

The Glory of the Church

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[0 : 00] Bible, I want you to turn to the book of Matthew, chapter 16. And before we start going into those couple of verses, I had the amazing honor in my life.

You will not care. I imagine most of you will not care about this. But I was invited by a friend to go play golf at one of the most elite courses in the United States in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

And I couldn't believe it, didn't ask Brooke if I could go, just said, let's go. And this golf course is known for how difficult it is, how pristine it is.

But also it's widely known for how the members' guests are treated. So these people pay a fortune to play at this golf course.

They paid a fortune for me to shoot 115 at this golf course. But I was treated because I was a friend of a member as like a king in the locker room, at the dining hall, the people on the different courses.

[1 : 00] And it was amazing to me to see just the reality of if you're a part of someone who's a part of something, that you are treated in the same way that they are. I think very often we think of the church not as Christ Church, but as a church that you and I are a part of.

But we are actually members of Christ Church to where we then recognize that the blessing and how we are treated by the Father because of whom we have been buried with and raised to new life in.

I wonder if you've ever heard someone say, and I imagine many of you have, I love Jesus, I just don't love the church. Or I'm a Christian, but I just don't go to church on Sunday morning.

I kind of do church on my own. Play a little Christian music, have a little latte, maybe even open up a Bible. It's just me and the Lord. And you hear that and you go, oh, that's one of the silliest things in the world.

You don't even know what you're talking about. I'd imagine if you spend enough time around other Christians, many would say, I love Jesus, I just don't love organized religion. Or I just don't care much for the church.

[2 : 11] I just like the teaching or I like one of the programs that they offer. But when I get kind of caught up in the organization of it, I just kind of get turned off a little bit. And I'd imagine you might want to respond to people who say things like that in a particular way.

Sometimes in maybe haughtiness or sometimes in, I don't think you understand what you're talking about. That's the silliest thing I've ever heard. Now, if you approach it that way, your speech may not be gracious or helpful.

Instead, the person might think, see, this is why I avoid church, of how you're talking to me right now, belittling me right now. But I want us to consider a better response where Jesus, one of Jesus, or Peter, Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends and disciples, thought and said that he loved Jesus so deeply.

In John chapter 13, you don't have to turn there, verses 37 and 38, Peter tells Jesus, I will lay down my life for you. And Jesus responds, will you? You're going to deny me three times before the morning.

And then later in John 18, Peter does exactly that. He denies knowing Jesus three times. Despite Peter's failure, Jesus, though, shows remarkable grace. To where in John 21, after his resurrection, Jesus gives Peter a chance for restoration.

[3 : 26] And just after breakfast, echoing the scene of Peter's denial, you think of right before morning and now a new morning, new mercy, we actually have Jesus saying, do you love me?

And Peter affirms this. And then Jesus says, then feed my sheep. Three times Jesus emphasizes the reality and the call that he should feed his own sheep, highlighting Jesus' love for his church, which will then in turn be Peter's love for his church and God's very people.

So, do you love Jesus? I would imagine you would say yes. So if you truly love Jesus, you will love his church. No one loves the church more than Jesus does.

We know this because he laid down his life for her in Ephesians chapter 5. And then in John 3, 16, it says that love involves laying down our lives for our brothers and our sisters. And so I want us this morning to learn from Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 what Jesus means when he says that he loves his church, which in turn would mean we love the church, where we're swept up in the glory of the church.

Mark Dever, one of my heroes, says that the church is the gospel made visible. And we see this through the specific sacraments that God gives his people, but the church, as it gathers, is the gospel made visible.

[4 : 45] And so I want us to explore Matthew 16, 13 through 20, which reveals that God's, reveals the church's glory. And then in Matthew 18, verses 15 through 17, which shows how personal the church actually is.

Now, Jesus speaks of the church only three times in the gospel, gospels. Three times in the gospels, he uses the word church or ecclesia or assembly.

Now, I think this emphasizes its profound importance and significance. So as we see a couple of these verses, keep the local church in mind as the thing that God loves and keep the universal church in mind as the thing that God loves.

It's a central theme throughout the New Testament. So the first thing I want you to see here this morning is the glory of the church. Church, capital C, the glory of the church. The church of Jesus is glorious and worthy of our love and our commitment.

Matthew 16, verses 13 through 20. Context here, Jesus brings his disciples to Caesarea Philippi, which is a city in northern Israel near Mount Hermon.

[5 : 54] Now, this region fed by the mountains' streams, so streams that would come out of the mountain, marks the headwaters of the Jordan River, but also it's a hub. And it's interesting that Jesus would bring his disciples up there.

This area marked itself as a hub of pagan worship and Roman influence. It was the sin city of its own time, you could imagine, filled with temples and idol worship where sacrificial and immoral practices were abounding greatly.

And it's here in this setting that Jesus takes them up there, looks at them, and asks his disciples, what do people say the Son of Man is? And these guys respond with names like John the Baptist, you see there in the text.

Names like Elijah and Jeremiah. And all these were revealed figures. Jesus then turns to them, asks them a question, they answer the question, he turns it back on them, and he says, but okay, who do you say that I am?

You see that there in that text. Who do you say that I am? I'd imagine some of you have fallen in love with your spouse. And it would take a lot of guts out of you to say, so what do your brothers think about me?

[7 : 08] What do your friends think about me? Oh, they think you're, you know, I would imagine in Brooke's case, they think you're really funny. They think you're really handsome. Like, man, imagine your genes going into our family. This would be incredible.

I'm certain they didn't say that, at least the brothers. But then he would take even more guts, faced with that kind of news, feeding into her algorithm. Okay, who do you say that I am? Here we see Jesus going to them with this really important question.

And it's Peter, who Peter messes up a lot, but you can't knock him for being bold and courageous. He says, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

And Jesus commends him there, you see in the text. And he actually affirms that this news that Peter preached from his lips back to Christ was something that was so amazing that it was heavenly inspired.

Because you remember, it wasn't far removed from this that Peter would deny Jesus. But at this point, he was inspired. Then addressing Peter specifically, Jesus says, you are Peter.

[8 : 13] Who am I? You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Yes, you're right. That's from above. You are Peter. And on this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Now, this rock, always up for debate. This rock is not the literal stones around them, but actually the confession that Peter just made.

So he was using, you'd imagine, rocks as an example. But then he says, you, Peter, in this rock, I will build my church.

Where this rock is not the literal stones around them, but the confession that Peter just made. That Jesus is the Christ. Now, I'd imagine in this particular church, somewhat my church growing this way, other churches that I've been around or you may be around, they make a big deal out of what is called a confession of faith or a church member's covenant.

And the reason that they aim to do this is not because we want to really be smart or really sound Puritan or really make things in calligraphy that make us look pretty impressive.

[9 : 22] We have this confession, this mighty confession of faith. But in the reality that what a confession of faith does is it takes something so massive and so large, the Bible, and it says, this is who Jesus is.

This is what hope we can have in him. This is what hope we can have in the future. This is what hope we can have in the future because of what it says about us in the past to where Peter basically makes his own confession. Who do you say that I am?

You are the Christ. So as an aside, as you guys use this, and I know that you use this in your Sunday morning liturgy and even the promotion of the book that was handed out or other books that you might have, these building up a confession is because young ones here, let's just say that you're under 18 years old, life is going to come at you and say, what do you say about the Lord Jesus Christ?

You really think someone was raised from the dead? Do you really think someone was crucified on a cross for the forgiveness of your sins? And hopefully you can be as strong and courageous as Peter when he blurts out that when someone says something like that, you say, absolutely.

You think the whole world was made from nothing? And you want to go, if you think that's a big deal, wait till you see what it took to forgive my sins. To where Peter responds with a tremendous confession that Jesus is the Christ.

[10 : 36] Jesus then continues, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

So what I want to do for the remainder of this first point, still on the first point, I'm going to unpack verses 18 and 19 in order to demonstrate why the church is glorious. So I want to talk about the glory of the church, point one, four points, point one, why the church is glorious.

The first one is, here's the first reason, verse 18, see it with your eyes. I say to you, Peter, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. The first reason the church is glorious is because Jesus, the confessed Christ, the son of the living God, is the builder.

The church is glorious because Jesus is the builder. Now, what else might Jesus have said here? He might have said, Peter, on you, I will build my church.

On you all, I will build my church. I'm going to use all of you to build my church. But he doesn't say that. He says, I will build my church. To build something, you must have power, resources, and influence.

[11 : 56] To build something, you must have power, resources, and influence. Now, about a month and a half ago, I'll never stop talking about it. I built, by myself, with the help of others, a pergola in my backyard.

And I love this pergola now more than any other part of my house. I love it. I sit underneath it. I have fires even when it's hot outside. I take pictures of it and send it to other people. But I couldn't do it without Dave Bopp and Jen Hopkins or Brooke going, okay, another trip to Lowe's.

I also couldn't do it because I actually took down this pergola from my parents' house and then transported. I didn't even pay for the wood. I certainly didn't chop down the tree.

I even used the screws and the bolts that came with it. But look at my pergola. Jesus here says that he will build his church.

And it takes power, resources, and influence. Now, here's what I want you to know about Jesus because he says, I will build. That's a promise. I will build.

[12 : 59] The tense in those words, that's a promise that he will build his church. And here's what you need to know about Jesus. And here's the reason the church is so glorious. That Jesus has everything he needs in order to build his church.

I wonder if you actually believe that. I went to a church plant in college. It had been existing for about four years. And to be really honest, I'd imagine it's somewhat of what you all go through on a regular basis.

It's really difficult sometimes to go to church. Because not only do you go, someone's got to set up stuff. Someone's got to tear down something. I'd invite guys from my fraternity.

And then after church, I'd be like, okay, now we shove all the chairs underneath the stage in this elementary school. And it becomes a work. And you start doubting, is this thing really a thing?

Is it really going to be a thing? One of my best friends planted a church three months before COVID. They had been meeting, and then they finally got into an elementary school. This is in northern Virginia.

[14:02] Like, people think California is crazy. Northern Virginia is the definition of crazy. Where they couldn't meet together for 13 months. In a place that they've been telling people, come here. Where we can gather together and sing and worship and enjoy the Lord.

Jesus promises to build his church. I think we often think about the church being built by God. Sustained by God. And the way that we think that things are built all around us.

In the city, Brooklyn, our near. So, in Oklahoma, there are two major cities. One's called The City. And the other's called Tulsa. Tulsa. The City, which is bigger, richer, stronger, prominent.

Where sports teams come to exist. Not to die off five years later. Oklahoma City has promised to build a 1,907 foot skyscraper. Being one of the tallest in the world.

In Oklahoma City. It's going to cost billions and billions of dollars. Now, how many of us think that that's actually going to happen? No way. There is no way that one of the tallest buildings in the world is going to be built by Oklahomans in the city in tornado country.

[15:13] Wouldn't you love to have an oil office on the 100th floor in May when an F whatever is coming towards you? And you might go, this is a bad real estate idea.

I think we often think about the glory of what the church can be and actually doubt. What is Jesus going to build it? Jesus has all authority on heaven.

In heaven and on earth. He has all power. He's the one who made everything and whom everything was made through. He has it all. He has all that it takes to build this church.

Do you think this highly of Christ? To build your church? Very often there's a fear that sets in in pastors to build something.

Or to maintain something. Or to deal with the church. Driving out here, you have a lot of time in the car to panic and to wonder and to question, am I going to build this church?

[16:13] To where they're near confronted by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the builder. My church has a past of putting a lot of emphasis on internal leadership.

How are we going to grow our church? To build up leadership principles within our leaders. Send them to leadership camp. Subscribe to leadership magazines. Build us up in good delegating skills. Good meeting management. Good oratory skills. Or maybe a church will put a lot of emphasis on the showiness. The attractiveness. That if people just come in the doors, they'll be attracted to whatever is going on here.

Or even we want to put so much emphasis on, if we could just have something that gathers people around and convinces them this is the best thing to do on a Saturday morning or Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon, Tuesday night.

Then, then God will build his church. But Jesus promised that he would build his church. No business, no country, no organization has a builder like the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:12] The church is glorious because its builder is glorious. And so we see that it's Jesus who promises, I'll build my church. Second thing of why the church is glorious, verse 18.

Again, notice, I will build my church. My church. The second reason is that the, second reason the church is glorious is because it belongs to Jesus.

I love the little phrase, my church. He doesn't say, I will build a church. I will build the church. Or even I will build you a church.

But he says, I'll build my church. There's something really healthy, I think, in saying that wherever you might go, that you are a part of Reformed Heritage Church.

Or Reformed Heritage Church is my church. Where do you go to church? Or do you go to this church? Well, I go to this church. This church is my church. When I go across town, I'm a member of Crosspoint Church. There's something healthy about that.

[18 : 12] Ownership and buy-in are good. But know this, know this. We belong to Jesus. And above all, we are the sheep of his pasture. It is us who was purchased by him.

And here, in the same thrust of language, he says that he will build his church. Towards his church. First and foremost, above all, he's the authority of his church.

But there's also something encouraging here and comforting here about him being possessive about the thing that he is able to build. My church. John 21, verses 15 through 17 tells Peter to tend to my sheep.

Not your sheep, Peter. Not the sheep. Not anybody else's sheep. My sheep. Tend to mine. He calls you, friend, his. The Lord of heaven and earth goes out to a pastor and says, tend to my people. Well, we left Bradley behind having to fill out a statement that if he needs to go to a doctor or we leave an insurance card, we're watching constantly on our church's indoor video cameras.

[19 : 21] Are they alive? Why? Because Bradley is mine. And I just handed him over to Grandma. Now, I like Grandma. She's my favorite mom. I think she's better than your mom.

But he's the most important thing to me outside of Brooke. But you're here with me carrying the insurance card. I think there's a sense in which when we give our lives to Christ and we become children of the Father through the Son, by the power of the Spirit, and we come into Jesus' church, despite anything that we are, Jesus says, I bought that one.

I bought that one. I bought that one. They belong to me. So the church is glorious because Jesus is building his church. Third, verse 18, it says the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Third reason the church is glorious is that Jesus guarantees the church's victory. Now, the gates of Hades will not overpower. Let me tell you a little bit about the gates of Hades. Again, he's up in this area.

There's rocks. There's pagan temples. But then there's also this cave called the gates of Hades. If you've ever been cave diving, you're crazy.

[20 : 34] I think if you ever go into caves, I'm a very claustrophobic person. I think you're crazy. Caves are terrifying. And when something is called the gates of Hades, what it's talking about is the open evil of the world as they mean to swallow everything outside of it.

And Jesus uses this incredible testimony, taking them up to a sin city where there's sacrifices of goats. There's demonic, devilish worship going on, even to the point of sacrificing babies and eating them.

And Jesus says, I'm going to build my church on top of everything else. Everyone here has played king of the mountain. What does it mean to be king of the mountain? You won.

And Jesus is saying, look at all that evil that's going to come at you and all that I love. And I'm building it on top of that.

Even the gates of Hades can't stand against it. Friends, whatever you fear. And are concerned about. Whatever you're afraid of and concerned of, the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

[21 : 43] Think of all the organizations, institutions, and countries, and empires, and businesses that have swept into the dustbin of history.

Yet one thing continues on. When the church thrives and grows, you may often hear of churches' demise and secularism that may come into their premises as if they're winning, but we will triumph. In part because of whose church it is. Local churches may falter and fail and die, but the church universal will thrive. See, if you recognize this is inevitable, the church inevitably will shine until Revelation 7 verse 9, when we are before the throne of God, above worshiping with people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

It's at that point that we realize that it really did thrive and grow. It will grow under the sovereign hand of the Almighty God. If you want to be part of something great and awesome, something that will last, something that's bigger than yourself, I think the inflection of the scriptures is that you would give yourself over to the church because you've given over yourself to Christ.

Jesus will build it. He will build it. The church is glorious. Fourth reason the church is glorious in verse 19. Notice again, I'll give you that little word that you've gotten singular. I will give you, Peter, singular, I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

[23 : 09] Whatever you bind on earth, you will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall be loose in heaven. Now there's a lot there, and we won't go into all of it today.

Can't get through all the weeds of this glorious pasture on what all that means, but what I do want to bring up is the idea of the keys of the kingdom. Giving the keys of the kingdom, Jesus giving the

keys of the kingdom to the church means that he's giving his church authority to do work. He's giving them authority to do work. Jesus gives his church, church the authority and the power to do this work, but particularly here, the authority, you see what it says, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

And that's just Jesus saying, I'm going to give you the ability to do the work that I've given you to do. And these keys of the kingdom, I think it's helpful to see that there are two keys here. When our church talks about the keys of the kingdom, at least our elders, other churches I've been at, when it talks about the keys of the kingdom, what are the keys of the kingdom?

I think it's clearly explained that it's the who of the gospel and the what of the gospel. The who of the gospel means, I think in most simple forms, the actual membership of the church.

[24 : 24] So in our church, someone comes into the church, it's the church, not the elders, not me. It's the church who votes them in, who affirms them in, saying, we've heard your testimony, we've heard your confession, welcome to our tribe.

And then when they leave, in likewise fashion. But then also the other key here is the what of the gospel, the confession that the gospel promotes. What does our church believe and confess to be true?

That's going to make possibly our church a little bit different than this other group of other Christians down the road. When we gather, it's because we're exercising the keys of the kingdom on what we believe, see this through baptism and the Lord's Supper and the proclamation of the gospel, but also who we're aiming to do it with.

Look at Matthew 18, 18 real quick. Turn over maybe one page on your own. Matthew 18, 18.

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Sounds a lot of the same in 16, 19, where I think he's just saying, I'm going to give you the authority to do the work that I called you to do.

[25 : 29] I think just a side note from this is that when you all gather, something happens. Even when you scatter, you're probably pushed out by a benediction. And it's not have a great week.

It's go in the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ or something like that. Not saying that your life on mission ends at this point, but that you, church, are doing something. So here we see that the church is glorious.

The second thing I want you to see is now in Matthew 18. So if you've got a copy, turn over to Matthew 18, starting in verse 15 and going into verse 20. Matthew 18, verses 15 through 20, where I think we see here that the church is very, very personal.

Verse 15 says, If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you've already gained your brother. But if he doesn't listen, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

[26 : 41] Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also with them. Very quickly, the church of Jesus is personal. It's local.

It's not just universal, like I think chapter 16 is bringing up to the top, but it's personal, what 18 is bringing up down to us. I want to tell you this real quickly and see if you can track with this.

If you go to Matthew 16 and think of the local church is there, but I think it's really talking about the universal church, but here I think we're coming down to what it means to be local. Why you possibly get up on a Sunday morning and not just worship the Lord, but you don't forsake assembling with other people in the process.

Likely in my own town of Enid, Oklahoma, I don't know all the Christians there. We've got 53,000 people on a weekend. We've got about 60,000 people on a weekday.

[27 : 48] I pray there are thousands of Christians there, though I don't know them. I do know the 262 members at my church who are Christians. Jesus knows who these other people are.

I would imagine you guys in your own context, the Parker, Colorado, or wherever else around there, you might know a lot of Christians, but you don't know all of them. But you do know the Christians that are a part of your church, your tribe, knowing the members, knowing who's visibly there.

Chapter 18, in context, in like glorious context, you look at Matthew 18 and you spread it apart and you go, what's happening there? I think this is about Christian conflict. Right. Chapter 18 about Christian conflict.

And here, in this particular section, verses 15 through 20, I think it's talking about how to handle conflict when two Christians are sinning against one another in the church. What to do with conflict, not that this ever happens, right?

No one in a church has ever bothered by someone else. No one in the church has ever possibly gotten close to sinning against someone else. Or no one in the church has ever wondered, okay, what do I do now when this person has inflicted cosmic pain against me?

[28 : 56] And here we see instruction from the Lord Jesus Christ that you handle this first one-to-one where you could say heaven and hell hangs in the balance. Because if this person has sinned against you and they keep on, maybe they don't understand the gospel.

Maybe they don't know the gospel or the Lord Jesus Christ. But by you going to them and calling them back to the gospel, then their confession is reignited.

Like heaven and hell hanging the balance. If that doesn't work, you are now going two to three to one. Two to three to one. Because the witnessing proclamation of the gospel is at stake.

It may think they want to deny you, but if two or three brothers or sisters go to them, what that's conveying to them is, hey, the watching world and us, your people, are calling you to a state of response and repentance.

And if they deny that, then you now take it to the church to one. One to one, two to three to one, now the church to one. Because one's unapologetic, unrepentance, is not to be swept under the rug in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 05] I'm a part of Rotary International in Enid, Oklahoma. I grew up a son of a Lions member. You guys know about those entities in cities where a bunch of old men have lunch and hear a program or whatever.

Maybe it's Ambox. I'm a member of Rotary. And what's amazing is I think sometimes Rotary is actually better at maintaining a membership than even some local churches. You stop coming for a year, you're out.

You stop paying your dues, you're out. It's not personal, but hey, we're a club. And here, this is heightened of, well, you're not a club because you pay. You're not a club because you attend. And you're a club because of what you confess about the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you don't confess the Lord Jesus Christ shown by your unrepentance, well, here we see someone saying, brother, come back.

Now, we're not all perfect. And so this is really what church discipline is shown to be. This is the mega doctrine of church discipline, Matthew chapter 18. Now, discipline can look, can be looked at in two different frames.

[31 : 11] Imagine two picture frames. It's Christmas season. Maybe some of you decorate for Christmas. It's actually Thanksgiving, but many of us decorate for Christmas. Imagine you're decorating for Christmas in your house and you want to put up two portraits, two glorious frames, maybe on this side of a glorious fireplace.

One frame is called formative and one is called corrective. Now, we're not all perfect. We all Christians are aiming to be molded into the likeness of Christ. And I think a helpful way to look at that, man, I really hope it's helpful, is to imagine me like a giant log.

Imagine me like a giant log over behind the cabin that we're staying at over here. There's a bunch of trees that have been chopped up. Imagine that giant log named Asher, a big old piece of wood. Not much to look at now, but Jesus, God, says that he will shape and fashion me into the likeness of his son.

I'm in on that. Now, how does that happen? Well, discipline. Think of formative discipline, like taking a piece of wood and taking a piece of sandpaper and finally shaping and fashioning me down stroke by stroke, smoother, kinder, gentler as my heart, more loving, more joyful, and the Lord. You might even see this being played out in my life. Imagine 13-year-old Asher, angsty, in middle school, you might take me out for whatever you take a 13-year-old out for and you talk about Bible verses and you talk about what your life in reflection of those Bible verses are like, whether it's about anger or lust or ambition and aim to encourage me, to point me towards a certain direction of godliness and righteousness.

[32 : 56] Maybe even you do that with a 38-year-old being down. That's discipleship, what the scriptures call, and it's formative discipline. Out of grace, other people are coming alongside you to shape you in the likeness of others, but think of the frame corrective on the other side.

Some things need not just be encouraged or pointed toward, but actually corrected or even turned to what we call repentance. Think of me again as a big old log. God says that he will shape me into the likeness of his glorious son, which is amazing.

But sometimes, things need more than sandpaper to craft towards beauty. Sometimes they need a hammer. Sometimes they need a saw, as harsh as that may be, but it's good for me.

Now in God's spirit, he can do this internally. And praise God when he does do that. You can imagine me going towards something and God's spirit holds up Christ to where I look at this, and I think, hmm, I really want that.

But then I look at Christ and I go, I really want that. But sometimes God's spirit uses others who are indwelt by his spirit. And this is what church discipline looks like when it's corrective.

[34 : 10] Brother, what you're doing is wrong. Now the brother may say, no it's not. I don't care.

And then others may come along and say, brothers, hear me and other brothers, what you're doing is wrong.

And he might go, no it's not. I don't care. And then it comes to the point of brother, here we stand, your church, whom you've identified to Christ with as your arms, legs, and heart, with Christ as your head, what you're doing is wrong.

Come home in repentance and enjoy God's gift and forgiveness. You see here how the church is incredibly personal. Christ's church is glorious because it's incredibly personal.

A third thing I want to bring up, I think as a conclusion, is you see here the church's commitment throughout the New Testament and throughout other examples in our lives. You all have heard, you may be familiar of Proverbs chapter 27, verse 17.

You probably quote it off the top of your head. You know what it says, iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Now, you know what's required for people to sharpen one another?

[35 : 19] Coffee dates, bro nights, maybe golfing with your friends. What's it take for iron to sharpen iron? Tension, friction, holy conflict.

Brooke and I, about a month ago, went with one of our best friends down to an area in Oklahoma called Broken Bow. It's a massive wood, it kind of looks like this, only less great, frankly, tinier mountains.

It's called Broken Bow. It's where people in Dallas love to escape and it truly is beautiful and they've got low-key rivers that you can hike around. We've got a one-and-a-half-year-old showcase. We're not going to trek for eight hours at a time.

We've got nap time to think about. We go along here and if you go and look in the river, just like any other river everywhere, but it meant something to me knowing this was coming up. You look in the river and you see a bunch of rocks in the river and then you look up, 20 feet, 50 feet, whatever, and you see rocks and in large part, you actually see that these rocks kind of have the same color.

Now, not a science guy. You see rocks that are kind of the same color. They kind of have the same density. They look like they're kind of a part of the same formation, but these look very different than those.

[36 : 28] These look sharp, rough, dangerous. You don't want them to fall. These in the river, you skip with. You collect. You see that they're smooth stones.

There's a term called hydraulic abrasion. I pray none of you are engineers and you will correct me after this. There's a term called hydraulic abrasion where these rocks have been in the creek or river and as the river comes up and pushes other rocks down the river, this rock bumps into other rocks like this and it takes rough edges off and makes it smooth.

That's why when you go down into a river, you find rounded rocks because they're constantly bouncing off of others, feeling the tension in others and have their rough edges knocked off them. I wonder if you've ever met a Christian that has rough edges.

I pray you meet some Christians that are just a delight. I've got so many in my church that it's like, I just want to hang out with you because every experience with you is just a delight. And then you might experience other Christians that are just a little rough around the edges.

You know what happens when people have rough edges? They hurt people. They do.

[37 : 42] They hurt people. And I want to submit to you that one of the things that happens when you're a part of a biblical church in a personal way and God gets a hold of you and He puts you in a community where there's contact with one another, He starts to take the rough edges off you and sanctifies you for His glory and for the good of others.

And so you're actually withholding the blessing of being sanctified and rounded out by the Holy Spirit by not engaging with God's people in a meaningful way in which you are in contact with them. I have an older friend who uses the example of when he was in college which was a long time ago that he was getting highly involved in the church and he asked one of his good friends, you know, are you a member of any other church?

They were studying at a university. He says, no, I just think that if I'm part of another church it'll just slow me down in the faith. And maybe he might but he said, have you ever considered that it may slow you down to be a part of these people but you may be a cause of them actually increasing their walk with Christ?

Are you harnessing around other people? Jesus commands us to be committed to a church, a local church so that we love and protect one another from sin so that we're shaped into the likeness of Jesus.

[38 : 54] Jesus commands us to be committed to a people when it's easy and when it's hard so that we love and protect one another from sin so that we're shaped into the likeness of Jesus.

Friend, do you love Jesus? Jesus. When I was in college I got to live in Washington D.C. for a little bit and then later worked there on and off again and I moved to college when I was 20 in between my freshman and sophomore year.

I'd never lived alone, never really been alone, always been on a team or I had an older sister in the house. I lived in a fraternity with a hundred other people and then I found myself in a 10 by 10 foot apartment, 20 years old, not even invited to other things after work with other people and I never felt more alone.

I actually never felt alone in life and all of a sudden I am alone and I felt alone and it was a terrifying thing. I wanted to leave. I was alone and I felt like I needed others.

About three weeks in I went to a particular church kind of by the U.S. Capitol and the only reason I went there in 2006 was because it was a brick church and I've been going to churches and sheds and elementary gyms for too long and I'm like, you know what?

[40 : 03] It looks nice. I'm just going to go there on Sunday. I bet the heater works perfectly. So I went there and I was overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed from the very first second there.

Now this is 2006, Bush administration so everyone was wearing a power suit and a power tie of which I was too and I just felt alive. But I heard these men sing masculinely from the top of their lungs.

I talked to one of the pastors after the church. I said, I've just never been around people that sing like this. And he said, I have no idea why everyone sings loud here. I know the reason I sing loud here is because I want the widow that I sit next to be reminded of the heaven where her husband is. I was overwhelmed at the sermon. It lasted for an hour. I don't like sermons that last an hour. I really hope I'm not preaching an hour long sermon here. But I was just captivated by everyone's collective like love to hear what God was telling us in his word.

The prayers in combination took a combination of 35 minutes. And I just never heard anything like it. And I left that place at 1235, started at 1030, 1235, and I felt so alone.

[41 : 16] I just had the most euphoric feeling for two straight hours. And I felt completely spiritually alone. Because I knew that I was a part of nothing that had my soul in check.

I grew up in a wonderful preaching church but I didn't have church membership. I went to a good preaching church my first year of college and it was a bomb to my soul and a lot of wickedness that I was around. But I knew that I was going to go back in several months and the church wasn't going to greet me.

To the point of I joined a couple, or a couple of months later I joined a church in Stillwater, Oklahoma, Grace Prez. And part of the membership process is you go through a class and there were six of us that went through it together and it was fine, a wonderful experience, whatever. Never joined a church before, I was kind of excited. Then on Sunday morning, probably a group this size, there were six of us up here and part of our membership process and coming into the body was we were to take, we were to make commitments to the church.

