

# The Local Church

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 17 May 2012

[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. You will be listening to our monthly Thursday night men's meeting.

If you want to turn to Hebrews chapter number 10, verse number 24 and 25, and we'll be looking at two verses to get started. And I gave the handout to you there, and I hope it can be an encouragement to you tonight because that is my intention tonight is to encourage you.

As you know, we're going through John. On Sunday, we'll be ending the chapter of John 14, and I'm really excited about ending John chapter 14. Towards the end of it, verse number 30, Brother Gibby, he says, after this, I'm not going to say much anymore.

He says, I'm done talking. I'm about to go put into action everything that I've said, and by watching this, your faith will be strengthened, and I've really been blessed by it. And then John 15, we're looking at how Jesus is the vine and we are the branches.

But on these men's fellowships, we do more of a topical study. And so as I was praying and thinking about what we would study tonight and knowing that we're involved in church planning, I thought this was a good deal.

[ 1 : 14 ] But, Brother Brian, I didn't want to be reactionary. You know, Pastor says we preach through the Bible, so we're not reactionary. So I can't say, I think everybody should get a cool Hawaiian shirt like Uncle Sam. Or I think that everybody should do this or that.

But I will tell you that even though I'm not reacting to you men in here, because as I've already mentioned, a group of men that show up on Thursday night for the vision fraternity and the pouring down rain, people that love the church, love the Lord, love the Word.

And so I'm not questioning that. But I would say that I'm kind of reacting to a lot of things that I hear in the world about the importance of the local church. One example, I was driving down the road and on the radio, they were talking about marriage counseling, and they were doing some kind of fundraiser.

And it seemed to be a great ministry. And I'll get to that in a second. But one of the things that the ministry said was, we have found that people in church don't hold each other accountable, and they don't encourage each other, and that church isn't really designed for that kind of dialogue and communication.

So we've created a community and a ministry where people can share together and really grow together. And my heart just dropped. I'm thinking, they're missing out. I thought, that's probably a great ministry and probably a needful one, but there's no reason for them to have to say that the local church is irrelevant anymore.

[ 2 : 33 ] I feel like the guy who worked at the nursery that my sister, the nursery not where kids go, but where trees come from. For Mother's Day, my sister and brother, we bought my mom some apple trees.

And so my sister called, and we were going to get her one apple tree. And she called me, and she said, this man has told me that apple trees are better if you buy two or three of them at one time. I said, who told you that?

Oh, the man at the nursery. I said, of course he told you to buy two or three apple trees. Find out, I think it really is true. They're supposed to be together. But I said, he doesn't have any credibility because go ask somebody else.

And so obviously because I work for a church, you're going to say, well, of course you're going to talk about the importance of a local church because you work for a church. And so we're going to look at the scripture tonight. So I just wanted to quickly say a couple things that I'm not saying tonight.

I believe that God has greatly blessed many ministries. I was a drunk in college, and Bill Bright led me to the Lord. No, that didn't happen. But that story is true for many people.

[ 3 : 35 ] Campus Crusade, and many of them have been greatly used as an evangelistic arm of the church. Zach Elrod here had opportunity where kids through the Fellowship of a Christian Athlete filled out forms sharing their testimony of salvation.

And Zach was able to look through them and schedule appointments with kids and say, hey, I really want to talk to you about what you said on the paper. I think that's pretty awesome. I think that's wonderful. Also, we're not getting into the night about a universal church and a local church because what we're talking about tonight is the importance of the local church.

So the 112, 113 times where a church is mentioned, there's a region that it's about. It's a city that it's out. And we know we're part of the body of Christ. When I was saved at the age of nine, the Holy Spirit indwelt me.

At that point, I became part of the body of Christ. But he is working today in and through the local church. And so I want to be part of one, and I want to serve in one. So I just want to tell you that before I get going so you can try to figure out what is he really trying to say.

Well, what I'm saying is what I'm really trying to say, and it's that I love the local church. And I have since I was a young kid. I've shared my story with you before how at 15 years old, I was going to be 16.

[ 4 : 41 ] I got sick. I was in the hospital for a while, and I wanted to get out of the hospital. But I really wanted to get back to New Testament Baptist Church. There's about 30 people that went there, hardly anybody my age.

But I wanted to get back to those people and those little old ladies that had prayed for me and that had sent the cards, and I wanted to be there with those people. And I had a love for the church before I even knew all that the Bible was teaching, and I just experienced that.

So it's been said that the battle for missions is won or lost in the local congregation. And so I hope as men who serve here in the church, we will see the importance of it. We train up. We send.

We support the missionaries that we just saw. And we need more churches, and we need to see churches strengthened, including our own. We have the opportunity to be a model church, this church here, that as Brother Josh is going to go to Chile, and as he will start a church, and we give a signing bonus if they name them Vision Maps Church.

No, we don't. Somebody just wiped out back there. All right. You all right? All right. I'm sorry. All right. And so as he will go there, and he'll start a model church, and he'll know, and he'll look at the Sunday school, and he'll see what we're doing.

[ 5 : 54 ] I guess I didn't have to draw attention to you, Eric. I'm sorry, but it was quite the fall. I just want to make sure that you're all right back there. But we have that opportunity, and we should be excited. And so the only way that small things can be made big things, if we take big things, make them small, and so involvement in the local church, it's a big deal.

And so the question that would be asked is some people would say that the church was just Jesus franchising himself. It's like the McDonald's. I even heard people say that the church was never Jesus' idea.

It was people after Jesus, and they just kind of took his teaching and ran with it, and it was an accidental result of his ministry. But one of the verses we'll look at tonight, Matthew, is that he says that this is his church, and that he will build his church.

And so we know that's not the case. In Hebrews, I've had you turn there, a couple verses, verse number 24, chapter number 10. It says, And as I heard the testimony and the prayer request given by you and by our missionaries, I was provoked to good works, and I wanted to do more for our Heavenly Father.

Then it said, And if you look at that word forsaking as it's used in different places in the Bible, you're going to find that it's not missing or it's not being out of town.

[ 7 : 52 ] It's going to be just turning their back on it and not being involved in it. And so much of my childhood, I wouldn't miss anything because I was afraid that if I was in the hospital and I missed a certain thing that happened on Saturday that I would be forsaking the church.

But it's much deeper than that. You say, Well, it's okay that I'm out of town. I'm not at this church. I got another church. Well, that's true because we're not forsaking. But it also means just because you're showing up doesn't mean you're not forsaking the church.

I mean, it really means get involved and be a part of it. So there's a way to be around and be forsaking it. And there's a way that you may be gone traveling that you're still not forsaking it because we're in this thing together.

And so there's an article this week that Jake Talby wrote. I don't know how many of you read it. It was about the church. He used the word for a brittle bones. And he talked about some reasons why the church is on the mission field.

He really sees that people lose the seeing the importance of it. And he gave a couple reasons that he thinks that the missionaries coming over there, he's dealt with some missionaries that don't even attend church.

[ 8 : 58 ] They're not seeing the importance of it. And so first thing he mentioned, I'll mention this quickly. He said, It's become a vogue thing. It's been a cool thing to kind of mock church.

You know, if you look online and there's so many blogs that are written just about the church. Everybody's an expert on churches these days, even if they're not involved in one. I was at a cookout at Ben's house.

He was inviting his neighbors over. And I was talking to a man, and he was talking to me about multi-site churches, where they meet in different places, and satellite churches, and different church planning movements. And I said, Well, you know a lot about this.

I said, Do you go to church anywhere? No, I'm not really into organized religion. But he could talk about church, and he could read about it, and he knew all the trends. But he just didn't think that it was necessary for him anymore, because he kind of outgrew it in his thoughts.

Secondly, many students had more authentic experiences of Christianity in their parachurch organizations, and many of them have given their testimony similar to this. I grew up in church, but it was always my parents that pushed me to go.

[ 10 : 00 ] And when I went to college, I went wild. Then I was invited to a Bible study on campus, and I saw people deeply, that deeply believed in God. And so that is not a bad thing, that he met some believers in the Bible study that love God, but it shouldn't be said of that.

I mean, I hope our teenagers upstairs, and I was joking with Paul, who's teaching them tonight, how I always want to be upstairs with the teens, but the nights I preach, I kind of want them back here with me. But I've got to play fair here. But with the teenagers, we don't want that to be said.

I grew up in church, but I never met a real man that loved God until I went off to college and met somebody else. They ought to be seeing it every time they're around one of you men, and they ought to be part of where they're at.

And I love that. We've said it many times in here. There's a reason that we like to have a church that has all ages. They need to know what it looks like. When I'm 40 years old, I want to be a man of God like he is. I want to be living out like him when I'm 50, when I'm 60, and I guess that's as far as we go in here, isn't it?

And third here, a misunderstanding of the relationship between the universal and the local church. It's just knowing that we are in the body of Christ, and that there's no special seating for us in heaven because we're a member of a church.

[ 11 : 09 ] It doesn't mean it's not important to us, and he deals with that. And then lastly is that this, or the fourth, that there's a separation between words and works. How many times, I think you testify this, how many times in the last decade have you heard someone quote Francis Assisi or Mother Teresa or George Washington saying, preach the gospel and use words when necessary.

And it's this implication that the world really doesn't need our words. They just need our actions. And as it's been said many times, that's like saying, feed the hungry and use food if necessary.

So it's this idea that what we're doing together in the church to get the message around the world is really secondary. All the world needs is more Christians to live in front of them and to see it, and people had lost seeing the importance of it.

And then fifth, young missionaries have just been intimidated by the church, missionary movement, because they've never grown up with it. They had no church experience. And so when they go to the field, they do not know what to replicate, because they didn't see the church effective in their community, in their opinion.

And so they're thinking the church doesn't work, so they need to think of something else to do on the mission field. And let's pray that never happens. Let's be the type of men that when missionaries leave this place, and we can't avoid the fact that half of us in here tonight are that, let's be the type of men in front of them where they're saying, we know that church planning works, that we don't need to try to come up with another plan, that we've seen it work in this community.

[ 12 : 38 ] We've seen it work in our family's life as we've grown. We've seen it reach people in our community. We've seen lives changed as we come together and work together. Can I get an amen or something, a blink?

Some of you haven't blinked since we've been in here. It's scaring me. So number one in your handout here. First of all, we see that it's God's idea. It's God's plan. So as I joked earlier, I'm not a guy at the nursery trying to sell you on two apple trees because I sell apples, but it really is God's plan.

And I remember I knew growing up, I was sharing some of my testimony with Brother Freak this morning, how I knew being at that church at the right time was important, but I didn't necessarily know when part of a church was important.

You get what I'm saying? Because it's important to be at church because I said so, but I wasn't necessarily taught from the Bible that it was God's idea. So it didn't really matter. If I was at another place, it didn't matter.

If I moved on, I didn't have the doctrine of the church being taught to me. I just had to be here because I said so, and it's really important to me. And it helped me because I was there, and I learned a lot from it.

[ 13 : 42 ] And as I grew older, I began to realize why what they were saying was so important. And so from the very beginning, we see that it's God's plan that we grow together corporately. In the Bible, there's Adam and Eve.

He puts them together. Abraham has a family, and we constantly see him, God working through groups of people together, through that interaction, through working together. And then Matthew 16, 18 says, And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

So he says here that I will build my church, and that's who it belongs to. And so churches have always been God's plan. Secondly, it serves as identification for the believer.

So first of all, we see through baptism and the Lord's Supper, people identify themselves with the relationship with God through the death of Jesus. Ms. Kelly and I were looking at some membership records because there's some people that were joined.

We're making sure their letter got sent. But many people that have joined their church have joined us through baptism, that they were baptized, and afterwards the church, they voted, and we said, you are a member of the church, and others have come by a statement of faith.

[ 14 : 55 ] And then, as I've said, some are from letter. So through baptism and associating yourselves with the local church, you're taking a public stand and saying, one, that I stand with Jesus, I'm a believer.

And also, by being a member of church, you say, I stand with that group of people that are believers, and it helps separate in this world people that identify themselves with Christ. And then in the Lord's Supper, as we get in here together, and the Lord's Supper is happening, and we are sitting here and we're involved in it, I am saying to Will, and Will's saying to me without saying a word, that I am identifying myself with a growing relationship with Jesus.

And that's so important in the day that we live, not just in a 1 Corinthians 5 situation where a man's sleeping with his dad's maybe second wife or his stepdad's second wife there.

It's not in just that, and they said, the world's looking, and they're wondering, is this really the marks of a Christian? And the church said, no, this is not how believers need to act. And so in the church discipline there, the man was confronted, and then he had a chance of repenting or he had a chance of being set aside.

But the church had to say, this is not how Christians identify themselves. So the church is God's plan. And secondly, it's been used always as a form of identification for the believers.

[ 16 : 10 ] Bo, I want to be associated with you. I am proud to say to the people in this community that I go to church and I serve with a man like Bo, and the same with you. Then third, a promise was given to the church in no other organism or organization.

Matthew 16, 18, the gates of hell will not prevail. As we've already mentioned, other ministries can help, be evangelists of arms, and they can be helpful, but none of them are given that promise.

That a mission board by itself has not promised that, but our church has promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. That a church, that God will continue working in that church to bring them into more and more effectiveness, but an organization that isn't following obedience to the scripture, they can be absolutely useless.

Where the church will have effectiveness on varying levels because it's its church, and it will continue to grow us where another organization can become useless to the cause by stepping away from these truths.

And then number four, the assembly. We are told to be part of a local assembly, and that should be it. It says that we are told that we should not forsake in the assembling of ourselves together, that we are supposed to get together for the study of his word and the worship and submit ourselves to accountability to the one another.

[ 17 : 27 ] Number five, Jesus cares for the health of the church, which creates a desire for me to be involved in it. Remember, we went through Revelation, and we looked at the churches there of Revelation, and Jesus speaking of what was being said about the churches, and he's walking among them, and we saw Ephesus had lost their first love and the concern there.

And for me, if Jesus says that he cares for the health of something, I want to be a part of it. Right? I mean, if Jesus was a member of the local YMCA and he cared for the success of it, I'd want to be a part of it.

And so I, you know, I want to invest my life wisely. So if there's something that Jesus says that he cares for the health of, then I'm definitely going to be a part of that. And as I've said here tonight, Thursday night crowd, a bunch of men on a rainy night, and you're saying, I can't be any more here than I am.

Do you want me to leave and to come back so that I can be here twice in one night? And I'm just telling you here, my point is just to encourage you in the fact that the Bible teaches these things and that this group of men and that our pastor and that other missionaries didn't just come up with this idea that as a church we get together and that we will start other churches.

Because we've already seen that starting other churches is costly to us, that we lose friends and we lose Scott. No, I'm just joking. Picked on them twice tonight. We lose friends.

[ 18 : 43 ] We lose missionaries. We lose talented people to the mission field and playing churches. Resources go to it financially and other ways in starting new churches. And I think you just ought to make it a conviction.

Because like many of you, like myself, we've just went to church and haven't thought much about it. And I've always wanted to. I didn't really need much reasoning for it because it just always made sense, which is my last point.

As a believer, I have a love for the brethren. So if you define for me what a church is and you don't say it's a church, and I'm going to say, I want to go there. There's a place where believers get together and they pray together and they sing songs together and they study the Bible.

Count me in on it. And that's how I've always felt. But it needs to be a core conviction of every one of you in here that you believe this. Obedience to many commands and ordinances require that we assemble and we get involved in a local church.

Matthew 18 is a story. And you know this. Pastor's taught on it before. You have a lot with a brother. She's done something with you. Who do you go to first? To the brother.

[ 19 : 44 ] Who said you go to the brother? So you go to him if you have something against him. And then as you deal with him, and if he's obstinate, doesn't want to deal with the problem that you're dealing with, you bring another brother with you and the presence of two witnesses, and he still says, hey, I don't care, Robert.

This is my parking spot, and I'm going to park here, you know, make up something silly like that. And he still doesn't want to. Then he's told that he gets brought before the church. Well, you can't bring somebody before the church if you're not involved in a church.

You with me? And so Matthew 18 tells us how to deal with these things, but it isn't possible if you're not involved in a local church, many of them. Brother John, you might remember we talked about this in the early days in one of those first World Evangelical Committee meetings.

We went through this. I forget how many commands in the Bible were for one another. It was a staggering amount of how many times in the Bible that we're told to teach and admonish one another with song, as we've done tonight.

To comfort one another, which is what I hope you've done as you've heard these prayer requests. You talk to the other to edify one another. You know, I have been helped so many times by every man in here, working on a project.

[ 20 : 51 ] I don't know how to get it done. And another man is able to help instruct me, give me guidance, show me. This morning I spent time with Pastor Frick in his home, just going through the Word. And that's one of those commands that we're giving to one another.

And we were joyfully involved in that, to exhort one another. And so it's hard to do the one another's if you're not around people, so there can be another.

And I ask for an amen. Thank you, my friends. Number seven, Jesus associated himself with the church and that we are his body. Ephesians 5, 25.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ has also loved the church and gave himself for it. You understand Paul teaches us how it's a mystery. It's not that the church and Christ, it wasn't modeling marriage, but marriage is made to model that relationship.

And our brains have a hard time being wrapped around that because how in the beginning did he create marriage looking ahead to the church and Christ? But he is showing that, and so we're learning, and that we're told as men that we're supposed to love our wives over ourselves, to love them like we do.

[ 21 : 55 ] And it says here, Christ, so husbands, you're supposed to love your wives as Christ has loved the church and he gave himself for it. So if Jesus is willing to die for it, then I'm willing to live with it.

If he's willing to give his life to create it, then I want to give my life serving in and through it. And then just a clear example, remember what is, who was it that Saul was persecuting before he became Paul?

He was persecuting the church. If you have any doubt tonight, that's a pretty good guess of what the answer is, okay, just the church. But then Jesus finds him on the road and he says, Saul, Saul, why persecute?

Who does he say you're persecuting? Persecuting me. And this is a pure example there that as you're persecuting the church, persecuting the body of Christ, Jesus says you're persecuting me.

There's such a correlation between Christ and his church that he said, Paul, you are persecuting me because I have died for the church and part of it. And so we should feel strongly about it.

[ 22 : 54 ] Number eight, the local assembly is where God has assigned us the responsibility of upholding the truth. First Timothy 3.15. But if I tarry long that thou mayest know how to oughtest behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

In this community, we should be a testimony of the gospel. We should be proclaiming it. We should be teaching. We should be equipping one another. I used to, when I was a teenager, I had a stop sign and I taught on this verse and I held it up.

And I said, if there's no ground and there's no sign holding up the stop sign, it doesn't matter how good the stop sign is if it's, you know, laying on the ground, if nobody sees it. Well, the only thing they wondered when I was done is probably the thing you're wondering right now, where did you get a stop sign?

And so if you're a teenager, you probably shouldn't use a stop sign as an illustration because it's kind of distracting. I got it at a yard sale where he got it. I don't know. I think there's a lot of places that make state stop signs, aren't there?

And so, but we, that's our responsibility is that we're supposed to uphold the truth and we ought to be it. And men, can I tell you, it's going to get harder. I mean, there's things that I think about. I don't know, maybe the older men in here don't understand the younger generation's infatuation with always talking and 140 characters on a Facebook or something.

[ 24 : 14 ] But, you know, I think sometimes now when I'm about to write something and I think, if I write this, could our church be in trouble in 10 years from now because of something that I said?

And I don't know that that's always would have been the case. You know, if I want to state my opinion, I think I better state it in such a way that I'm only saying what the Bible is saying and that this could not be construed as hate or be considered making a joke out of something because we live in that day.

More, David shared a story and that's Peru. It's happening here too. They're just dealing with a group of people in their community that we desire to reach in our community and it becomes more and more and we got to be unmovable and we must be grounded in Jesus Christ and we must stand for the truth.

Number nine, God saves and gifts believers for the purpose of good works and those that will be done through local assembly. For we are as workmanship created in Christ Jesus under good works with God, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

As a believer, I'm bearing fruit. John 15 talks about that. He's working. God's working in my life and I'm bearing my desires to bear more fruit. I know it's your desire as well.

[ 25 : 24 ] But we have the opportunity that as I was born again, that I was created for good works and that there was works ordained for me that I have found that I was saved at the age of nine and that God had good works for me.

I have found that when David the boy got saved and that good works that God had planned for David the boy, somehow those plans were us together working on something. You know what I'm saying?

We're working on something together, but it's those good works that we're doing together. Sometimes they're goofy as we have a plan for a camp video next week and sometimes it's goofy. Sometimes it's more serious. But as I'm living out these good works that God had planned for my poor salvation and I'm doing them with you, I know that I'm following part of his plan here together.

Number 10, God has graciously granted accountability to us through godly leadership. This is where he knew where I was going, right? All night long. That's where I was at. Hebrews 13, 7 through 17.

Remembering them which have ruled over you, have spoken unto you the word of God whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Obey them which have ruled over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account.

[ 26 : 31 ] And they that may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you. Speak about the role of a pastor here, a bishop overseeing that and his responsibility. But we're also telling the book of Acts of a group of people that they addicted themselves to the ministry and that other people submitted to their leadership because they're just saying, this guy really loves Jesus.

He's really teaching the word. And they said, I'm going to go and I'm going to get close to that person. I need that person in my life. I need that person looking after me and wondering where I'm at. And it's nothing more manly than allowing yourself to be accountable by other men.



And it really is the case. And the world would try to tell us that nobody tells us anything. But that is not how men of God track that. We want to learn from one another. The church, number 11, is helpful and needful in fulfilling our personal and civic duties as she declares all the counsel of God.

So I understand that you have responsibilities. First institution was the family that God teaches. And so that the church does not replace the family and the role as a dad. We've seen in Utah and different places where they've tried to do that, where the church has tried to take over and step across the line inside the family.

But as a church that should be teaching the whole counsel of God, you should be getting help in those responsibilities. You should be learning how to be a good citizen from the word of God. You should be learning how to be a good husband from the word of God.

[ 27 : 53 ] You should be learning all these things. And so the local church is helping you fulfill those other responsibilities that might be considered outside the ministry of the local church. Number 12, the church has a responsibility.

The responsibility that Jesus concerning the gospel, to proclaim the gospel, to preserve the gospel, to display the gospel. First Corinthians, he tells us, I'm giving you the ministry of reconciliation.

So he gave it into a church and we have a responsibility to steward the gospel and to share it with the world. What are we going to do about Spain? Well, we say we're going to send Scott.

What are we going to do about, man, I drew a blank here, Chile, you know, or Peru or what are we going to do that? But what are we going to do about the people that live just two miles south of here? What are we going to do about people living 14?

What are we going to do about people that make more than \$150,000 a year? What are we going to do about people that like less than \$20,000? What are we going to do about teenagers that like sports? What are we going to like about teenagers who don't like sports? You know, there are all kinds of people groups all around us all the time.

[ 28 : 52 ] You can read about it in missions magazines, but there's all kinds of people groups that we're not reaching. And we're told that we have a responsibility to the gospel, that not only are we supposed to proclaim it, Matthew 28, the Great Commission, and that we're in 1 Timothy, that we're supposed to 315, as we look there, as we have the responsibility of teaching.

Robert, if you'll find that for us. But also we look at the responsibility to display the gospel. One of my favorite verses, and Philip, you know this, Ephesians 3.10, you know this one of my favorite verses. We talk about it often.

To the intent now that unto the principalities, the powers, and heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. Brother Brian, I don't get it. But somehow it says here, by what we do inside of this church here, and other churches and people working through their churches there, is that the powers and heavenly places look down and say, I'm understanding better the wisdom of God by watching this.

That's pretty awesome, isn't it? And so that what we're doing is way beyond what most people would imagine. It's cosmic in proportion to what we're doing. I was at a Chamber of Commerce meeting.

I didn't mean to be. I was actually there waiting for our guest speaker in the Bible Expo, and I'd heard this joke one time, and I was really hoping to use it. If somebody would ask me, they would say, what business do you represent? I'm going to say, I represent the oldest business in this city.

[ 30 : 14 ] I represent the church that has been around 2,000 years, is that I represent them, and nobody asked me. I just sat there. All right. And I got there. I actually was reading.

By the time I looked up, everybody was too drunk to have much of a conversation with. But read that for us. 1 Timothy 3.15. All right.

The verse I just read, Robert made it sound much more important because of that raspy voice of him. But it's our responsibility, the pillar and ground and truth, make sure it's being taught, exposing where it's not being taught.

And then number 13. It aids us in the pursuit of knowing God through His Word. 1 Timothy 4.13. Till I come, give attendance to reading, the exhortation, and the doctrine.

I don't know about you guys. I like to read. I read on my own at my devotional time, and I study. But I'm in need of more places that are teaching the Bible. I need that.

[ 31 : 17 ] I don't really get to an opportunity where I'm like, somebody's teaching the Bible, and I can hear it and say, well, I've had my quota of the day. I've had too much Bible. So I'm thankful for a place that somebody's going to be prepared to teach a lesson, to do it.

Somebody else may teach a better lesson someplace, but I came prepared today because I wanted to share a lesson with you. And if I wasn't standing here, one of you would have been, but somebody would have been prepared in this time slot to share the Word.

And I need that because I need the Word to work in my life. The Holy Spirit uses the Word in my life. It helps identify what doesn't belong and be there and what needs to be there.

And I'm thankful for it. Verse 14, And so from the time of salvation being predestined into His image, apparently we've seen the night, the more we're like Jesus, the more we wear striped shirts and khakis, saying about five people here have the night, whatever it is, but it isn't what conforms us, but we are being conformed inwardly to the image of Christ and that God has given gifts and people to the church to help that together.

And then last here, number 15, Together, together will be the desire of the redeemed because we will love our brothers. Verse 1 John 3, 14 through 16, We know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren.

[ 32 : 53 ] So one of the ways with assurance of salvation is you should have a love for the brethren. And so go find some brothers and live your life with them. And if you never love them, be worried, okay? And so the Bible is told that we know we've passed from death into life.

How many of you have passed from death into life? All right? Because how many of you love the brethren? Can I see your hands? Don't have to be sappy, okay, men? I'm not asking for any hugs here. All right? But we know that. We know that we have passed from death unto life.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hate his brother is a murderer, and you know not that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God because we lay down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

It's a mark of a Christian. We love his word, and we love the brethren. So I personally have a problem or a concern. I shouldn't say a problem. I just have a concern for somebody who says, you know, I love Jesus, but I really don't have much of a love for the church.

And they say he associates themselves with it. He died for the church. He loves the church and all the things that I know how Jesus feels about the church. You know, there's things that my wife cares about that I care about now that I didn't before as I fell in love with her.

[ 34 : 01 ] And so as I fall in love with Jesus and he saved me, I love what he loves. And where he loves something and I don't love it, I say that's wrong, and I ask him to change that.

So I would never proudly say I have no need for organized religion. I have no need for assembling. And also I would never, in the study of his word. I mean, we would never admit that either.

I mean, I think we're smarter than that. We're not going to say, you know, I don't really have much need for the Bible. I love God and all. But some even say, would dare say that. But we love his book. We love the bride of Christ. And we don't want to speak about it negatively.

So I'm just thankful. How many of you are thankful for the church to meet him? How many of you believe that God may use us believing to start more churches around the world? And we see it's important. I know men that come to men's fraternity, that's redundant, vision fraternity on a Thursday night on a rainy.

I know that you came to hear the word. And that's a great thing. Just remind yourself, this isn't something unique to us. Planning churches, none of us came up with it. That this was God's idea and that we should get behind it.

[ 35 : 05 ] And I'm thankful for it. And I really do love it, brother. I really love being around you. And so much church doesn't happen just during an event. That's why it isn't going to just work. One of the other texts in church is, you know, just stay at home.

Save us the seats and watch it online. And we use it. People watch it online. It's a great tool. You're out of town. You're sick. Can't something happen. You can't get to it. And it's a great tool. But there's so many things that need to happen while we're here.

And I think that's neat about our church. Some of you are here an hour early. Some of you are going to stick around later. Sometimes you can't. Sometimes you can't. But you're getting together because we're not an event. Past you say, growing up all the time, some of you have heard it, we're not an organization.

We are a living organism. That we're part of the body. And that we're supposed to spend time together. And I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful that that's God's plan and that is designed.

And nobody can come up with a better one. All right. Even if you try, you're not coming up with a better plan than his. And it's a wonderful plan. And I'm thankful for it. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the church.

[ 36 : 03 ] We thank you for this local church and the people that you have sent. Lord, as I spoke tonight, Lord, I thought about some of the amazing stories of people that you have sent here. And how you got them here to this group of believers.

And I thank you for that. I thank you for ordaining them the good works and working together. And I count it such an honor to serve with these men. Thank you for when I passed from death and the life, Lord, you gave me a love for the brethren and for your word.

And I'm thankful for a place that gets together and fellowships and studies your word. Pray that every man in here tonight, Lord, will take it deep into their heart. And to make it not just a good idea and not just a tradition, but will make it a true biblical conviction of their heart.

That we are people that believe in the church and we desire to see more of them planted around the world. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.

This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. For more information, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

[ 37 : 15 ] Amen.