

Why I Love the Church

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you'll be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Amen. Praise the Lord. He is stronger. Amen.

Take your Bibles if you would and open them with me to Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16. I am excited to share with you the wonderful news about the Church of Jesus Christ.

That's one of the most misunderstood words on the planet. Honestly, people do not understand it. And over the next few weeks, Lord willing, you'll understand just a little bit more about what the word church is and what it means.

You've learned by now that it is a word that means assembly. It is a body of believers getting together. The church and the Bible is a body of baptized believers who join together to fulfill the commands of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And today, I'd like to start talking to you about why I love the church. And I may do another week or two on this. And I'd like you to read with me through this passage of Scripture and see good reasons why we love the church.

[1 : 04] We love the church. We love the church, number one, because of a strong confession of faith that we make. Look, if you would, in Matthew chapter 16 and verse 16, the Bible says, And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That's the confession that all of this passage of Scripture is built on. Jesus said, Who do men say that I am? And Peter said, they told him who the men said.

And then he said, Well, who do y'all say that I am? And Peter said, Well, you're the Christ. You're the Son of the living God. And then Jesus said, On that confession, on that, Peter, I will build my church.

And so the church is built on a great confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. So I want to talk to you about why I love the church.

I love it, number one, because of the great confession. There's a great confession. The church is made up of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're a part of the church, if you're a part of Vision Baptist Church, you are publicly saying, I believe in Jesus.

[2 : 13] Amen? I believe in Jesus. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the sent one, the anointed one, the one that God sent to this earth to bring salvation.

We believe Jesus is the Christ. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. There's God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches us that.

We call that the Trinity. And Jesus, the human being that was known on earth, is the Son of God. That human being is the Son of God.

We believe that Jesus is God. We unashamedly believe that Jesus is God come into flesh. In John chapter 1 and verse 1, the Bible says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And so the Bible says the Word was in the beginning. The Word was God. And then it says in John 1, 14, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That Word is Jesus.

[3 : 13] He is God in human flesh. If you believe that, say amen. That's what a church is. A church has a strong confession. We believe that Jesus was God in the flesh, and He came to pay our sin debt.

We don't only believe that Jesus is God, that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus is the Messiah. We believe that Jesus is God come to take care of our sin debt, to take care of our problems.

If you have a low view of Jesus, you'll definitely have a low view of the church. If you have a low view of Jesus, you'll definitely have a low view of Jesus. If you want to get together with others that love Jesus, that worship Him, that sing to Him, that learn more about Him, then you are going to love the church.

We came in here, they just sang a song, sin is strong, Jesus is stronger. We're going to sing over and over about our great God. We're going to sing over and over about Jesus.

If you believe Jesus is the only way to heaven, then you're going to love the church, where He has preached, taught, explained, and shared. So we, as a church, have a very strong confession.

[4 : 22] We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That's what Peter said. And when Jesus heard that, He said, Peter, upon this rock I will build my church. In other words, Peter, on that great confession, on that great statement, on that great truth that you had to learn from God, no man could have ever taught you that, I'll build a church.

And that is that Jesus is the only way, He's the Son of God. Now here's some verses for you. Write these down there in the bar to your Bible or somewhere. Remember this, Jesus, everything's about Jesus.

Everything's about Jesus. The church is about Jesus. And the reason is in John 14, 6, John 14, 6, the Bible said that Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. Now look, just wait just a second. The church is about Jesus. It's not about Mary. It's not about saints. It's not about baptism.

It's not about what you eat or what you don't eat. It's not about what you wear or don't wear. It's about Jesus. Because there's no other way to the Father. You can't get there through Mohammed.

[5 : 28] You can't get there through Confucius. Confusion or Confucius. You can't get there through anybody else. It's only through Jesus. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And nobody ever gets to the Father but by me. In Acts chapter 4 and verse 12, the Bible says, Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

The church is about Jesus. It is a great confession. It's Jesus and Jesus only who is the Savior. He is the only mediator.

There's nobody else that can get you to the Father. God and man were separated by sin. Man walked out and said, I'll do things my way. I will refuse to do God's way.

And man stepped out and did his own thing. And God provides a way back. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 3. Look in your Bible. 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 3.

[6 : 30] For this is good and acceptable. In the sight of God our Savior. You should put a, you should have your Bible open there. You should put an exclamation point there. You should put a star and an arrow.

Because of what you're about to read, Paul said, What I'm fixing to tell you is good. God likes it. God said, I agree with this. God said this is good. God said this is acceptable.

And then you might underline this. God our Savior. That's how we go to heaven. It's by what God did. Can you say amen right there? We go to heaven because of what God did. God our Savior.

It says in verse 4. Who will have all men to be saved. You should underline that. Who will have all men to be saved. Underline all men to be saved.

Who will have. Who. God wants everybody to be saved. He doesn't want anybody to go to hell. He loves everybody. If you came here this morning. And you're not sure you'd go to heaven.

[7 : 27] You don't know about your sins being forgiven. I can tell you now. Your sins are paid for. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus said it's finished. It's yours just to receive the gift. Who will have all men to be saved.

And then look what it says. And who will have all men to come to the knowledge of the truth. God wants everybody to know. God wants everybody to know the truth. Then verse 5. For there's one God.

And one mediator between God and men. The man Christ Jesus. So there's God. There's man. There's a big gulf between them. But one person can go from God to man.

And bring man back to God. And that is Jesus. And look how he can do it. If you would. If you would in verse 6. Who gave himself a ransom for all. He paid the sin debt of everybody.

Everybody can be saved. He's done everything. So that everybody can be saved. It is finished. Jesus has done the work. And that's what the church is all about. I love the church. Because I love Jesus.

[8 : 25] I love the church. Because I love talking about Jesus. I love the church. Because Jesus is our message. Jesus is our purpose. That's our strong confession. No one gets saved.

It doesn't come to the point of making that same great confession. It's knowing Jesus as your Lord and Savior. It's only Jesus that gives us our dignity back.

I'll never forget. We had just gotten going in Arequipa. And a man came from Lima. And he said, you should make a video about your ministry.

And I said, okay. I don't know anything about that. This is the back in the days. Those great big old VHS tapes. And those great big cameras. And so a guy came down to the city. And he told me.

He said, well get the people together. We'll have them give a word of testimony. We'll do something. We'll put all this video together. And so we got all the people together. And everything is going to be in Spanish. And then we're going to put. You know, we're going to dub it into English.

[9 : 19] And we're going to bring it back to the church in the United States. And a lady in our church whose name was Nartha. Nartha came from a broken home. Nartha came from living with more than one man.

From being an alcoholic. With all kinds of problems. And that day when they turned the camera on. Nartha said, I'll tell you why I love the church. Because here at this church I found out about Jesus.

And Jesus gave me my dignity back. That's pretty good. Jesus gave me my dignity back. Jesus got me out of that filth. Jesus got me out of that failure.

Jesus got me out of all those things that were wrong. Forgave my sin. Made me right. And gave me my dignity back. I love the church. I love the church because we're going to talk about Jesus.

I love the church because Jesus changes lives. I love the church of Jesus Christ because of that strong confession that you found when you read with me in verse 16.

[10:13] The Bible said, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. Second reason I love the church from this passage of scripture is we have strong promises. Look at verse 18 if you would.

Matthew 16, 18. We have strong promises. The church of Jesus Christ has strong promises. And I say also unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.

And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I think that's very interesting. He looks at Peter and he said, Peter, upon this rock I'll build my church.

And, of course, that's referring back to a great statement that was made in verse 16 where he said, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And in the next verse, God, Jesus actually said to him, Peter, you would have never understood that.

You would have never known that if God hadn't told you. Look at Matthew 16, 17 with me if you would. They'll throw that up on the screen for you. Look at Matthew 16, 17. The Bible says, and Jesus said to him, blessed art thou Simon Barjona.

[11:14] That's Peter. For flesh and blood didn't tell you that. It didn't reveal that to you. But my Father which is in heaven. So, Peter, what you just said, wow, that came from God.

You know who I am. And that's the whole point. Upon that rock I will build my church. Now I want you to go back to verse 18. I want you to look at these promises. But first, look at this. He looked at Peter and he said, it's my church.

He looked at the apostles. He looked at Peter. He looked at one of the leaders, the main leader of the apostles at that time. And he said, my church. He didn't say your church.

In my Sunday school class this morning, we were sitting in my Sunday school class. And my daughter started talking about what a wonderful church y'all have. And she said, just want y'all to know what a wonderful church y'all have.

And I said to her, there's only, after she got through saying it to the class, I said, only one thing wrong with what she said. She said, what a wonderful church y'all have. And then Chuck said, yeah, he corrected me on that when I got here.

[12:12] You know, it's not what y'all have. It's what we have. Amen. What a blessing it is to be a part of this church. But look at what he said. He says, my church. Not the church of the people that belong to vision.

Not the church that belongs to the pastors. Not the church that belongs to the apostles. He said, it's my church. But then he made great promises. He made great promises that you find in verse 18.

The first one is, he will build his church. Jesus will build his church. No other institution has ever had such a promise. We sow and we water, but he gives the increase.

We teach and we preach, but he saves. He empowers his word. You can have a business, but you can't have that kind of promise with your business.

You can have a family, but you can't have that kind of promise with it. You can be sure, however, that the church of Jesus Christ will prosper. Do you realize what happened? A young guy steps off of an airplane in the city of Atequipa.

[13:10] He's never been in another country except Mexico and Haiti. He doesn't know what he's doing. All he knows is, I'm going to tell him about Jesus. I'm going to tell him what the Bible says about Jesus. And all he knows is that, but he had a promise.

That was me. I stepped off that airplane so scared, I cannot explain it to you. Terrified. Will they listen to me? Will things happen? What will happen? And God started working because here's what he said.

I will build my church. And here we are at this church right here. And you come to Sunday school and you come to church. And over the last nine years, you've been watching God do something special.

We've been seeing people get saved. We've been seeing lives get changed because we have a promise, a great promise. Jesus said, I will build my church.

He wasn't talking about a building. He was talking about getting people saved. He was not talking about a building. He was talking about building people up in him. Jesus will build his church. Every young missionary can step out on the field knowing something.

[14 : 07] I'm not going to have to do this. I just go out there and he does it. I just go out there and watch him do something. It's wonderful to watch God do something. There's a second great promise in this chapter, in this verse.

Look at it. It says, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now, so many churches, they're singing songs like, hold the fort.

The idea is basically like, man, things are getting bad. And the world is winning. And sin is winning. And wickedness is winning. And poor Christians were backing up. And things aren't going to work out.

That's not the idea in this verse. First off, gates don't move. The idea in verse 18 isn't that all of a sudden the devil picks up the gates of hell and moves them closer to us.

And he gets closer and closer. And it's like he's moving his gates up to our gates. That means he's got his gates sitting over there. And they can't stop us. We have the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 05] We have victory. We can march right into the citadel. We can march right into the stronghold. We can march right into the place where his seat is and have victory because of this.

Jesus said, I will build my church and hell can't stop me. Amen. That's a wonderful thing. Some of you are so beat up and worried and scared that the church is dying.

I'll give you a hint. It ain't dying. It's not going to die. It cannot die. Because Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail. Now, gates.

In the Bible, when you talk about the gates of any place, that's where the leadership sat. In the story of Lot, Lot sat in the gates. That means he was like on the city council or he was like the mayor.

The word gates in the Bible is usually used as kind of like city hall. And so really, you got this whole place where you might say Satan and the demons and all the powers that be, the spiritual wickedness in high places.

[16 : 03] And they're all gathered. And he said, they can gather all they want. They can plot all they want. They can plan all they want. They can pull everything they want to pull. But I will win. He said, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail.

Devil will not win. By the way, every time he's ever thought he won, he lost. Every time he ever thought he won, he lost. Every battle he ever thought he won, he lost.

He can never win. The demons and wickedness cannot win. We can't be stopped when we take the gospel message of Jesus Christ. It may appear that temporarily we have failed, but we have not.

In about 1958 or 59, not exactly sure of the year right now, a group of five young men decided they would go visit the Alka Indians and share the gospel with them.

Alka stood for savages. These were wild men. They'd never seen white people. They didn't like white people. They didn't like civilized people. And there was no way they were going to let anybody in. These five young men, they were in their late 20s, mid 20s, late 20s, up to about mid 30s.

[17 : 05] They would lay awake at night thinking of how they could get the gospel to this group of people. And there was a guy named Nate Saint. He had a yellow airplane. And he got out and he perfected a way to fly this airplane around and drop a rope out.

And he could fly it and hold a basket on the ground in the same spot where you could actually go put stuff in and take stuff out. He was that good a pilot. And they were in the jungles of Ecuador. And some of us have been to the very place where all this took place, down to Shell Meadow and all that.

And he decided he would do that. And they landed the airplane on the river there. And they decided they would witness to these Indians. They actually had a gun with them.

And when they began to witness to the Indians, the Indians killed all of them, all five of them. A few days later, they found out that four bodies had been found. One body was still missing.

And it hit the news all over the United States. Life magazine, picture of the wreckage, picture of the dead bodies, picture of all the horrible stuff that's going on. Paul told me he had a copy of that picture, that magazine years ago I saw at his house.

[18 : 10] Wow, it looks like they lost. It looks like they lost. And so the wives, Jim Elliott's wife begins to write books about, she takes Jim's notes and writes them and has been affecting some missionaries all over the world.

All the way up until today, Elizabeth Elliott wrote The Life and Testament of Jim Elliott, one of my favorite books ever. Remember, the ladies went back, Nate Saint's wife and others, they go back into that city and win those people to Jesus.

And they got saved. And we have been there and been in one of those churches. You want to hear a wild one? We were down in, we were in Ecuador. And Jason Holt, if you know Jason Holt, big, tall, red-headed, galoot missionary, great missionary.

But Jason's always had a crazy, wild streak about him. And Jason came to me and he said, I hear there's one of the killers here in town. And he got saved. He's the pastor now. And he said, can we go meet him? I said, Jason, we got to get out of town.

There's no way we can meet him. We don't have time for that. Jason said, come on, could you give me an hour, one hour? If I could find him, could we go meet him? I said, oh, good night. How are you going to find a guy like that? He said, give me the hour, give me the hour.

[19 : 15] And it wasn't long until we were sitting on the front porch of a house. And that man was sitting there and we were talking in Spanish to some of the family was translating his language and he ends up signing a book. And what looked like the devil won, the devil lost.

The killers became pastors. And the end of the Spears, a movie about that. Your God always wins. Say amen. One day we were standing on the Bible college land in Peru. We were building a Bible college.

I had about 40 acres of land. It was going to be a wonderful place. And they broke through the fence and they beat us up, put 12 stitches at the top of my head, sent nine of us to the hospital. And we lost like \$30,000.

And I thought, we have lost. A few months later, God gave us the land where the Bible college is now. It is so much better, so much prettier. It was the land God wanted.

We can't win. We can't lose. He can't win. Say amen. He said, I give you great promises. I will build my church. He said, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[20 : 14] Every place we go, we take the truth. It will work. It will prevail. We do not sit back and try to hold on. Instead, we attack the very doors of hell and take the gospel to them.

Twelve unlearned, few weak men turned the world upside down in one generation. Jesus told them in John 14, 12, Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also.

And greater works than these shall he do. Because I go to the Father. And those 12 unlearned fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners, in one generation, were able to shake the world.

Because they had a promise. I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail. In Acts chapter 17 and verse 6, the Bible says, And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.

Can you imagine that? From a little bitty, scruffy bunch of men over in Galilee, they turned the world upside down. By the way, we call this the year of 2015, after Christ.

[21 : 40] The year of our Lord. Before that, the whole world was divided when our Lord came. I love the church. I love the church because it's about Jesus. I love the church because it has great promises.

And by the way, God is still looking for men and women that he can use to accomplish his purposes. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is 2 Chronicles chapter 16 and verse 9.

And the Bible says, For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. All my life I've asked God, please find me.

When your eyes run around the earth, find one guy that loves you. Find one guy that with everything in him wants to serve you. God, please show yourself strong on my behalf to do your work.

And God has done that. He'll do that for you. You're sitting here today and you're wondering, Could God use me? Yes, he can. Could God do great things with you? Yes, he can. Not because of you, but because he said, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail.

[22 : 39] You're teaching in a Sunday school class. You're saying, Can I make a difference? Yes, you can because he said, I will build my church and the gates of hell can't stop me. Somewhere today, a young man stands alone, weak, helpless, but believe in God.

He begins to preach. He wonders if anything will come from it, but it will. God will build his church. And Satan trembles at the very thought.

Third reason I love the church. In this passage of scripture, look in verse 19. I love it because it's about Jesus. I love it because it has great promises, but I love it because the church has great responsibility.

You're in a church this morning, not a building, but a body of Christ. Joined together, believers, baptized and organized to carry out the great commission.

And he has given us great responsibility. Verse 19 says, And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

[23 : 44] God gave Peter and God gave the church the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Underline that in the verse. He said, Peter, buddy, I'm going to let you do big stuff. I'm going to let you do big stuff.

It's Jesus who has the keys, by the way. It's he that has the keys of life and death. It's he that has the keys of death and hell. It's Jesus who has the keys. And then he turns to Peter and the church and says, I'm going to let you guys be in on this great work.

I'm going to share with you this great, awesome responsibility. And in the lifetime of Peter, you'll see those keys go to work. On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 and verse 41, it's Peter who's known as a preacher and 3,000 people get saved.

In Acts chapter 8 and verse 14, when the Samaritans get the Holy Spirit to come on them, it's Acts 8, 14 and 15. It's Peter that God is using. In Acts chapter 10, when Cornelius and the Roman centurion and his family, it all happens, it's Peter that God allowed to take the word there.

Each of us make that difference in the lives of others as we share the gospel also. Without a doubt, the power to know about Jesus and his salvation lies in our willingness to share the gospel.

[24 : 52] I have, you have, we have the ability to open the door of gospel and grace to so many people around the world. That's why we're such a strong missions given church.

That's why you've given over a million dollars. That's why you've given over \$160,000 this past year to world evangelists because we make a difference. That's why yesterday, Canon and Andrew led a team of people that went out all over the city, giving out gospel tracks and inviting people to come to church because we have the news.

We have life changing message. We are making a difference because Jesus is allowing us to take part. If you believe that, say amen. This is awesome. This is awesome.

He lets you take part in what he's doing. He lets you in on the winning team. It's awesome. The second thing was they would bind things on earth and in heaven. It says there in Acts chapter 16, in verse 19, it said, I'll give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and what you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

That's got to do with church discipline. That has to do with church discipline. And the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 12, for what have I to do to judge them that are without?

[26 : 03] Don't you judge them that are within, but them that are without God judges. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person. God, listen to me. The church is an accountability mechanism.

The church is an accountability organism. It is that God put us all together in a church to help each other grow for him and to honor him and to love him and to exhort each other and to comfort each other and to do all these one another's in the Bible.

1 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 12, he said, don't y'all judge them? Don't y'all help each other do right in the church? Don't you have teaching and preaching and discipleship? Don't you have deacons and pastors and leaders?

Don't you work together to serve God in the church? See, in the church, there's a, hey, you should be a member of the church. There's a difference in the congregation in the church.

And you could be here today listening, but if you hadn't signed up and said, I'm in, you're just standing in a position of saying, I want to take part, but I don't want you to have any responsibility over me and I don't want to have any responsibility to you.

[27 : 07] He said, what y'all bind, I will bind. And what y'all loose, I will loose. In Matthew chapter 18, the next time the word church we mentioned, in the gospels, it's only mentioned two times in the gospels.

The next time it says, moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. And if he hear thee, thou shalt, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto them as a heathen man and a publican, because whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loose in heaven.

There's that passage. So watch, watch, watch. That church isn't an invisible church. It's a local church. It's a church where we're meeting together, where we are responsible to each other, where we're accountable to each other, where you know me.

I'm not a preacher on a screen. You know me. You know if I love my wife like I'm supposed to. You know if I'm doing what I'm supposed to, because you know me and I know you. And that's what church is about. I love it because the church has an awesome responsibility.

[28 : 13] An awesome, we have, we have, we have the name of Jesus. We have great promises, but we have an awesome responsibility as a church as we work together to bring God glory.

So in 1 Corinthians 5, there was a man having an illicit sexual affair with his dad's wife, and the church had to make a decision about it. Say, I don't like that.

I know, but it's what the Bible says, and that's where the church has awesome responsibility. We also have the awesome responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission. We were given the responsibility of taking the gospel to the world.

We are given the responsibility of taking the gospel to the world. Now listen to me, church. This isn't just a place you come on Sunday morning. This isn't just a place where you come listen to somebody teach a Sunday school class and preach a message.

This isn't just a place where they take up your money. This is a group of people that have dedicated themselves to the Lord Jesus and to obeying him. We have been saved, we've been baptized, and we are organized to say, we will do together what Jesus wants us to do.

[29 : 18] That's what a church is about. I love that. I love it that it's about Jesus. I love it that it has great promises. I love it that there's great responsibility. You know, some church people are like, they're kind of like live together without getting married.

It's like, hey, I'll live with you, and as long as I like you for a while, we'll get along, but I'm not going to stay with you. In 1973, I told Betty, I'm marrying you. Everything I got's yours, everything you got's mine.

We're together. We're in this, and that's what's going on in a church. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11. He gave the church apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints so that the church members would learn how to do the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we wouldn't be children anymore, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine.

Like Christians today, they don't know what they believe. One day they believe this way, another day they believe this way. There's no steady standard teaching of the book. That's why we do that here. That's why we do that here.

So that you can't just be deceived and you can grow up in him in verse 15, in all things from whom the whole body fitly joined together, compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working and measure of every part, makes an increase in the body.

[30 : 47] So here's what God did. He put us all together. And he put a young man to lead some singing and a young lady to play a piano and some young men to play some guitars and a young man to, or an older man to give an offering to Vosha.

I said that, right? Amen. And some young men to sit back there in the back and operate a sound booth and some young men and women to teach Sunday school classes and some people to take care of a nursery. And everybody in this church that every one of us have a job to do.

And we're all working together. This isn't talking about something invisible we can't see. This is talking about us together, carrying out on earth his plan. This isn't us sitting in our house and saying I'm a part of the church and I'm doing it.

No, this is us together, church assembly, working together to carry out God's work. The church is responsible to teach its members the truth.

1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 15. What a verse. A church has awesome responsibility. 1 Timothy 3, 15. But if I tarry along that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.

[31 : 47] Get in here. Learn how you're supposed to act in the church. That's what he wrote the book of 1 Timothy about. He wasn't talking about something invisible. He's talking about us right here and how we're to work. Which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Somewhere there ought to be some people that are studying and praying and working and holding each other accountable to see to it that the Bible is taught and truth is taught. There ought to be in this church some layman who would say, Austin, you will teach what's right.

You will teach the Bible because we expect the Bible to be taught. And I ought to be able to say to you and I expect you to do that. And together we challenge each other and motivate each other to make sure we teach truth.

This is the pillar and the ground of the truth. The church is not a club. It's God's organization here on earth to represent Him and what He teaches.

It has enormous responsibility. That's why you must take it seriously. You must be in your place. You must do the work like you were working for God in His greatest enterprise because you are.

[32 : 52] The most important thing you do every week is what you do with each other. Your Bible is full of one another's. Your Bible is full of us coming together.

Your Bible is full of the church. I love the church. I love the church because it's about Jesus. I love the church because it has great promises. I love the church because it has awesome responsibility.

I love the church because it came at a great price. In Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, the Bible said, Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood.

This is no ordinary group of people. We are people of super strong convictions. We're people who believe great promises. We're people that know we are in a church that has a position of great responsibility.

We know the church is close to the heart of God because it costs Him the death of His dear son. If God put that much emphasis on the church, then I certainly want to do the same thing.

[33 : 57] The church costs God and everyone else who has ever loved the church. It costs us our lives, our fortunes. It's worth everything that we could possibly imagine. I want you to know today, you ought to love the church.

The church. The New Testament is the story of His church. The New Testament is the story of His church. The word church is only mentioned two times in the gospel, both times in Matthew.

But from there on out, it becomes an important theme. The book of Acts is the story of the acts of the Holy Spirit, the acts of the apostles as they started churches. The epistles, the letters, are to churches in different locations.

The pastoral epistles, Timothy and Titus, are written to churches or pastors of churches. In Revelation, you see seven churches. Then the rapture and the marriage of the church to Jesus.

You should get excited about the church. I am a church man. I live to start churches and teach people how to act in the church and to get the church to go forward.

[34 : 58] The church is the closest thing to heaven on earth. Here we come together, rich and poor, different races, different colors, different languages, and we all love God.

And we're all bought the same way. None of us came in here proud. All of us came in here. If you became a member of this church, and you truly are, you came in humble knowing you were a sinner and you didn't deserve to go to heaven, but He saved you.

And so we humbly acknowledge Him. How are you involved in the church? Are you helping carry out God's mission for the church? Are you involved? Are you involved?

You see, church, man, church, it's not a building. It's not a club. It's not where you just come and kind of flip it. It's a body of Christ doing a work for God. Are you a member of the church?

Have you openly identified yourself with the church? Or are you a secret agent? 007 Christian. In Peru, when we first started the church, it was so funny.

[35 : 58] The new believers got saved and they would take their Bibles, they would stick them down in their pants or hide them like this. And they'd come walking into church and when they'd get to church, right as they came in the front door, you'd see them, they'd whoop out their Bible.

Because people on the street made fun of them because they were Christians. They'd say, there go the brothers. Hey, brothers. Hey, little brothers. Y'all are brothers. We know your brothers. They didn't mean it as respectful at all. They were making fun of them.

Maybe that's the kind of Christian you want to be. I don't want to be a part. I want to be, I want to go, I want to hear, I want to see what they do, but I don't want to get in. Are you giving so the church can accomplish God's mission for her?

Are you praying for the leadership of the church that God would use them greatly? I finish with a song I love, an old hymn. Onward, Christian soldiers. Marching as to war.

With the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ, the royal master, leads against the foe. Forward into battle. See his banners go. Like a mighty army moves the church of God.

[36 : 59] Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod. We are not divided. All one body we. One in hope and doctrine. One in charity. Crowns and thrones may perish.

Kingdoms rise and wane. But the church of Jesus will remain. Gates of hell can never against that church prevail. We have Christ's own promise that cannot fail.

Father in heaven, I love you. And I love your church. I thank you for it. Thank you that you let me be a member. Thank you that you let me be a part. Thank you that you let me teach the church.

Thank you that you let me be a pastor. Thank you that you let me work with this great church. And I'm asking you, dear God, to work in this church. That our members would take seriously. That we are your church.

That we are your servants. That we are your army. That we are doing your work. God, please work amongst us. God, please build a church here. Thank you for what you are doing.

[37 : 57] And help others, Lord, to get involved. And to get on board. And to carry out your will for their lives. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.