it does. Jesus Christ is our high priest. Hebrews 4, verse 14.

[24 : 38] Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

We hold fast to our confession of certain beliefs about the Lord Jesus Christ is found in Scripture because we have a great high priest seated at the Father's right hand in glory who ministers on our

behalf, who intercedes for us in prayer, who advocates for us when the devil slanders us and accuses us.

We are a priesthood as the church, and we have a high priest in Jesus, our Lord, our Savior, and our life. But there's more in the New Testament.

Not only is the church compared to the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple or building of God, and a priesthood, but in the fifth place, the New Testament has the metaphor of branches, that the church of Jesus Christ is like branches.

We read of that in John 15, 1 through 8. Again, this was given by Jesus before the cross, just before the cross, before the church itself was born in Acts 2, but he was looking forward to what it would be like for believers after the church was formed.

[25 : 57] And he says these beautiful words, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does not bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

So this metaphor compares the church to branches in a grape plant. So if Jesus Christ, if we are branches as a church rather, then Jesus Christ must be the vine.

And he says so right in the first part of that passage. Jesus says of himself, I am the true vine. I am the true vine. Jesus is the vine. This is a church.

[27 : 07] We're branches to Jesus. You're all branches if you know Christ as Savior. If you're redeemed and regenerate and saved and converted, then you're a branch. And Jesus Christ is the vine.

And this is a collection of branches that meets together every Lord's day and worships this wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The sixth and the last metaphor I want to take us to in the New Testament, the sixth comparison that the New Testament makes for the church is that we are called a flock in 1 Peter 5.2.

This is in the context of Peter exhorting other elders in the church in this manner. He says to those elders, Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

Shepherd the flock of God. The New Testament compares a church like this to a flock of sheep.

This picture that I put in the pulpit as an illustration will come to that in just a minute.

But if you think about a flock, if the church is the flock, then that makes the Lord Jesus the flock shepherd, right? The good shepherd, the great shepherd. Pastor Moss and I are under shepherds because guess what?

[28 : 36] We, in some manner, hold you as little lambies in our arms. We care for you. We pray for you. We love you. We try to be a good model for you. But guess what?

Pastor Moss and I, in this same picture, are the lambies. And we're in Jesus Christ's arms ourselves. We are both under shepherds to the sheep, but we ourselves are sheep to Jesus the good shepherd.

That's very precious. I had a man in the second church I pastored in Pennsylvania. He was an ordinary man, a man that in his senior years and with some of his disabilities, I'm ashamed to say that some people in the church overlooked him.

They kind of went a different way when he passed in the halls because they weren't comfortable talking with him. He was missing some teeth, and he inadvertently would spit on you when he talked. And some people didn't love him, and they went away from him.

But he gave me that picture. He gave me that picture. And the time I spent with Michael was so precious to me. And he was part of that flock.

[29 : 42] He was a little sheep in that flock. And he gave me this painting, this pen and ink drawing, to remind me that, yes, you're an under shepherd, Pastor Rob, but you're also a lamb in need of the good shepherd Jesus.

Okay? So we've seen these metaphors. To review them quickly, Scripture likens the universal church that's all born-again believers worldwide, and this local church and all the other local

churches in Nassau.

No one's been able to give me a clean number on how many local churches there are in Nassau. I've heard anything from 1,500 to 3,000. I'm not sure, but it's a lot of churches. Right?

So Bible-believing, Christ-centered, true New Testament churches like this one, like Calvary Bible Church and many others I trust, we are called the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple or building of God, a priesthood, branches, and a flock.

So let's go off from these metaphors, shall we, for a few minutes. What does it look like to be a bride, a body, a temple, a priesthood, branches, and a flock?

[30 : 50] What does that look like? How would kingdom life know if you are, for instance, living and looking like a bride? Well, what do brides live and look like?

Well, they try to make themselves look as beautiful as they possibly can look on their wedding day, right? And they're ready. They're ready to be married. They're ready to walk down that aisle. If this church would live and look to be like a bride of Christ, you would be beautiful in the eyes of heaven, and you'd be ready to serve the Lord and ready for His return at any time.

Let's go on to the next metaphor. How much does kingdom life church look and live like a body? A body that is healthy. A body that's healthy is in balance.

All the ways the blood tests they do, the life is in the blood, and so my doctor does my physical and draws blood, and he has all these tests on my blood to understand my health. He's looking largely for balance in my blood, that my blood levels are in proper balance with one another.

For the kingdom life church to look and to live like the body of Christ that you are, you want to be spiritually healthy, and you want to be in balance.

[32 : 04] I noticed in the scripture verses, Pastor Cedric, that you're learning, which is a wonderful discipline as a church, that you alternate between Old and New Testament. I'm pretty sure that's how you do it.

At least that's how you did it in this sample I saw. That's a beautiful, that's a way of being in balance. Old and New Testament, Old and New Testament. Let's go on with these metaphors. How much does Kingdom Life Church look and live like a temple?

Well, a temple that's properly running as a temple is organized. Not all mixed up and out of order. And a temple looks inviting to people who are coming to the temple.

Inviting. How are you looking and living like a priesthood? But by definition, a priesthood is serving. Serving God by serving others. And by definition, God honoring priesthood is compassionate.

We ought to be compassionate local churches that don't judge books by their cover. Don't avoid the Michaels in the corridors of the church because they inadvertently spit on you because they're missing teeth.

[33 : 13] How about looking and living like branches? Branches. Branches are useful and fruitful to the degree to which they are connected to the vine.

If you take a sea grape branch and it gets broken off, doesn't have adequate contact with the vine of the sea grape plant, it will not bear sea grapes. Or if it has some started, they will die.

For us to be churches that resemble the branches that we're supposed to, we need to be connected with Jesus Christ. That connection does not happen just through our emotions.

Emotions aren't wrong, but they're a better caboose than a train engine. But we get connection with Christ through His Word, through His Bible.

Sunday mornings in this context, but also on your own through the week. Connect to the Bible.

Connect to Christ who is in the Bible. And of course, when branches are properly connected, they have fruit.

[34 : 16] An interesting personal study for you maybe to embark upon with your mate if he or she loves the Lord and lives with you at home, or your kids that still live at home. Find out what the Bible defines to be fruit.

I find six things that defines to be fruit I don't have time to go into, but maybe you could find that on your personal study of God's Word. And the last metaphor, look and live like a flock.

A flock are sheep that are together. That's what makes them a flock. Are you guys together? Do you love being together?

Do you want to spend time together? Not just on Sunday mornings, but other ways, like this afternoon at lunch and other times. Are you together? And a flock that's in good shape is a flock that is supervised.

The sheep don't tell the shepherd what to do. The shepherd lovingly tells the sheep what to do, right? There are some churches where the sheep tell the under shepherd what to do.

[35 : 20] And so, look and live like a bride. Be beautiful and ready. Look and live like a body. Be healthy and in balance. Look and live like a temple. Be organized and inviting.

Look and live like a priesthood. Be serving and be compassionate. Look and live like branches. Be connected and have fruit. Look and live like a flock. Be together and be supervised. So I want to ask some more questions to make some application to this truth.

A bridegroom lovingly cares for his bride. And so a question for you. And I don't know because I don't know you as a congregation.

I'm not pointing fingers at anybody. I'm just asking a question. Do you accept Christ's care for you as your most precious and needed care?

To loosely quote George MacDonald, a 19th century preacher, pastor, and writer, whom C.S. Lewis greatly admired and often quoted.

[36 : 25] To loosely quote George MacDonald. Perhaps some 127 states that God gives to his beloved even in his sleep because God's beloved doesn't want the help when he's awake.

We all need help. We get episodes in our lives of knowing we need help.

Do we realize the best help, the most essential help, is in our Savior? We ought not to be running all around for solutions other than Jesus Christ.

Solutions like government or public rallies or marches or wealthy church members or canned church programs or know-it-all guest speakers. I trust that's not me. We're not going to be running around for all these quasi-pseudo-counterfeit solutions when we have the primary, the sufficient solution, who is the Lord Jesus Christ in his person and in his work.

Not going here and there to compare ourselves with other churches. Not just seeing man-made church initiatives as the answer and not becoming seeker sensitive. May I next remind that a head calls all of the shots for the whole body.

[37 : 47] I'm only talking, preaching, thinking because my mind is telling everything else in my body what to do right now. I hope you are aware that Jesus Christ is not actually Lord unless a person determines that they will never say no to Jesus.

In any matter. I'll say that again. You can say that Jesus Christ is your Lord, but he is not actually your Lord if you think you can say no to Jesus in any matter.

If I passed out a recipe card to each person and on the recipe card one half it said no and the other half said Lord, I had said circle one.

You could only circle one and not two. You cannot circle no and Lord. If you circle Lord, you are saying you will never say no to Jesus in any matter.

If you circle no, then he really isn't Lord of your life. But that can change even this morning.

[39 : 07] May there be no matter in my life that I feel I can say no to Jesus Christ in. And may there be no matter in any one of your lives that you feel you have the right to say no to Jesus.

May I also remind that a foundation stabilizes and shapes the entire building upon which it rests.

This building is on a foundation and this building is shaped by the foundation it sits on. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church who stabilizes the church and shapes the entire building which rests upon it.

And so here's a question, a personal question. I want to ask each of you, know Christ. What is your foundation? What is your foundation in life?

One answer can be as simple as what do you think most about when you're free to think about anything else at all? What do you think most about usually when you're showering, when you're shaving?

[40 : 12] What do you think most about when you're putting on makeup or waiting in a waiting room? What are you thinking most about when you're eating alone or settling into the pew for the worship services to start here? What are you most thinking about when you're lying on your bed and drifting off to sleep?

If you think about Christ, the majority of the time when you're free to think about anything, then probably you live with Christ as your foundation.

Christ will be the reason for what you say and for what you refuse to say.

Christ will be the reason for what you do and for what you refuse to do. Christ will be the reason for what you approve and what you refuse to approve. Christ will be the reason for how you do

entertainment and how you refuse to do entertainment.

Christ will be hope for you and everything else will be things you refuse to hope in. Christ will be the reason for who you are and for who you refuse to be.

[41 : 30] who or what do you think about in a typical day when you're free to think about anything at all may it be christ well we move on from christ as foundational to christ as the high priest and may i remind us that a high priest ministers the word so that other priests will do so now you realize i hope that each one of you even the children here today have your own congregations that you preach to pastor cedric has this congregation that he preaches to each lord's day but each one of you who are christians have your own congregations that you preach to every day and pastor cedric's will maybe never intersect with your congregation he'll never get to preach to the people you get to preach to ever thought about that if you're married your first congregation is your mate and if you have children your first congregation are your children who still live under your roof and your secondary congregation is your network of influence say that with me network of influence network of influence i used to live in a gated community in pennsylvania and we had to drive our trash to the dump three times a week we'd go to the dump with our car and our garbage bags in the back and throw it in the dumpster and leon worked at the dump and leon was part of my congregation although he never went to milford bible church i had an influence and spiritual influence in leon's life one day i was bringing my trash like i did every day i saw leon i said hey leon if you get to heaven do you realize you'll be unemployed he looked at me so weird i said there won't be any trash in heaven there won't be any garbage in heaven there'll be no dumps in heaven you will be unemployed if you're there but will you be going there leon now i got his attention moving from trash to jesus he was in my unofficial congregation and i shared the gospel with leon right while all these other people are unloading their trash and invited him to repent and trust jesus for salvation and he did and about a month later he died but leon was in my sphere of influence friend of mine who's evangelist he was raising a little boy about 10 years old he went through walmart we all love walmart he was five thank you beth we modify that to five so five-year-old son's going through walmart with his evangelist father and the evangelist father asked the walmart cashier uh do you know for certain you'll go to heaven when you die and the cashier says that she's scanning the groceries i don't know i sure hope so i'm going to try to do more good than bad and the five-year-old said to his dad dad tell her about christ she ain't gonna make it all right influence you have congregations at walmart or at eight you know whatever you've got congregations or to the children i want to speak to the children are here i was no genius at four or five years old but i trusted the lord jesus to be my savior about four and a half years of age and i was no genius i just knew that i was a sinner that jesus died on the cross because he loved me and i trusted him and only him to make me right with god and i was saved as a little little boy and god used me as a little little boy to lead lots of my friends to salvation in christ and i leave that with god how it all turned out if you're a child here today you have people you can influence spiritually and you should you shouldn't wait till you're growing up you should influence them right now now um so you get the point i'll give you one more illustration that i have i have a congregation

that's bigger than my sunday morning calvary bible congregation i like subway subs so when i go to subway i always order the same sandwich you with me italian bmt on urban cheese uh pepper jack cheese lettuce double tomato and then when i get the double tomato i tell the person making my sandwiches there's going to be tomatoes in heaven i love tomatoes there's going to be tomatoes in heaven she looks at me funny i said but i don't know about beets and then it's one of the co-workers say i like beets and i'll joke around i'll say well maybe the beets will be in the corner all over yonder in heaven but then i say but you know talking about vegetables is wrong when you talk about heaven when you talk about heaven you talk about people made in god's image and people get to heaven by trusting jesus christ alone for salvation so i can have a congregation and i do have a congregation that's much bigger than the people who come faithfully on sunday mornings to 62 collins avenue you all have congregations that you're preaching to that pastor cedric probably will never get to preach to remember that a high priest ministers the word week by week so that you all will minister the word to your congregations minister the word to your congregations please what about a vine may i remind us that a vine is the life and the sap in a vine makes great production possible on the branches now this concept of abiding in christ in john chapter 15 thankfully god christ defines what abiding is right in the same passage after he says that we must abide in christ to be fruitful jesus in verse 10 of john 15 explains what abiding is he says jesus says if you keep my

commandments if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as i have kept my father's commandments and i abide in his love so abiding is obeying you can't say you're abiding in christ if you're not obeying christ but if you are obeying christ you're abiding in christ and when you're abiding in christ you can and will be fruitful so obeying is the condition for bearing fruit it's that simple you see a christian with no grapes on their branches as it were no fruit of the spirit evident in how they live and talk and think and decide they're probably not obeying christ's commandments you see a christian on the other hand who's got grapes as it were on the branches of their lives grapes for refreshment and nourishment of other people the fruit of the spirit galatians 5 then you can know that that christian is obeying christ's commandments and the spirit of god is in control of that christian and produces those grapes as it were on the branches of that christian's life i'm going to hurry along here i want to remind us too that the good shepherd leads and protects and provides for his sheep on a sheep by sheep basis although we are a flock of sheep what i love about this picture is it's the good shepherd one-on-one with the lamby jesus shepherds you christian in a tender beautiful way as if you were his only sheep that's precious so in these moments together and on the occasion of your 35th anniversary we've biblically come to know what the lord purposes for kingdom life church as you go forward until the rapture sounds the buzzer and the game ends by the way you do realize the game clock is ticking down you follow the news in the middle east the game clock is ticking down uh i used to play point guard on the basketball team the point guard as you know is responsible for calling the offensive plays to help the rest of the team score baskets and if as a point guard i'm dribbling down the court i know we're down by one point but if i can't see the game clock for whatever reason it's obstructed to my view and i don't know the time remaining on the clock i don't i'm at a great disadvantage and if i don't know where things are at on the game clock i know it's near the end of the game but i don't know how many seconds i have left i'm at a great disadvantage so what do i do if i don't know what time is left on the clock i i call the play as fast as i can and run that as hard as we can to score as much as we can the game clock is ticking down for christ's return i don't know when but i know it's one day closer today than it was yesterday and i know that i can't see god hasn't told me in his word the date or the time of his son's return so i don't look for a date or a time i just run the offensive plays that i find in the bible as hard as i can and as fast as i can with the team that i've been given my brothers and my sisters in christ and you should do the same and you and all the local churches like you are to live and to minister as the bride of christ beautiful and ready as the body of christ healthy and in balance as a temple of god organized and inviting as a priesthood serving and compassionate as branches connected obedient branches having fruit and as a flock together and supervised that's six things to be i want to wrap up this message by giving us the one thing we're to do these are the six things we're to be the bride of christ the body of christ the temple of god the priesthood the branches and the flock now what is the one thing that we are to do the one thing we are to do is the great commission matthew 28 18 to 20 quote and jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples say make disciples go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit teaching them to observe all that i have commanded you and behold i am with you always even to the end of the age and so the great commission for kingdom life church and for the church is make disciples that's the one thing we're supposed to do make fully committed followers of christ how is that done according to jesus who gave us the commission it's done this way there are three participles in what jesus said which tell us how the one thing is done to make disciples ready three participles go or going baptizing and teaching we are commanded commission sent to make disciples by going baptizing and teaching i think it's done this way i think it's done this way with the task the one thing we're supposed to do so let's do that to wrap up this message stick with me it sounds like this make disciples going baptizing teaching being the bride and the body and the temple and the priesthood and the branches and the flock, recognizing Christ to be the bridegroom, the head, the foundation, and the high priest, the vine, and the good shepherd. I just wonder sometimes, nobody can nail down for me how many churches there are in Nassau. Let's say there are 1,500. Let's say there are 1,500. What would Nassau and our country look like if every one of those churches was making disciples? What would Nassau look like if the Great Commission was not the great omission and that we were making disciples as localized expressions of the bride and body of Christ? What would Nassau and our country look like?

If all of these churches were making disciples by going, by baptizing, and by teaching, what would it look like if all of these churches were making disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching, being the bride, beautiful and ready, and the body, healthy and in balance, and the temple, organized and inviting, and the priesthood, serving and compassionate, and the branches, connected and obedient and having fruit, and the flock, being together and supervised, recognizing Christ to be the bridegroom, loving and caring, and the head, commanding and directing, and the foundation, stabilizing and shaping, and the high priest, ministering the word to others, who will in turn minister the word to others, and the vine, giving life and producing grapes on the obedient branches, and the good shepherd, shepherding all and shepherding one by one.

[55 : 04] What would Nassau look like? Not like it looks right now. What would it look like? So Lord, may the repentance needed start with me and my family. May the repentance needed start with this church and all of the individual marriages and families that constitute this church.

Happy 35th. Happy 35th. And I'm so grateful that in the grace and goodness of God, that we don't have to guess, but we do have to obey.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word that is a light, a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.

We thank you that you have revealed all that you need us to know in your word. We pray that we would be churches shaped by who we are relative to Christ, and that we would understand who Christ is relative to us as a church.

We pray that we would major on the majors and minor on the minors. We pray, Lord, that we would be running the offensive plays for the kingdom of God with an urgency and a cohesion and an obedience that is reflective that we know the game clock is ticking down to zero, but we don't know how much time is left.

[56 : 42] Lord, give us an urgency as we are all of these metaphors that you've told us we are.

Thank you for Pastor Cedric and his family. Continue to bless, guide, and provide for them in every way.

Bless this precious church family, Lord. I know the folks here love their pastor and love the Lord and love the word of God. Bless this congregation as she forges now into the first Lord's Day of her 36th year.

And we ask this in Jesus' name and for his glory alone. Amen. Amen.