

Why Church Matters

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. Welcome to our time of worship and our time of being under God's word. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving as the lead pastor here.
- And a special welcome to you who are visiting newcomers. Some of you are just passing through. Some of you guys are just checking us out as we're as you're on your vacation in time. We want to give you a welcome.
- Welcome. This morning we're kind of doing, we're opening up a new kind of series and it's just a quick three part series. And if you're new and you're kind of wanting to know what we're about, this is actually the series for you.
- Because what we're going to be covering in the next three weeks is looking at the DNA of the church. What is the function of the church? What is the mission? What is the vision?
- And on the third Sunday, I want to talk about what SBC values are. And just as we kind of head into this new season, we want these type of ideas to be permeating, not just in our lives, but even visually as we walk around this church.
- [1 : 0 9] So the first sermon, which we're going to do today is called Why Church? Why does the church matter? Why is it important that we are here? Next week, we're going to look at the mission of the church. That what is the role of those who come to church, who believe in church, who attend church.
- And like I said, the third sermon is going to be what is it that Squamish Baptist Church specifically values? Every church has certain values, certain pillars that uphold their ministry. And we're going to talk about what SBC has traditionally held to.
- And like I said, these are going to be communicated here from the pulpit website and throughout even the physical body of this church, this building.
- So let me just clear up something right from the beginning. When you hear the word church, what do you understand that to be?
- For a lot of people, church means a building, right? You know, you got the temple, the steeple, look at where all the people come through or wherever that rhyme works.
- [2 : 2 4] You know, it's got brick wall, stained glass, a cross on the roof, maybe even a fresh coat of paint, right? That's what we look towards as a church. We drive past it, we see it, and our kids might ask it, what is that building?
- We say that's a church. For others, the church means a program. It's the experience of coming together. There's music, there's sermons, there's a children's ministry, and of course, coffee after the service.
- Or in Squamish, coffee happens before the service. And what happens, it's a routine. It's a routine that happens on Sunday, like attending a soccer practice or going grocery shopping.
- Now, for more people than would like to admit, some people believe that church is optional, that it's an option.
- It's something that you do when you have time, when the schedule allows, that it's dependent upon the weather, if there's nothing better to do.

[3 : 39] Let's be honest, our culture has taught us to think of church the way we think of a restaurant. What's on the menu today? Who's preaching today? Who's leading music today?

We come away with, did the service meet my expectations? And perhaps I ask, will I come back here next week because I found it enjoyable.

And then we rate it, we review it, perhaps we even recommend it. Or we quietly slip away if it did not deliver unto my expectations.

But here's the problem. Nowhere in Scripture is the church ever identified as such. The fact is, the church is not a restaurant.

The church is not a business. The church is certainly not a social club. And get this, the church was never ever seen in the Bible as being optional.

[4 : 50] And let me tell you why. You see, the church isn't man's invention. It's not like man came together and, hey, let's come up with an idea that we can bring people together.

Scripture teaches us that the church is actually God's idea. That's why we read in Matthew 16, Jesus Christ simply says, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Now, I want you to think about that for a second. There's actually nothing else that we read in the Gospels or taught in the New Testament that Jesus Christ said he would specifically build.

Jesus never promised to build governments. In fact, Jesus Christ didn't even say which governments were systems of government were preferable over others.

Jesus never promised to build businesses. Jesus never promised to build charities. And you might be surprised, but Jesus never even promised to build families.

[6 : 10] Jesus simply said, I will build my church. So when we have the creator of heaven and earth, the one who sits over the universe, when he says something is important that he will build it, guess what?

It matters. It has to matter. Because as we're going to be seeing in the next three weeks, the church is God's plan for reaching the world with the gospel.

Because the church is God's family for growing disciples who look more like Christ. Because the church is God's temple for his glory.

God's family for growing disciples. We're a distinct people who reflect his holiness. There is nothing else like it. There is no other organization, no other movement, no other gathering carries this promise that Jesus himself is building it and that hell itself cannot defeat it.

Let me ask you, you've come into some extra money. Perhaps through an inheritance, you hit a lottery. Where are you going to place that money that will last forever?

[7 : 38] Some might say real estate. Others might say gold. Smart people will say Bitcoin. But we're going to try to future-proof what we have.

But here's the truth. Everything else is temporary. Governments rise and fall. Companies boom and bust.

And even the strongest family legacies fade away. But the church, the church has stood when every empire has crumbled.

When every kingdom has fallen. When every name except the name of Jesus is forgotten. This is why church is important.

If you want to be aligned with God's plan. If you want to grow in Christ. If you want to be part of something that lasts for eternity.

- [8 : 50] That God says brings glory to him. You need to care about the church. You need to care about the gathering of God's people.
- And that's where we're going in this series. Why church matters. Today we're going to see that the church matters. Because one, it belongs to Christ.
- Two, it is made up of his people. Three, it has a purpose. And four, it must display his marks or characteristics of health.
- So before I begin these four points. Let me just open up in prayer. And ask for God's blessing on our time. Father, we're just asking you to give us an understanding. Perhaps we've had other views.
- Perhaps we've been taught something else. Perhaps we've never really even thought that much of the church. I pray that this morning would give people a taste.
- [9 : 51] Just as we're doing this survey. This three-week survey of your church. Church, its purpose. And what you mean to happen within this.
- And how and what we value in this church. This gathering of your people, oh Lord. Pray that you'd give my voice clarity. I pray that I can keep my voice.
- I pray that we would understand it. And Father, if for a moment. You could put aside our past. Our prejudices. Our hurts.
- Our hurts. That have occurred in churches. Perhaps we come here to guilt. Or to placate a loved one. Because we can look back and say, man, I was really hurt by church.
- I just come because I have to. Father, I pray that you would give us a taste of your glory. And an understanding of your church. And this sermon in the next two.
- [10 : 54] That these teachings would displace our fears. Displace our hurts. Displace our bad experiences that we've had.
- Perhaps we've been let down. And Father, may we truly see this with your eyes. This group of people. And may you give us a heart that desires to glorify you in all things.
- So we ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. So you're going to notice in your bulletin. I'm going to be covering a lot of information.
- So I decided to make it easy for you. Just simple fill in the blanks as we go through. Feel free, obviously, to take notes on your own. Obviously, this sermon is going to be available on podcast.
- But also, in case you didn't know, it actually creates a live transcript. If there's something that you want to rehear or reread, it's available for you. So the first thing we need to understand about the church that I've just been nailing into this introduction is that the church belongs to Jesus Christ.
- [12 : 06] He is the one. Church, that means if it belongs to Jesus, it does not belong to you. It does not belong to me. It does not belong to the elders.
- It does not belong to the pastors. It does not belong to the people who give the most money. And the church does not belong to the people who've been here the longest. The church simply belongs to Jesus Christ.
- I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Can I get those verses spelled out for us for each point if we can? And I don't want you to miss that little word.
- It says, my. The church is the possession of Jesus Christ. He bought it. He built it.
- And he sustains it. So the obvious question is, why does Jesus Christ own the church? First, he purchased the church with his blood.

[13 : 05] Acts 20, 28 says, the church of God which he obtained by his own blood. The church isn't built on our preferences, our traditions, or our opinions.

It is built on the costly, sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Which tells us that the church is infinitely valuable to him.

And this is what makes it infinitely valuable to us. Imagine this. If someone bought you a car and they paid for it with their own blood. Their own effort and sweat.

And literally poured out everything they had in their life so you could have this car. Would you treat it casually? Would you say, I'll drive it if I feel like it?

Maybe I'll wash it. Maybe I won't. No, I think the natural reaction is you would treat this car with the honor because of the price paid.

[14 : 09] Perhaps you're a young person and that is the gift your parents gave you so you could attend school. How much more should we treat Christ's church with honor because he shed his blood for it?

The second reason why Christ, the church is his, is Christ rules the church as its head. Ephesians 1.22 says, And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

God gave him the church to rule. Colossians 1.18 says, And he is the head of the body, the church. Guess who makes that as leader?

The boss, the head, the authority. This tells us that the church is not a democracy. Where we do whatever the majority wants.

It's not a dictatorship where perhaps someone like myself who says it's my show and we run it my way. No. It's not led that way.

[15 : 26] It's a Christocracy. It's an understanding that Jesus Christ is the head. He rules it and we submit. This is why when we gather, when we plan, when we lead, when we serve, we're not asking, what do I want?

We're not asking, what do people prefer? The first question is, what does God's word say? What does Christ himself want from this church?

Christ is building the church.

He's the one who builds it, protects it. Sometimes we talk like it's our job to build the church. Hey, we need more programs.

We need better marketing. We need better music, better preaching, and then we'll grow. But Jesus didn't say that. He did not say, you will build my church.

[16 : 26] He says, I will build my church. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3, verses 6 and 7, we plant, we water, but only God gives the growth.

See, our role is faithfulness. His role is fruitfulness. And in our faithfulness, we do marketing.

We actually put up signs. But one of the things that we want to do is we want to remove barriers for people understanding God's truth.

We want to remove those barriers. We want people to see this building. We want people to come and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. We want people to know that our landmark in this city, if you saw the article, isn't a building, but it's a group of people who've been faithfully worshiping here since the 1960s.

Our role is faithfulness. His role is fruitfulness. Which means we don't need to panic. We don't need to manipulate.

[17 : 45] We don't have to manufacture results. The fact is, the risen Christ is building his church, and not even the gates of hell can stop him from doing so.

It's an incredible work, this church. Because it's his. So the question is, if the church belongs to Jesus Christ, then the question for every believer is, do I treat the church like it's mine or like it's his?

Do I come here to serve myself, or do I come here to give glory to God with my service? Do I come with consumer expectations or with surrendered worship?

Do I view the church as something to use or as something to serve? Do I argue for my way or do I yield to his word?

See, when you understand that the church belongs to Jesus Christ, everything changes about how you do church and how you think through church. You stop saying, what do I get from it?

[19 : 04] And you start saying, what does Jesus Christ deserve? Does he deserve my best? Or he deserve my castoffs, my worst, my crumbs, so to speak.

So from this point, we understand that the church belongs to Christ. He purchased it with his blood.

He rules over it as its head. He builds it by his power. And he will finish what he started. Point two.

What is the church? The church is a people, not a place. It's our identity. And this is the shift that we have to make in our thinking. The church is not where we go.

The church is who we are. Here, God defines the church as a people in David's reading.

[20 : 09] In 1 Peter 2, verse 9 and 10, it says, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

Get that? We're being called to be something for God. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

If you want to explain to someone, what is it to be a Christian? What have you been called to? Go to this verse.

Go to this verse. That you were chosen. That you were chosen by God. You are now ushered into a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a nation set apart.

Remember, holy doesn't mean perfect. Holy means to be set apart by God, for God, a people, for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

[21 : 27] There's no mention of a building. There's no mention of an event. It is simply his people. He's chosen. Called. Set apart.

Paul echoes this in Ephesians 2, verses 19 to 22. He says, So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

We read here that the church is a household, a family, where God is the Father and Christ is the cornerstone. So, how do I join this church?

Well, if you've been with us for the last couple of weeks, you've heard us preaching a couple of weeks ago, but we enter into this church, into this family, into this royal priesthood through faith, and membership into the church through baptism.

Galatians 3, 27, Paul writes, For as many of you were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. According to God's words and our affirmation of faith, a local church is made up of people who have confessed faith in Jesus Christ and declared that faith publicly through baptism.

[22 : 57] That's why when we talk about church membership, we only recognize membership of people who've been baptized, who've made that public proclamation that they're declaring, Hey, there's this inward reality that God has done.

God has given me faith. He has changed me. And I'm here to tell you. And as we're going to see next week, we're going to have another visible testimony of a baptism, of someone making that declaration.

I'm God's. And I want to be a part of His people, and this is how I'm showing you. Baptism is not just a ritual.

It's the doorway into visible church fellowship. When people are baptizing, they declare, I belong to Christ, and I belong to His people here.

In other words, the church is not like a gym where you pay a membership fee, never usually use it, and cancel it when you find out they're still taking money out of your account for it, right?

[24 : 00] It's a covenant community where you say, I'm all in. I'm all in with Jesus, and I'm all in with these people. Which leads me to the third point.

The church is a committed community. Probably one of the most powerful images we have is found in Acts 2, 42 to 47.

We read that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. This is where we modeled what our church looks like and does. They shared their lives in fellowship.

They broke bread together. They prayed together. They gave generously to one another, and they praised God together. It wasn't a casual, I'll do this if I have time.

This was their identity. They just weren't going to church. They were acting like the church. You with me on that? It's not going, it's being.

[24 : 58] Think about it for a second as a sports team. We understand that the stadium is not the team. A uniform is not the team.

The logo is not the team. The team itself is the players who are committed to one another, working together, wearing the same colors, fighting for the same goal.

The church is God's team, not in the stands, not watching, but on the field together, playing.

So let me ask this. Do you see yourself as a part of, when I say, are you a part of SBC, does that mean you just belong to the building, or do you see yourself as a part of one another?

See, if the church is just a building, you're just a spectator. But if the church is a people, you are a participant.

[26 : 01] You're a player. The church is not a place you attend, it's a people you belong to. And how do you know you're there?

It's when you embrace that identity, you stop saying, I go to church, and you start saying, I am the church, and I am bound to these people. Let me move on to the third point of my sermon this morning.

And that is the church has a mission. And let me be clear what that mission isn't. That mission isn't to entertain you. That mission doesn't exist to make you comfortable.

The church doesn't exist to preserve your traditions. The church has one purpose, and the church exists for one ultimate purpose, and that is to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Mic drop. That's it. That's it. What defines our mission? Well, first, the Great Commission defines our mission.

[27 : 15] Before Jesus would leave his apostles, he gives them Matthew 28, 19, 20. We're going to dig into this a little bit next week. But he simply says, 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 to the end of the age. Our purpose is not vague. It's crystal clear. Make disciples.

Now, disciples are not just simply converts, not just attenders, but followers of Jesus Christ who love, obey, and grow in Christ, who simply say, I want to be more like Jesus.

I want to be more like Jesus. Because God also identifies the church as a body, we work together to bring him glory by using our various different gifts.

Notice the verbs. We've got go, make, baptize, teach. It's active. It's not passive. And if the church forgets its mission, becomes like a sports team that never takes the field, it just sits in the locker room admiring their uniforms.

[28 : 43] There was this pretty really big church down the States that had thousands, massive influence. And around 2010, they actually wrote a book about themselves, and they said, we failed.

Now, their evangelism was immense. Like, people were saved by the thousands in their community. Their people from all over the world were studying their systems.

But they had this moment of humility. They just simply said, we failed to disciple. We never took them. We introduced them to Jesus.

But we never helped them grow to be more like Jesus. And I thought that was a great telling observation. There was this humility in that, that they actually claimed, we forgot our mission.

And what fuels this mission? It's the great commandment.

[29 : 47] Matthew 22, verses 37 and 39 says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.

And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The fuel for disciple-making is love.

It's not so we can hold a census and say we've ticked off a box. The reason we disciple, the reason we have youth ministry, the reason we have this children's church, and we have these growth groups going out, is because we have a love for God and a love for you.

Without love, evangelism is simply a sales pitch. And disciple becomes legalism. With love, the mission becomes unstoppable.

So one of the verses, statements, you're going to read in our mission statement is we fulfill this calling through the great commission carried out in the spirit of the great commandment.

[31 : 04] Excuse me. Now this mission that we have, and this is verse point C, is the church's mission is both global and local.

That is command of Acts 1-8, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. See, the church isn't about us here.

It's not about our building, our town, our comfort. The mission is both local and global. That's why we support ministries that plant churches.

That's why we support ministries that are building churches, both in Africa and Southeast Asia, bringing biblical, bringing God's word and their language to the people.

And they do that through the local church. These are the things we believe in because Jesus Christ has taught them to us. Imagine a fire station where the firefighters never left the building.

[32 : 20] They polish the trucks, they shine the helmets, they train endlessly, but when the alarm sounds, no one goes out. What would you say about that fire station?

Pretty useless. Be the same thing with the church. The church isn't on mission, making disciples, baptizing, teaching, loving. It's forgotten why it chiefly exists.

So of course, you know I'm going to ask the question, are you on this mission? Are you just attending? Because the Bible doesn't say that making disciples is not just the pastor's job.

It's actually the church's job. That loving your neighbor isn't a suggestion, it is a command. That witnessing to the gospel isn't optional.

It's to be who we are. The church exists to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ who love him, follow him, and helps others to do the same.

[33 : 32] So my fourth point as I move into this is that churches pursue characteristics of health. So you're asking the question, how do I recognize a godly church?

One that is following Jesus. We obviously have what we've talked about, but there's going to be living things. There's going to be signs of health, and I want to tell you what some of those signs are.

One, the church has to have a high view of God. I know it goes without saying, but there's a lot of churches that don't exist for God. They have a high view of man, not God.

A healthy church begins with awe. That's why we sing these incredible songs, Christ victorious, that we just sang today. We're not casual.

We're not flippant. We're not man-centered, but God-centered worship. When we gather, the first question is not, did I like it? But the question that I want us to ask is, did God receive glory that Sunday morning?

[34 : 36] See, without a high view of God, the church becomes a club, and with a high view of God, the church becomes a temple.

The second mark of a healthy church is they hold to the absolute authority of God's word, the absolute authority of God's word. We take our marching orders, not from my seminary education.

I've got a lot. I've got my master's and doctorate. That's not where we take our authority from. We take our authority from the word of God. It's what tells us that the Bible is not one voice among many that we've chosen.

We believe it is the only voice. We don't sit in judgment over the word. The word sits in judgment over us.

All too often, I've been to churches where they sit around and pontificate about whether they agree with what that Bible says in that time. And they try to create different reasons to ignore.

[35 : 40] Oh, it was written 2,000 years ago. Come on. It was written in Hebrew. What does anybody who's just speaking Hebrew know anything about today? Right?

Oh, don't get me started on Koine Greek. Really? The God who created us couldn't figure out the best way to communicate with us?

If there's a problem in understanding God's word, be assured the problem is not with God. It's problem is with our limited capacity to understand.

But what's great about it is he gives us this Holy Spirit. And he illuminates these passages. He helps us apply them to ourselves. And we also believe in this term that was coined by the Reformers.

It was called sola scriptura. It's scripture alone is our authority. We don't have a pope. We don't have councils. But we have church.

[36 : 46] And we actually have a history of belonging to these churches. And we can actually trace the lineage of our church. So if I today am to speak something that you have never heard before and that nobody has ever talked about, guess what?

Who's probably out to lunch? It'd be this guy. Right? Because these things have been taught. It's called orthodox. We know what the historical church has believed in.

We know we stand on the shoulders of these men and women who came before us with these words and actions. And this word is at the foundation for my preaching, the teaching, for the counseling, for our decision-making that has to come from the absolute authority of scripture.

Because without scripture, the church drifts into opinion and error. But with scripture, the church stands on the solid rock.

Amen? Third command, third health mark is the church, a healthy church, will teach sound doctrine. What that means is sound doctrine means healthy teaching, the kind that nourishes the soul and protects us from falsehood.

[38 : 04] That's why if you follow every cult, every heresy, every drift in church history began when people stopped caring about sound doctrine.

Those are the people who said, hey, I've got a new and novel idea. And they ignore everything that came before them and they start heading their own way and it's a complete titanic disaster.

But when doctrine is taught clearly, people grow strong and are stable in Jesus Christ. Without doctrine, the church becomes shallow.

With doctrine, the church becomes deep. Amen? The fourth mark is that a healthy church pursues holiness. Holiness.

Like I said, holiness isn't perfection, but it's set apart. Holiness means confessing my sin. Seeking God's forgiveness.

[39 : 04] It's pursuing purity. It's walking in obedience. It's not just a matter of preaching it, but we want to practice it together. We're going to see this in the communion table.

Pastor David's going to be leading communion. He's going to talk about it. And if he didn't know he was going to talk about it, he's going to talk about it now. But it's the idea, if we're not forgiven amongst ourselves, if we haven't brought our issues before God and before each other, this table isn't for us in that moment.

That horizontal love has to flow from that vertical love. And if we have broken relationships, we are to seek to fix those relationships with one another. So when we come to this table, no accusation can be made against us.

We don't want to just preach it. We want to practice it. And with holiness, the church shines in this world.

And the fifth mark of a healthy church, I will argue, is that we exercise spiritual authority under Jesus Christ, which means Jesus Christ is the head of this church.

[40 : 16] He rules it. He commands it. He exercises this authority. And He's given us godly leaders, shepherds, pastors, whose job is to shepherd, teach, and guard the flock.

It's to protect you. And I pray we model that. I pray that we model this humility and our desire for holiness, not only in our lives, but to reflect it to you and not to bring shame on Christ's glory in this gathering.

But we know when we model humility and holiness and when members are submissive and supportive, the church flourishes under the authority of Jesus Christ.

without godly leadership, churches drift. With godly leadership, the church is protected and strengthened. Think of a hospital.

A hospital is not judged by the color of its walls or the comfort of its waiting room chairs. A hospital is judged by whether sick people actually get well.

[41 : 29] In the same way, a church is not judged by its programs, its style, or even how popular it is. A church is judged by whether it displays these marks of health.

Is God exalted? Is scripture preached? Is doctrine taught? Is holiness pursued? And is Christ ruling through godly leaders? So here's the question.

So here's the question. Are we pursuing these marks of health? Do we tremble before God or do we treat him casually? Do we open the Bible with reverence or do we simply let it collect dust?

Do we hunger for sound teaching or just want to be entertained? Do we confess our sins and pursue holiness or do we just hide and compromise?

Do we submit joyfully to Christ's order or do we resist it? See, a healthy church is not defined by size, style, or success.

[42 : 40] A healthy church is defined by faithfulness, marked by awe of God, submission to his word, sound doctrine, holiness, and a submission to the authority of Christ.

Let me conclude for you this morning. Why does the church matter? Church belongs to Christ. The church is a people, not a place.

the church has a purpose, which is to exist to glorify God by making disciples, living out the great commission and the spirit of the great commandment, and the church must pursue health.

It doesn't just happen. These are the reasons why the church matters. Because it's God's.

It's eternal. because it is God's chosen means to display his glory in this world.

[43 : 50] Probably one of the most precious illustrations of the church is found in Ephesians 5.25. When Paul compares the church, he calls us the bride of Christ.

the bride who's waiting for the return of the bride groom. If someone said, I love you, but I can't stand your wife, how would you respond?

You'd say, if you don't love my bride, you don't love me. So you can't love Christ and not love the church. in the same way, we cannot say, I love Jesus, but I don't need the church.

We do. Jesus loves his church. Jesus gave his life for his church.

Jesus is coming back for his church. And there's that imagery of the bride. He's coming to clean us up. He's coming to make us presentable for that wedding day.

[45 : 09] If we love him, we will love his bride. So let me ask you, where do you stand with Christ church?

Are you casual or committed? Are you a consumer or contributing to it? Are you a spectator in the stands or a player on the field?

My friends, this is not optional. This is eternal. This is the only institution on earth that will last forever. Are you going to be a part of it or not?

So here's my invitation to you. If you're new, don't just attend belong. Get to know us. Allow us to know you. If you've been on the sidelines, don't just consume, commit.

Help out. Be a part of the ministry. You don't need to be super learned to be a part of the ministry. Chris is actually calling people just to be hospitality, to welcome people.

[46 : 17] Probably one of the most important ministries is just welcome people to make sure they feel open and warm coming into this group of people who love God because if we love God we're going to love everybody who comes in this door.

Amen? Whoa, that is the weakest amen I've ever heard. Do you love God? You're going to love people. Amen? That vertical has to translate to the horizontal.

And if you've been casual I'm going to ask you don't drift devote join a small group just start by devoting yourself to meeting twice a month with this group of people who can know you and you can give to them love them and let them love you.

So I end with this question why does the church matter? simply because Jesus Christ matters and if you love him you will love what he loves and he loves this church.

Let's pray. Dear holy heavenly father we thank you for this word there's a lot in this we just feel like we've flown over it at about 30,000 feet but I pray just as we listen to these words we take notes perhaps we go back and read or listen online I pray these truths about your word would resonate with us maybe we have to do some self examination maybe we need to understand am I just a consumer or am I contributor maybe we need to ask ourselves the question do I want to be something that is eternal or something that is going to fade away!

[48 : 09] prayers that they choose you and that they choose to love you as you have loved them that you have died for this church that you purchased that with your blood which we will be celebrating in a few moments God we understand that you are good and you are gracious and you also help us heal sometimes we have wounds inflicted to us because people wanted us to buy into the legalism of church or we were forced to be a part of church when we first weren't even a part of you sometimes we've seen hypocrites sometimes we've been hurt by people who've lied deceived and we ask ourselves how can that be a part of the church well the first thing is we're all broken we all come with our baggage our issues but

I know that if we focus on Jesus Christ and your glory Lord hearts change and lives change and soon the past is just the past doesn't matter anymore doesn't define who we are sometimes we need a new experience and I pray oh father for us as elders as we come to meet we pray that as we seek out your word that people will know that we do indeed love them and we do want what's best and we are humble before you oh Lord in seeking what you want not ourselves so God I ask for all these things and I'm greedy in asking and I don't mind being greedy because you call us to ask and pray for these things and that is what we do we ask these things in your name amen