Why the Church?

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Preacher: Joey Snodgrass

[0:00] Christ's people. I love being with people who love Christ and love his word.! So it's an absolute treasure for me to be here tonight to open God's word with you. As Josh said, my name is Joey Snodgrass. I have the privilege of serving as the youth pastor at First Baptist Mustang.

I've been a member there since 2011 and it's the joy of my life to be able to serve that church and the students there. And I want to serve you tonight as well. I don't know most of you. I've never seen some of your faces before.
But I love you because you love Christ. You love his word and I want to serve you by opening his word with you tonight. Our theme for this week is simply the church. And my theme for this session is why the church?
So why are we studying the church? Why is it good to study the church? And what is the church doing in God's plan in the world? So we'll be tackling tonight the question why the church? But first, let's pray.
Father, we ask that you would open our ears this evening as your spirit speaks to the churches who are represented here. Father, your son has promised us that he will build his church.
[1:12] May we get a taste of the fulfillment of that promise tonight as we open your word. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen. Amen. You can open with me to 1 Peter chapter 2.

This sermon tonight will be largely topical as we answer the question why the church? But we will start here in just a moment in 1 Peter 2. Has there ever been a time in your life where you were lost?
And I'm not talking like you took a wrong turn and you're waiting for your GPS to reroute you, but lost, lost. There was a time I was lost with my mom and my brother-in-law.
We had taken a vacation with my family to Colorado Springs. Anyone been to Colorado Springs before? Beautiful part of our country. It was July, so it was beautiful weather. We decided that one day we were going to hike the Manitou Incline.
And if you're not familiar, that's just a straight-up hike going up old railroad ties forever and ever and ever. It's thousands of steps up. It was a grueling hike. We had to take several stops on the way up to catch our breath and rest.
[2:19] We made it to the top, though. It was worth it. Got a beautiful picture of the Colorado Springs area. And then we had to come back down. And there are two ways to get back down. You can go back down the way you came, which is dangerous and also tiring.

Or you can go back down the backside of the mountain. And there's a trail there that kind of weaves back and forth. They call those switchbacks. So it kind of weaves back and forth down the mountain so you're not walking down too steeply.
Also a very scenic view on your descent. There's a sign at the top of the trail that says, Do not cut the switchbacks. So the switchbacks are when the trail switches back directions.
And they tell you not to cut those because they may not always be lined up perfectly. Well, we accidentally cut one of the switchbacks. Unknowingly, we got off the trail.
And before we knew it, we were just out in the middle of nowhere on this mountain in Colorado Springs. Thankfully, we made it back down. We were safe. Everything was good. But for that moment, it was terrifying.
[3:18] We don't know where we are. We have very limited supplies. The world starts to feel like a very, very big and hostile place when you're lost. And one of the scariest things about being lost is the feeling of being all alone.

No, it's just you, whoever happens to be with you, and your very limited resources. And as we study the church this week, one of the beauties of the church is that by belonging to a healthy church, we

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get a continual weekly reminder that God has not left us alone in this world.
God has not left us alone. This life is not just us and our limited resources. We have everything we need because of God's grace. With his word and his spirit inside of us and the church, we have a fruitful paradise to worship in.
Yes, we're at war. Yes, we fight against our sin. Yes, we declare war on false teaching. But we have everything we need. So why the church?
Why the church? There are two aspects in which we can speak of the church, and we will speak in both of them this week. One is the universal church, or the capital C church.
[4:36] This is every believer throughout time who has belonged to the church. There is one singular church of God, the universal church. We can also speak of the church as it exists locally.

So there is one church of God, but there are very many local churches. First Baptist Mustang, Eagle Heights, First Baptist Piedmont, Sojourn, Crosspoint, whatever church you're from, is an example of a local church.
We'll be talking about both of those aspects this week. We'll even toggle back and forth between both of them tonight as we think about the question, why the church? And in order to answer our question, why the church, I'd like to ask and answer five other questions.
And I'll give these to you as we go through them, but here are the five up front. Why study the church? Why are we studying the church this week? Secondly, what is the church? Why is the church?
Why be part of the church? And what happens if you neglect the church? And so all in the effort of answering the question, why the church, we'll ask and answer those five questions.
[5:44] So firstly, why study the church? Why should we spend time thinking about the church this week? Shouldn't we be talking about Christ? Shouldn't we just be talking about salvation or theology or something maybe that seems more important and significant than the church?

Why study the church? Well, a couple of reasons. Number one, we need to study the church so that we can know what God expects of the church.
We need to study the church so that we can know what God expects of the church. And as we study the church, we'll be doing so by studying the scriptures which are written to churches.
The New Testament letters, 1 Peter being an example of that, these are written to churches. 1 Peter was written to multiple churches scattered throughout Asia Minor.
And in the New Testament letters, God is speaking to specific local churches. Churches in Ephesus, churches in Corinth, in Asia Minor.
[6:48] But the truth of what is spoken to those churches applies to any church anywhere. The truth that we have in these letters applies to all churches everywhere.

The New Testament letters are not written to us directly, but they are written for us. They give us instruction and guidance on how the church should conduct itself in this world.
And if we know what God expects of the church, we're then able to identify a healthy church. And this applies even to your local church.
Is your church healthy? To answer that question, you need to know what a healthy church looks like, what God expects the church to be. And seniors, those that just graduated, whether you like it or not, if you're moving away, you'll need to be able to identify a healthy church in whatever's next for you.
You'll know how to identify a healthy church. You'll know how to make your church more healthy. If you know what God expects, you can see the shortcomings of your church, and you can work to address those and bring them in line with God's word.
[7:57] And secondly, we won't just know what God expects of the church, but we need to study the church because the church is where all theology and all sanctification takes place.

The church is the center of the Christian life. Cyprian, one of the church fathers, has this to say. He said, No one can have God as their father who does not have the church as their mother. And that may seem like a strange way of thinking about the church, but he says, No one can have God as their father who does not have the church as their mother.
Well, a couple of things that Cyprian isn't saying. He's not saying that the church is as authoritative as God. He's also not saying that belonging to a church is a work you need to perform in order to make God your father.

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Why does he call the church a mother? Because mothers give and sustain life. Mothers give and sustain life.
[9:03] What he's saying is that whoever has God as their father will demonstrate their childhood by being connected to the church.

And if someone claims to have God as their father, but does not participate in the life of the church, they're illegitimate. They are not being obedient to the scriptures.
The church is the incubator of godliness in this world. And Cyprian is saying that the normal and expected pattern for Christians is to be connected to the church.
And this is what the apostles believed as well. When the apostles wanted to write a letter to Christians, where did they send it? They sent it to churches. They sent it to the place they know that Christians would gather together.
And so what we have in the New Testament, everything we have in the New Testament is a result of God speaking to the church. And all of our theology is built on this text that's written to the church.
[10:05] Theology originates in and belongs to the church. All of our study of theology needs to have as its end better service to the church.

Do not study theology just as an abstract philosophical goal. All of our knowledge, all of the things we know about God from his word should make us better servants in the local church.
Because that is where this theology comes from. It was written to the church. And so as we study the church this week, we're building the table that hosts every theological conversation.
We're building this house in which all Christians gather together to discuss life and godliness together. And so I would encourage you this week as we study the church, let it mold you into a better servant of your church.
Let it make you a better worshiper in your church. Let it make you a better theologian in your church. Why study the church? We need to know what God expects.
[11:14] We need to be able to make our churches more healthy. The church is the center of the Christian life. And it's through the church that God sends his word to the world.

Paul calls the church in 1 Timothy 3 the pillar and buttress of the truth. The church is the foundation for the proclamation of God's truth to the world.
Secondly, what is the church? What is the church? If we're going to talk about the church this week, we need to define what it is. And so I would encourage you to look at 1 Peter 2 with me.
I'll pick up in verse 4 and read through verse 10. As you come to him, that is, as you come to Christ, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
[12:38] And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. What is the church?
I've got two definitions for you. One's short and brief, hopefully memorable. I've got a much longer definition that's hopefully for your notes. So the short definition is this. A church is a local community of God's people who have covenanted together to obey Jesus.
A church is a local community of God's people who have covenanted together to obey Jesus. That's our short definition. And here's a longer definition, which I think in sermons are usually unhelpful, but I'm just going to let it rip.
[13:57] And if you need it, you can come talk to me afterwards. Long definition. A church is God's blood-bought, word-created, spirit-filled people who identify themselves by covenanting together and regularly gathering under the word.

The word proclaimed through sermon and song and the word demonstrated through baptism and the Lord's Supper. Super long definition. If you caught it, that's great. If not, come talk to me

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afterwards.
But Josh, the guy who introduced me, the one with the big beard, Josh, I assume you've got the best beard among the church camp guys. So props to you. But Josh and I both belong to the Capital C Church.
We both belong to the one universal church. But we belong to different churches, different local churches. We have not covenanted together. We do not regularly gather together for the hearing of the word and worship of our God.
We've both been saved by God, but we belong to different churches. Now as we zoom in on 1 Peter 2, 9 and 10, you should have memorized this in order to come to this camp.
[15:04] I hope you've kept that up and stored it in your heart. Peter begins by saying in verse 9, but you. This is in contrast to the unbelievers he's just described, particularly in verse 8, that they stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do.

And one of Peter's favorite words throughout this epistle is obedience. The theme of obedience and disobedience. When he talks about obedience, that's his shorthand way of describing Christians. Christians are those who obey God. Unbelievers are those who disobey him. And so disobedience is a characteristic mark of unbelief. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.
He's describing these churches. He's describing the people who belong to these churches. But what's peculiar about this is the churches he's writing to are Gentile.
They live in Asia Minor. They're primarily Gentile Christians. And the terms he uses to describe them as being part of the church are terms that God himself used to describe his people Israel in the Old Testament under the Old Covenant.
[16:23] So what is going on here? Why is Peter just freely saying, you're a royal priesthood, church. You're a holy nation. You're a chosen people.

Why is this significant? One of the things Peter's communicating through this language is that the church is the vehicle through which God's promises go to the nations.
And the church is not a new idea. The church has been in God's mind from the very beginning. All of the church's promises have blossomed out of the promises that God has already made to Israel. And it's not that Israel's done away with in God's future plans, but it does mean that the church is grafted into the promises that God has spoken to Israel.
All the promises made to the church have their origin and foundation in promises that were originally made to Israel in the Old Testament. Promises of a Messiah.
[17:32] Someone who'd lay down his life for his people. Promises of a new covenant that would actually change people from the inside. Promises of a new creation that wouldn't just make new people but would give these new people a new world to inhabit.

These are all promises that aren't new. These blossom out of what God has already spoken to his people. And so we need to read and love the Old Testament.
That's our story. Those are our people. We are grafted into the promises that God is making in the Old Testament. And why does God create this new group?
Middle of verse 9. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
The church exists to proclaim Christ. The church exists to proclaim the glory of God. And we proclaim him in worship as we sing together. We proclaim him in preaching as God's word is opened and applied to God's people.
[18:40] We proclaim him as we share the word with other believers to encourage them and build them up. We proclaim him through the Lord's Supper. We proclaim his death until he comes. We proclaim him by sharing the word with unbelievers.

The church exists for proclamation. Do you proclaim him? And if you gather together regularly with your church, you do as your church sings and studies the word.
But do you proclaim him to unbelievers? Do you proclaim the gospel to those who are lost? And I want to call out one of my students, Jenna Johnson.
She's right here on the front row. Wave, Jenna. There she is. So Jenna loves the gospel. She loves Christ. So much so, for her birthday a couple years ago, her parents were like, what do you want? What gift do you want? Do you want us to give you money? Do you want us to take you somewhere? She said, take whatever money you'd spend on me and buy me gospel tracks. So she

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got gospel tracks and she shares the gospel faithfully.
[19:43] She proclaims God's excellencies who called her out of darkness into his marvelous light. So she's an excellent example of that. Verse 10.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Even these words come from the book of Hosea, written to Israel, saying you've become so evil, you're no longer my people.
You've no longer have received mercy, but I will say to no mercy, now you've received mercy. I will say to not my people, now you are my people.
And this is true of us as Christians. There was a time when we were lost. There was a time when we were all alone, but God saved us and God brought us in. And Paul says in Ephesians 2 that you who were far off were brought near by the blood of Christ.
We've been brought inside because of what Christ has done for us. Once we did not know what mercy was, but now we've received it from God. Once we did not know what love was, but now we've received God's love through His Son.
[20:57] In verse 5, he describes the church as being built up. Being built up. We as the church are built on the foundation of God's Word, and we're continually built up by God's Word as we gather together.

In Ephesians 4, Paul compares the church to a human body where all parts of it individually need to contribute to the whole in order for the health of the whole body.
What is the church? The church is the place where God's love is fully displayed toward His people and among His people.
Thirdly, why is the church? We've already touched on this, but let's zoom in on it further.
For what purpose do these promises come to us as Christians? Why does the church exist? Why is the church? The church exists for many reasons, but Peter highlights one here.
[22:12] The church exists for proclamation. The Lord has saved us so that He can send us as proclaimers. He's given us this new collective identity so that we can proclaim His excellencies until He returns.

The church exists to proclaim His truth to the ends of the earth until He returns.
And when we ask why is the church, I think the question we need to ask is why does the church exist at all? Not only what is its purpose, but what are we doing here as the church? Why are we here on earth?
God hypothetically could have brought us straight to heaven after He saved us. That would be so sick. If He saved us, bam, you're in heaven. Or, God could have saved us and just left us on our own.
Just sent us out as individuals kind of like the ACT. Like, you've got your tests, go do it, don't talk to anyone, and come back up here once you're done. But if God brought us immediately to heaven after He saved us, there would be no one here to proclaim His excellencies.
[23:23] And if God saved us and left us as individuals and just sent us out to obey on our own, we would be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And we would not be able to endure any pressure from the world at all.

But in the church, we have a community built together to proclaim who He is, to proclaim His excellencies. And the church is custom built to endure persecution.
It's custom built to sanctify us and grow us up. The church is the mother of all the godly. This is why the church exists. In God's wisdom and loving kindness, He has brought us into the church.
In a couple of texts, you can write them down. Matthew 28, 18-20 and Acts 1-8. Both beautifully describe what the purpose of the church is.
Why is the church? Jesus sends His disciples into the world in Matthew 28. It says, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.
[24:32] And in Acts 1-8, He sends out the apostles saying, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in all Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And notice in that Matthew 28 text, it doesn't just say make converts, but make disciples. Teach them.
Teach them what I've taught you. Proclaim my name to the ends of the earth, but make disciples from the ends of the earth. How far does this proclamation go?

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Where do we proclaim Him? To the ends of the earth and to all nations. Why do we proclaim Christ to all nations? Why do we preach His glories to the ends of the earth?
Because we proclaim the name of Christ everywhere that He reigns. We go to the ends of the earth and preach Christ because He reigns there. We go to the ends of the earth and preach His excellencies because He is the sovereign ruler over every people and tribe of every language and every dialect.
[25:36] He is the unconquerable ruler of every nation and continent. And so we go and proclaim His name because He reigns there. And He is worthy of His glories being proclaimed in the farthest corners of this world that He has made.

And this mission is at the very center of God's heart. Jesus says in John 20 verse 21, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.
This mission to proclaim His excellencies is the mission of the Son. This is why the Son was sent and now He sends us to the ends of the earth, to all nations.
When you go and proclaim, whether in your neighborhood or to another nation, you are participating in something that is at the center of God's heart. We have an outgoing God.
We have an extroverted and overflowing God who loves to make Himself known, who loves to share His love with those who are unworthy. This is why you're a Christian.
[26:50] It's because God sent His Son and because the Son sent His church. Someone spoke the gospel to you. Someone proclaimed the excellencies of Him who called people out of darkness into His marvelous light.

And because of God's love, no cost is too high in life. I love reading stories of missionaries, people who gave their life on the mission field.
There's a particular group of young men who sold all their possessions. They were 16 to 25 years old, this group. Sold everything they had to go and be missionaries in a foreign land.
And as their boat is setting sail on the sea, their families are there on the dock weeping and crying. Don't go.
Stay back here. And the message of these sons to their parents, of these men to their friends, was a question.
[28:03] Shall not the Lamb receive the full reward of His suffering? Because of the love of God through Christ for them. No cost was too high to pay.

They were willing to give their very lives to be obedient to 1 Peter 2, 9, to proclaim His excellencies where He was not known. Why is the church? The church exists for proclamation.
Number four, why be a part of the church? Why be a part of the church? There are a lot of reasons why you should be a part of the church.
I originally came up with 33. That list could be much longer. I'm just not very bright. I'm only going to give you like six or seven. I'll make up my mind as we go. Six or seven reasons why you should be a part of the church.
Number one, Christ is worthy. Christ is worthy of your participation in the church. That should be the only reason we need. Christ has called us.
[29:04] Christ is worthy of our participation in the church. Number two, God commands you to do it. God commands you as a believer to be faithfully connected to the church.

Christ is worthy of it. God commands you to do it. Number three, it's at the center of what God is doing on earth.
The church is at the center of what God is doing on earth. It's ground zero for the advancement of God's kingdom. And you should be careful around people who say they're serving Christ or they're advancing the kingdom but aren't connected to a local church.
The church is the place where God is growing his kingdom. Number four, the church is where true knowledge is gained. The church is where true knowledge is gained.
This takes place in healthy churches as God's word is proclaimed. And this true knowledge consists of knowledge of God, knowledge of ourself, and knowledge of others.
[30:23] We know God through his word. As his word is opened and proclaimed, as we sing his glories together, we gain knowledge of who our God is. We also understand who we are in light of that.

God is perfectly holy. When we get an image of him, when we get a glimpse of him, we recognize how sinful and wretched we are, how undeserving we are, of his mercy and love.

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And we get a true knowledge of others. We get a picture of what the world is like, lost in sin.
Number five, we should be a part of the church for community.
It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a church to grow a Christian. If you want to grow up as a Christian, if you want to be faithful to the Lord, be invested in your local church.
Number six, you should be a part of the local church for service and ministry. It's where all spiritual gifts are put on full display.
[31:39] The gifts given by the Spirit are for the purpose of building up the church, of edifying the church. And so in order for you to faithfully use your spiritual gifts, you need to be vitally connected to a church.

And number seven, we're going full seven, baby. Why should you be a part of the church? The church will never be defeated. The church will never be defeated.
Christ said in Matthew 16, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's word will not. And the church, which is built on that word, will never fall. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the church will not.
Our enemies will pass away, but the church will not. Our sin will be done away with fully and finally, but the church never will be. Our sorrows will come to an end, but the church never will.
[32:42] Our imperfections will be erased like footprints in the sand, but the church never will be. How can we know this for certain? How can we know this for sure? Is Jesus alive?

Is he reigning forevermore? His promises are true. His church is safe. His church is secure. He will keep his promises regardless of how much the church suffers in this age.
No matter how afflicted she is by false teaching from the outside and from sin on the inside, no matter how small and insignificant the church may seem, the church will never be defeated because Christ is alive.
And one day, all sorrows will be done away with. What we experience in this life is not the end of the story. The church is going somewhere.
The church is going to meet the Lord. Are you going with her? Are you with her on that journey?
Number five, the fifth question, what happens if you neglect the church?
[33:48] What happens if you neglect the church? The church is very often neglected even by those who love Christ.

And neglect doesn't just mean non-attendance. you can neglect the church even while being in the church every single week. You can neglect the church from inside the church simply by not appreciating the church, simply by not fully investing in the church or not making full use of the church.
And some of the more obvious signs of neglect are all around us. I'm sure you've heard some of these. People saying, I love Jesus, but I don't love the church.
I just read my Bible on my own. Religion is personal. It's more about a relationship, not so much religion and meeting together. There was someone I was talking to at the gym a few months ago and I said, where do you go to church?
And what I was really asking is, are you a Christian? But I was getting there by saying, where do you go to church? And they said, oh, we don't really go to church. We just, we read the Bible as a family and I listen to Bible Recap, this podcast.
[35:01] They were going about the Christian life on their own. They were neglecting the church. Or people saying the church is full of hypocrites or the people are weird and sometimes we say amen. People say, I've been hurt by the church so I'm not going to make more connections because I could get hurt worse.

And some of these things are said by people who claim to be Christians. Christians. And some people certainly have experiences from very bad churches and want to be sympathetic toward that and patient with that.
But maybe you've been frustrated by the church. Maybe there are particular people in your church who have hurt you or been difficult to live with. And maybe you've just thought secretly, I'm just going to distance myself.
I'm just going to remove myself a little bit from these people, from the church itself. Maybe you think you could get further on your own in the Christian life. Maybe you think you could accomplish more if you weren't constantly slowed down and interrupted by other people.

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Maybe you're like, if I could just have the Bible and Jesus, I would go so far so fast. I wouldn't be hurt. I wouldn't be slowed down by any of these people. I wouldn't be annoyed by them.
[36:17] C.S. Lewis has something to say and it's a little bit of a lengthy quote, but, talks about being hurt by love. He says, to love at all is to be vulnerable.

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping your heart intact, you must give it to no one, not even an animal.
Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries. Avoid all entanglements. lock your heart up safe in the casket or coffin of your own selfishness.
But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. Your heart will not be broken.
It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. to love is to be vulnerable. If you're not connected to the church, you'll have less pain, but you'll have no one to share yours.
[37:30] You'll have less sacrifice, but no one to serve you when you're in need. You'll have less stress, but no one to share the joy with. You'll have less work, but no one to enjoy the fruit with.

You'll have less sorrow, but no one to laugh with. You'll have less of a burden, but no one to carry yours. You'll have less slowdown. You'll have no one to cross the finish line with.
Without the church, your life will be easier, but it will not be more satisfying, and it will not glorify God. You'll be all alone, just you and your very limited resources in this big, hostile world.
world. What we find in the Bible is that our life is most enjoyed when it is poured out in service to others, even, and especially, when that service is inconvenient, when that ministry to others is painful to us, when it's inconvenient to our schedule.
But we do this with an eye toward eternity. One day, every bitter thing will be forgotten. no sacrifice or trial will have been too difficult.
[38:42] We will behold God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, but if you detach yourself from the church, you'll be disobedient to Christ, and so you will not look like Christ.

According to the New Testament, you cannot please Christ and be detached from the local church. Your sin is too deep, your trials are too debilitating, to go with the Christian life alone.
Have you failed to love the church in the way that you should? Have you neglected the church? Have you slacked off in your involvement with the church?
Have you spoken of the church in an unfaithful or slanderous way? Have you viewed the church as a chore rather than one of Christ's choicest gifts to his people? There's forgiveness in Christ.
The message of the gospel isn't just for unbelievers, it's for us Christians every day of the week. So to conclude, why the church?
[39:48] Why should we study the church? Why are we spending time doing that this week? Because God is glorified when we think rightly about the church.

God is glorified when we use our minds to think clearly about the church. Why should we love the church? Because Jesus loves her and gave himself for her.
And Jesus' people love what Jesus loves. Jesus loves the church. In God's wisdom, the church is God's plan for filling the earth with his glory and we want to be a part of that.
Do you love God? Do you love Christ? Prove it to me and love the church. Be faithful in and through the church. And I pray that this week your understanding of the church will grow, but I also pray that your love for your church would grow as well through that understanding.
And loving the church isn't an end in itself. As we love the church, we are loving God's gift to us, which brings him glory and joy. And if you think back to me and a few family members being lost on the mountain, what was our problem?
[41:09] What went wrong? Ultimately, we neglected the command we were given. And we didn't outrightly neglect it, we read it, we thought about it, but we failed to apply it when it mattered most.

We failed to be obedient to it when it came down to making choices. people neglect the church. People don't love the church because they neglect God's commands.
Be obedient. Be faithful. Love the church. And as you're obedient to God, you'll find that you will never be alone. You will not be ultimately lost.
You will not be led astray. You'll be walking the path the church has walked for thousands of years. And Christ himself will lead us and comfort us along the way until the journey is done.
And then we will see him. We will be with him. We will be rewarded in his presence. We will worship him for all eternity.

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[42:14] The church will thank its savior. No longer in separate local scattered congregations but the church will be there. The whole church will be there as one assembly for all of eternity praising God and thanking Christ for the blessing of the church and the redemption he has worked for his church.

So if you would turn with me finally to Revelation chapter 7 and please stand with me. we'll read Revelation 7 verses 9 through 12 I want you to do your best to picture this see this this will be our experience in the future.
Revelation 7 verse 9 After this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb that's Christ clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb and all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying Amen blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever!
and ever! Amen! Pray with me! Our Father you've been so gracious to us in saving us we could never be worthy of your salvation we could never be worthy of the gospel but beyond even that incalculable mercy you've brought us into your church and Father I pray as we study your bride this week that we would be enchanted with the church we would love the church because you love the church we would be faithful to the church because you have been so faithful to us you are faithful you are worthy Father one day we will see the lamb who was slain for us one day we will worship him face to face and I pray that when that day comes we will have been found faithful to not only know what a healthy church is but to have loved and served the church
Father I pray at the outset of this week that you would be glorified by our study of your church this week and in the name of your son the church's savior we pray amen do you feel the world is broken you sing we do you feel the shadows deepen but do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through do you wish that you could see it all made new and is all creation groaning is a new creation coming is the glory of the
[46:13] Lord to be the light within our midst is it good that we remind ourselves of this is anyone worthy is anyone whole is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll the lion of Judah who conquered the grave he is David's root and the lamb who died to ransom the slave!

is he worthy is he worthy of all blessing and honor and glory is he worthy of this he is does the father truly love us does his spirit move among us and does Jesus our Messiah hold forever those he loves we know he does does our God intend to dwell again with us none else worthy is anyone worthy is anyone whole is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll the lion of
Judah who conquered the grave he is David's root and the lamb who died to ransom the slave from every people and tribe from every nation and tongue he has made us a kingdom and priest to God to reign with the son so is he worth worthy is he worthy of all blessing and honor and glory is he worthy is he worthy is he worthy of he is is is he is he is he he is he is he he he last verse
I want you to take a moment as we've considered who we are in Christ the church what God has called us to do that if Christ is worthy, then this last verse is what we will do in response, by His help, to be the people that He's called us to be.
So sing this with me. Will you glorify this Savior? We will. Will you go to make disciples?
[49:54] We will. Will you share the truth of Jesus with the nations of the world? We will.

Will you join in love to see this all fulfilled? We will. Father, would you help what we've sung to not be in vain by the power of your Spirit through the proclamation of your Word and as we gather together this week, these multiple local churches trying to just encourage one another in our faith and in our practice of our faith?
Would you help us to go back home that this next Sunday when we gather that our church family would see us and say, hey, I feel more encouraged to be the church and to follow Christ because of what these young adults have brought back in their worship, in their conversations, in their attitudes, in their service.
God, would you build up your local church that way across this state and across the world? In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. We are going to dismiss you guys to your small groups momentarily.
You guys will go meet where you met this afternoon. You get lost in that process. Find one of us. We'll help you guys get there to your small groups. You guys have got some free time after that.

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[51:29] Then it's in the dorms by 11 o'clock. Visit the Snack Shack this evening. Thank you, Joey, for that word. You guys be sure to encourage him when you see him with that. He was supposed to just kind of set the table a little bit before the week, but he served a full meal to you guys.

And it is night one. We have a whole week of this. I'm so excited. So with that, you guys are officially dismissed to your small groups. We'll be right back.
We'll be right back.
We'll be right back.
We'll be right back.
[53:59] We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[56:12] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[58:42] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[61:12] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[63:42] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[66:12] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[68:42] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[71:12] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[73:42] Thank you.

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Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[76:12] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[78:42] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[81:12] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
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