

# Discussion of What is the Purpose of the Church, sermon 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome, everyone.

We didn't have a main Scripture text from this morning,! but just if you'll recall, the questions were,! What is the church?

and who is the church? And through Scripture, we saw that the answer to the first question is that the church is a body of believers who have been united together in Christ for service and service to Him and one another.

And so the church is a body. Secondly, who is the church? And we looked at that on a universal aspect, that the church is everyone, everywhere, who has been born again and who has been saved, who is a part of the universal body of Christ.

And so as Christians, we are, or Christianity, I should say, is not limited to one people, one race, one nation.

[ 1 : 09 ] And so there you see the answer there for who is the church. The church consists of people from all tribes, tongues, and nationalities who love, encourage, support, and equip one another on a worldwide and local scale.

The church is the faithful bride of Christ, prepared in anticipating His imminent return. So now we move on to our questions. And the first one is, Why is the church often tempted to consult sources other than the Bible to determine its purpose?

Why should the church seek answers from the Bible to define its purpose? So the first part of that question, Why is the church often tempted to consult sources other than the Bible to determine its purpose?

Jack's not here, so I can't... Thank you. I was wondering, I was thinking that's what you were coming up to do. Why is the church often tempted to consult sources other than the Bible to determine its purpose?

So you even think about what are some of those other sources that the church often consults? People don't think that the Bible is sufficient enough by itself, so they're always looking for extra-biblical texts to prove the Bible is true.

[ 2 : 27 ] So think about just recently they had the Bethlehem star, right? Well, you back up in time, and they were following these planets that kind of came together because then they don't have to believe in the Bible. They can believe in astronomy and stuff like that, that the stars came together.

But I believe the star came and settled over the house, like the Word says. So people are always looking for ways to prove it outside the Bible just because they don't think the Bible is sufficient in what it says standing on its own.

Yeah, so because people don't trust that the Bible is the Word of God, and so that would cause them to consult other sources besides Scripture.

So I think that's a great answer because that's what it's rooted in. Why would you consult another source? It's because you don't believe that the Bible is the source with the answers. Can you think of any sources that you've heard or seen referenced that churches have consulted with to determine their purpose?

You think of any? What about, huh? Barna? Barna? The studies that they do? Yeah? So the Barna and the studies that they do can be helpful, but they can also steer us in a direction that maybe isn't necessarily biblical.

[ 3 : 53 ] How about business? Have you ever heard of churches consulting the business world to determine its purpose? So sometimes the church can be caught up in thinking that the purpose is to

grow, right?

Numerically. And now we know that our purpose is to go and make disciples, so numerical growth would necessarily be a part of that, but sometimes we lose sight of the fact that we're to make disciples, and we think that our job is to draw a crowd.

And so if we think our job is to draw a crowd, who would we consult with to learn better ways to draw a crowd? Well, one would be businesses, right?

What do businesses do to draw crowds? What have you noticed? What are some things that a business will do to draw a crowd? Advertising.

Advertising, yeah. Giveaways. Giveaways, absolutely. Those are two big ones. Anybody else? Entertain. Okay, good.

[ 5 : 02 ] Give them a reason to come. Those are all good. For example, I remember in Leavenworth, Kansas, where I was pastoring before, that we had something called Pear Day, and this was done up at Fort Leavenworth, where every year there would be a new group of officers coming into the school because they had a college there, and so they would come for a year or two of training.

And so Pear Day was an opportunity for local businesses and organizations and churches to be up on Fort Leavenworth, and we'd all have a booth and pictures and materials to pass out to them just to connect with them, let them know that we're here, and answer any questions that they might have, especially if they're looking for a church or whatnot.

And so you had all kinds of doctors and dentists and restaurants and every kind of business that you can think of up there. And I remember one church was doing a raffle for a plasma screen TV. So this lets you know it's a little bit of an old illustration because back then a lot of people still had box TVs. So this was a flat screen and it was a plasma screen TV.

And I remember just having a chance to get away from our booth and just to walk around to all the different ones and seeing this church with their raffle.

[ 6 : 41 ] And, you know, the TV was there in a box, and then they had a big clear container where you would write your information and then put it in the box where it would be drawn on Easter at the church.

And so, yeah. And they got a lot. I mean, they got a lot of names. They got a lot of people interested. And I'm sure that that Easter they had a lot of people in their church, probably more so than they'd had before.

But, you know, it goes back to the old saying that what you draw them with is what you must keep them with. And so they drew a large crowd. But, you know, the purpose for their coming was to win a TV.

And if a chance for a free TV isn't provided every Sunday, then eventually they're just going to not come anymore unless they're saved. But, you know, a church that thinks that that's a method, a good method to draw people, I'd kind of wonder about what gospel they would be preaching there. So we've seen, you know, looking to the business world, how do they draw a crowd? Well, maybe we can do a raffle and that will get people in here or do some kind of a giveaway.

[ 8 : 01 ] Same thing. Raffle, giveaway. And so a lot of times churches will look to the business world to think that in order to be successful, we've got to draw a crowd.

And the best way to draw a crowd would be to copy off of what businesses do. And I think Linda said entertainment as well would be the other one. What do entertainers do to draw crowds? All right, I heard some comments.

What did you say, James? Yeah, same thing. Okay, so back to giveaways. You've got the T-shirt cannon gun.

Shoot them up into the crowd. Amy, did you have them up? Sell stuff, she says. Sell stuff? Yeah. Okay. All right.

Go ahead. I have it first. Why is the church often tempted to consult, you know, because they want to do their own thing. Okay, that too.

[ 9 : 07 ] Against what they believe in, what they want to do, they're going to seek other sources to make their messages out. They think they're wiser than what Scripture has to say, you know, maybe be tempted into thinking that these are different times and a different age in order to get people here.

We've got to do different things. And Leandro was talking about the lights and the fog machines. Leandro says lights. Okay. And the show.

Because why do people go to those things? Because they want to be, oh, they want to be entertained. That's awesome. That's something I don't see at home. And so I want to go and pay money to go see that.

And so you see churches adopt those same kind of things. They make Sunday morning more about a time of entertainment, more about a time of a show to draw the crowd in.

And so you've seen sanctuaries transform into theaters. Have you guys, I know a lot of you guys come here and have come here for a while, and so this is the sanctuary that you're used to seeing.

[10:09] But have you not had an opportunity to go maybe visit another church, or maybe it was a family member's church or friend's church, and you walk in, and what you'll notice is that the walls are all painted black.

Seen that? Yeah, those different kinds of things as well. Coffee bars up front or in. But the walls are painted black.

And once it's time to worship, they turn the lights down low, and they pump in the smoke for the lights and for the effects and everything.

And it's very much like if you went to a concert. And again, it serves that entertainment value that people are looking.

And so I think we've seen it be successful. We've seen a lot of churches do that and draw the crowds. And so sometimes we can, as a church, think that if we do that, we'll have the same kind of results.

[11:19] But why shouldn't we do that? Why should the church seek answers from the Bible to define its purpose? I'll give you a microphone, Amy. Amy says because we're not making disciples.

Because we're not being disciples. Yeah. Yes. It's an easy way to draw a crowd, right?

Because then we don't have to get uncomfortable with sharing the gospel with people and what that might cost us. And so we just show up to these churches anonymously, and we can leave anonymously and see people there and feel like we are fulfilling the Great Commission.

But on closer inspection, it's not the case. Elsa? Yeah. Is it primary and inerrant resource? Yeah.

So the inerrancy of Scripture. It's believing that the Bible is God's Word. And if the Bible is God's Word and God is truth, then what the Bible says is true, and therefore the answers that we need to understand our purpose comes from the Word of God.

[12:35] Because who created the church? Well, He did. Right? And He did. I think as we saw this morning in the example of Acts 2, that it's the preaching, it was the declaring, it was the proclaiming of His Word that formed and built and established the church.

And so that's absolutely necessary. So if we're going to know what our purpose as a church is, then we need to know what God has said it is, and we'll know that by looking in His Word.

And it can be tempting, you know, at times to look at and consult other sources in the world and see how they've been effective and think that we can do the same thing here.

But ultimately, whatever we do as a church must be determined by what God's Word has said. It's so important. And so as we go through this study, it's going to be rooted in Scripture because ultimately that's where the answers that we'll find for our purpose as a church, for our purpose as individual believers.

Yolanda? Yeah, well, the purpose of the church is to preach the gospel. And a lot of these churches that are complaining, they're not doing that. Yeah. And I think we've seen, you know, and it's easy to throw stones, too, at everybody else and say, well, it's all them, it's all them, it's all them.

[13:59] But, you know, we do this as Southern Baptists just in different ways because a lot of what we do is it's the reporting numbers, right? How many baptisms did you have? What was your average attendance?

What was your average giving? And those things can indicate health. But also, and I think we've seen and heard of examples of churches where they're just eager to get anybody wet, you know, and count people twice.

Find ways to do that. I was a part of a church where a pastor found a way in a rationale to count the choir twice. And I don't remember what it was.

It wasn't logical. And that's, I think, what it was. Well, when they're here, well, when they're in the loft, they're up here and we count them.

And then somehow, magically, when they come into the sanctuary, they turn, yeah, they transform. Different personality. It's like when they're up here, they're Batman, and when they're out here, they're Bruce Wayne.

[15:07] And so we can count them twice. And I mean, we laugh, but oftentimes we look at our numbers as a way to reflect, well, that must be a church that's healthy and has found its purpose.

And it's not always the case. Sometimes it is. And it can be, but not all the time. And so, you know, I think it's something that we've got to consider as well is are we growing God's way?

Or is the growth that we're experiencing based off of something else? And if it's based off of something else, then we've got to reevaluate what we're doing and if it's really a part of our purpose.

The next question, why is it necessary that we shift our focus from seeing the church as a building where people assemble to an assembly of people in the body of Christ?

I thought this one was a tough question. Why is it necessary that we shift our focus from seeing the church as a building where people assemble to an assembly of people in the body of Christ?

[16:13] What is it about the building and that attachment that's so hard for us to disassociate with the church? Wes?

I first thought, I thought of, think about China. We might not always have the building. You know, it might not always be a place that you can go to where you, it might come to this point here where we have to go underground and meet in people's homes or at a park or whatever it might happen to be and keep it cash where the police don't realize we're, you know, I mean, even with COVID, what's happening, that people had to take other measures and meet in their cars outside the church building.

So, I mean, it could get to that point. So, it may not always be a church building you can even go to. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, so it's definitely more of like a Western thing.

It's more of an our culture thing, whereas we see in China and in other countries where there's more persecution, they're not allowed to have these buildings, the churches still meet, and they meet where they can, which is oftentimes in the home or someplace underground so that they can meet safely.

And it would have been neat to have the grassers and the Caraways here tonight. Caraways are out of town. The grassers have an illness. But being from China and Russia, I mean, their churches met in their homes.

[17:36] And so, you know, it'd just be interesting to hear from their perspective coming back to America where there is this strong attachment to our buildings and seeing the building as the church.

Okay, Dwaylene. Also, I wonder if sometimes we use our building as a status symbol or status emblem.

Ours is a second. Our church building is bigger than down the road. Ours looks nicer. We're from that church up on the hill. Yeah. You know, whatever. It becomes a competition between churches too.

And a puffed up pride. Yeah. So we've got to be really, really careful about that, that it's not about pride and how we're seen, but more about how we love.

Yeah, I think that's a great point too. Another reason why we've got to be careful about our association with the church as a building, because it can be a sense of pride for us.

[18:43] You know, does your church have a gym? Well, ours does. And according to Jack, we have two. Yeah. Yeah. Do you have a cave?

No. But we can do that, can't we? And there are associations with people when they drive through a town that they could see a smaller church and assume, or a smaller building, and assume that, you know, well, they're probably an older church, a smaller church, probably not a whole lot going on there.

And then we can go to some of these other churches that I think they look more like, almost like a Chuck E. Cheese on the outside, and you wouldn't know it was a church unless there was some kind of, I don't know, something that indicates that it is.

And that doesn't necessarily mean that that church is healthy either. Linda? Well, it's easier to disassociate yourself from the building. Okay, I go to church.

This is how I act when I go to church. If you view yourself as the church, 24-7, it's a whole different matter of, okay, I'm not separate.

[ 19 : 56 ] Yeah. Right. James. James. I think the best thing that we can look at to give us clarity is 1 Corinthians 12, 12 through 14, when he talks about we're all part of the body and many members.

And then it goes on into 15 and everything where it talks about there's not one part of the body that's more special than the other. We're all working together. So if we look at ourselves as a living, breathing organism, it makes a huge difference instead of those to brick and mortar.

Yeah. But I think 1 Corinthians is our guide on how we should be living as a church body. I agree.

Yeah, that's what Scripture doesn't compare us to a building or the church as a building but as a body.

And a body made up of people with a different function and purpose. And so often, though, we lose sight of that because we get so attached to the location where we meet for worship.

Why do we get so attached to buildings? Especially a church building. Why is there such an attachment there? You guys probably know. You think about a church like this.

[ 21 : 29 ] And if you've been in a church like this for a while, you could say, I was baptized in that church. I was married in that church. Or you could say, I was saved in that church. Saved in that church.

Baptized in that church. Married in that church. You know, my mother or my father or my spouse or my grandparent, their funeral was at that church.

And so a lot of the attachment is due to the memories that we've created here, right? And so the space is important to us because of the memories that we've had in it.

And I think it's the same as a house. You know, if you've lived in a home for a long period of time, it's the same thing. It's the memories. It's all that's happened there. It's what you're used to.

And so we, as human beings, we can get really attached to things that aren't alive and that can't love us back either.

[ 22 : 31 ] And so we've got to be, I think, really mindful of this because this is a hard one. And I didn't, you know, this morning in talking about it, I mean, it's a hard one for me because I think about my home church and that building is special to me because I was dedicated in that church.

I was saved in that church. I was baptized in that church. I was married in that church. All of my siblings were married in that church. And it's the church that my parents have been going to in my entire life. And so it holds a lot of significance to me for those reasons.

But it's a building, you know, and if that building was to be gone for some reason, it doesn't take away the fact of what God did there through the church of people there in my life.

And that's what's really most important for us to remember and for us to hold on to. Because we can do this, don't we? Sometimes we can put our building above people.

And clearly from Scripture we can't do that. We can't put the building above people who are a part of our body because, as I mentioned this morning, you know, one day this building and everything else in the world will cease to exist and we'll have a new heaven and a new earth.

[ 23 : 53 ] But the one thing that will remain is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. And so, I don't know if, because I was thinking in application, like how far do we take this?

Do we stop saying, when we're referring to our church, do we stop referring to the building? I don't think we need to take it that far because then there's going to be, you know, some of us will get excited about that and we'll say, you can't say that anymore.

You can't say that, you can't refer to the, the physical location anymore. Pastor Mike said that that was wrong and you're not being a good Christian if you do that. But it's got to be, I mean, it's got to be a change of mind that results in a change of heart too.

That we appreciate our building because I think that there is significance in the way, in the place that we meet. and, you know, we pray that God would do a lot of equipping within side walls of this building but we can't hold on to it tighter than we hold on to the people who are a part of this church. We can't love it more than the people that we go to church to, with, or belong to church. See, I just did it there too. It's so hard. The people that I belong to.

[ 25 : 16 ] Okay, Marcia? Since everybody calls this structure the church or a church, I think it gives us opportunity when somebody says about, you know, well, what church do you go to or something like that that it gives you an opening to say my church building is such and such but my church is the so many Christian friends that I have there that have been through everything with me, you

know, and stuff like that.

And you can get into that and let people know that it's more than the structure. Yeah. That it is the people. Yeah. Good. Yeah, and I do think it's good that we communicate that too because I think people in the world, an unbeliever doesn't understand the Bible's definition of the church and they think the definition of a church is a building.

And so to teach them as well, you know, it's not the building, it's the people, it's the body that we belong to in Christ. James. I was just going to say that, you know, when you were talking about all your memories from your home church, it's not necessarily that building that you're reflecting on. It's the people that God placed in that church to build you up and disciple you and help you to grow to where you're at today. So if you look at it as the body, the living organism, and that God has placed these people in this body to do his work, then the memories that you get from that are not so much the building itself but the people that God has brought into your life and how they've impacted you.

And, you know, as I've gotten older, both of my parents have passed away, a lot of my family members are gone now. My church family is stepping in and taking that place.

[ 27 : 06 ] And it's not the building that I'm close to. It's the people inside. Yeah. Good. Because, you know, if something, we wouldn't want this to happen, but if something happened to our building during the week, say this week, something happened to our building and we couldn't meet in it anymore, we would still find a place to meet, wouldn't we?

And we would still be Highland Park Baptist Church. I don't think we'd fit there, but we would find a place. When Mike McBride was here and tornado season would come through, he always prayed that the building would get knocked down by a tornado so we could build a one-story building with no stairs.

Oh. Well, that's a good idea, you know, because this building is hard to navigate. Yeah.

As long as we're not in it when the tornado comes. Yeah. Yeah, that's funny. But yeah, I think it's really important that we pray through this one too and to start, if we haven't already, seeing each other as members of the body of Christ.

And the other thing to think about as well as right now, because of COVID, we have a lot of body parts that are meeting either at Sooner Park or are at home.

[ 28 : 31 ] And so, we can also, in associating church with a building, be of the mind, well, if you're not here, you just, people kind of fall through the cracks. And I think a lot of times we don't, that's not intentional.

It's just what happens, unfortunately, sometimes. And so, if we're really mindful of the body being people, then we need to be mindful of those who aren't here physically.

And what can we do to continue to make them know that they're a part of our body whom we love? And I mean, one of the ways we try to do that is, you know, have a setup so that they can still watch live whenever we're worshiping and that they can worship with us.

But, you know, I just challenge you to think about that too. What are some other things that we could do for those who are a part of our body who aren't physically here to let them know that we still are thinking about them and praying about them.

We still consider them to be a part of our body. And then the third question, what involvement should Christians have with the church on a universal and local level?

[ 29 : 44 ] How does this involvement better enable us to advance the gospel together? So, what involvement should we have as a local church on a universal level?

Wes? Our ties, our gifts, and our time. Either going on mission trips, sponsoring mission trips, praying for mission trips, praying for the church, but like the Annie Armstrong donations that we do, there's lots of ways you can spread the gospel without necessarily going out and going to some foreign country, stuff like that.

Yeah, good. So, with our giving, being generous of our money to support the universal church, good, especially you think about our missionaries, one of the benefits for missionaries in the SBC is that they don't have to come back home to try to garner enough support so that they can go back on the mission field, they can stay on the mission field, and they can continue in their work, they don't have to drop things and come back home to rally support so that they can go back.

It's one of the benefits of the, again, the IMB and the SBC is that our missionaries can continue where they're at fully funded and not have to have a pause in the work that they're doing.

So yeah, it's important and we see that in Scripture, don't we? Churches collecting offerings to be given to other churches in need, whether they were persecuted or going through a hardship.

[ 31 : 20 ] There's examples of that, so that's a good thing. How else should we be involved as a local body in the universal church, as a local church in the universal church?

Wes mentioned a good one, which was giving our our money. What would be another one, James? I think the fact that we're supposed to fulfill the Great Commission, that should be our guide.

Yeah, so we're called to make disciples of all nations and to go, and so how are we going to fulfill that if we aren't thinking about the universal church, if we're not thinking about those in the ends of the world, who have yet to hear the gospel.

That should be something that bothers us, to think that there's a group of people out there somewhere that hasn't heard the name of Jesus Christ yet, and to be praying for them and to be either willing to go ourselves or help out in some of these other ways to encourage those whom God has called to be able to go to those places and to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Anything else that you guys can think of of how the local church should be involved with the universal church? Wes? I'd say also I like donating money for Bibles that go places because you see so many pictures of these people that are getting their very first Bible ever and they're slutching it and there's tears in their eyes or Tom's told us many times about villages someplace where every family has one book out of there's one Bible in the whole village and everybody gets one book that they read and they'll exchange with everybody else so getting the word out there which is the gospel the good news in a physical form in a Bible or a USB drive or something like that where people can physically have the word and read it for themselves you know that's going to really lead a lot of people to Christ too if they can just read the word itself.

[ 33 : 29 ] Good so continuing to find ways to get the word of God to people to get the gospel to as many people as we can whatever form that needs to be having that physical word in your hand you know you hear so many times people just they started reading and they came to Christ they realized they were a sinner or whatever the situation is but just getting that out there in all the different ways we donate to a thing called TWR Transworld Radio and they're broadcasting it to China and places like that where people are hearing it over the radio there's just so many ways to get it done just think about those kind of things that you can use to project the gospel without physically having to sneak through customs with your couple of Bibles and try to give away to two pastors in China or something like that.

Yeah. You can really broadcast a lot in other ways. Yeah. Good. What about mission strips? Now have you ever heard the argument and somebody would say well instead of spending thousands of dollars for plane tickets to go to some country in Africa and spend a week there why don't you just instead just write a check for all that money and just send it to them?

Have you ever heard that argument before? Amy? Okay. Now how would you how would you respond to that?

Well here we go. Okay. Okay. As a person who has gone on these trips I can tell you it makes a huge difference in what you think about the church universal.

The first thing you find out is that Jesus is alive and well and working in Latvia or China or Ukraine or Mexico or wherever we happen to get to go it's huge that we go to these places and I'm nobody when I go there they don't care if I was you know anything what they like is that you came Yeah.

[ 35 : 40 ] That you took your time that you took your life you came and you wanted to make a relationship with these people and it is relationship we will be in heaven with them and there's some folks I cannot wait to see again I won't see them on this earth but I will see them there because they're part of the same body that I'm part of and another funny thing happens when you go on the mission trips and you know you can go in country because we like we go to Colorado or wherever we're going to go to Memphis this year is that right and different places like that you learn about your other family members when you go on these trips I know that some people cheat at dominoes okay and I know that some people don't like pickles or beans and you know what I care about that now because

I know them the church universal is not just this place we don't have a lock on everything and we can't do everything ourselves but if we give our time and we give our attention and our love to these people Shirley and I had the blessing last year two years ago now of being cabin moms in Lafayette at the kids camp that year and Amadeus was one of the boys that we got to know and I just can't wait to see what God's going to do with those kids and you know it's a relationship and when we go

when you go I mean even in town if you do Meals on Wheels!

or you do anything in the name of Jesus and call that your mission call that your purpose call that your outreach to the world and you know those people and build those relationships that's how you strengthen the church and how you strengthen yourself because we've got a big job to do and we can't all do it by ourselves so that's my opinion good yeah the one thing I think I've realized in the mission strips that I've been able to be a part of that were international and that I've heard from others share as well is you know when people say well just write them a check and send them the money wouldn't that be more resourceful is that means so much to the people that you go and visit you know and I think I before I experienced it myself with Latvia as well I think it was David Platt who shared a story about I can't remember what country it was that he was visiting and the pastor there was just in tears as you know it means so much to us you taking the time to come here tells us communicates to us that you actually really care it's easy to write a check and to send it it's much harder to make the sacrifice to physically come and it means an awful lot and so it means a lot to them and then like Amy testified to and I know and Eric will hear in a minute I'm sure as well about his mission trip and I won't say too much because you might want to say this as well but it changes you there's something about this as well our your interaction you're being sent from a local church to some other church in support of the universal church it has a major impact on you too so go ahead Eric you know as as talking about the churches and talking about the building the previous question in my mind just I've been blessed enough to go to Zimbabwe three times and in total I've probably been on the ground for about a month total in three different years and when I think about those churches and I remember growing up when people talk about a certain church I would just I would know the building and that's what I would know but being able to go and being able to share the gospel going and and like you just mentioned it's easier to write a check but the Lord prompted me that I needed to go and I saw why is this that so he could use me because he had bigger plans than writing the check and being able to go to be used by the Lord and to think of like she said I'm nobody I'm I'm nobody but he counts me worthy enough that he's given me salvation and to go and share that with somebody in a in some country I don't know how far it is away but and to see life come into people who have no hope instead of writing a check going and actually doing the work and seeing how God can use you because I am nobody I was nobody but as I began to do the

Lord's work he showed me that I am somebody in his eyes and that I and that I am chosen and that I am worthy to be called his and going and seeing when I think about the churches that we help plant I think six six or eight the community of Cajon day the community of Missanga Kajikachi and other communities in Zimbabwe and when I think about those churches they don't have buildings I see faces and I and I think about that now when I think about Cajon day which is one of the bigger biggest churches growing in that area of Zimbabwe I see faces I see faces that like she said that I'm going to see in heaven I may not see him again here on earth but I know I'm going to see him again and I remember being at that point where okay this this person for this person church is going to Zimbabwe I can help him with something what can I do and the Lord began prompting me said hey you need to look into this and as scared as I was it's hard to please God in your comfort zone he got me out of that and said go I'll provide and I've told you some of the some of the some of the stories and how God provided for me and and and going actually going as he said the great commission I completely understand that now there's a there's a whole lost world out there that needs to hear the gospel and be in the church and who we are as a church yeah some people can't go but for the most part we put limitations on ourselves saying we can't go for whatever reason but when you see people over there in these communities the last trip I made in 2018 we had two people walk 21 miles to come to the church service and I come back here and you think about if it's a little snow on the ground we're not going to show up but to think about they started the evening before to get there for 11 o'clock service the next day you think my goodness and then they're coming to hear me share

[ 43 : 36 ] God's word and like I said who am I but all he does is ask us to be obedient and when we do that we everything else makes sense the great commission and I look at these banners go it's an easy word to say sometimes it's a hard it's a hard thing to do but as soon as you do it it becomes easier and easier and to allow God to use you in such a way you want to do it again yeah good Wes I'd like to say kind of what Amy was talking about when you actually go on a mission trip you're furthering the the idea of the church as a body in the different parts and now every time we went to China when we went to Latvia and you guys probably went to Ukraine you show up and you tell

them we'll do whatever you need us to do if you want us to clean the floor we'll do that we'll do the kitchen duty stuff whatever it might happen to be one time we went it's like it was at a daycare in China let's go school and Amy and Shirley are teaching them songs I got to be you know I'm going to teach them how to play ultimate frisbee so that's what that's just what at that place we wanted you go someplace else and all of a sudden you're whatever they need you to do you're doing that so your different body parts are doing different things so they can see how as a church body it all kind of comes together and I really y'all are my church family people care about me and I care about you guys and when you're all sudden you're in this other country and it's the universal thing you're talking about so cool this morning all of a sudden they're my brothers and sisters in Christ right and I care about them and they care about me and the fact that you're showing up and being there to do whatever they need you to do it just shows shows them and proves back to you it's like we're all one right we're all one big piece and you do what you can to help each other out it's just it's a just a wonderful thing to do and I encourage anybody give it get a try and go on one of these mission trips good so a lot of the comments and there are some things we heard in the comments is it's really necessary that we do this it's necessary that we support with our finances it's necessary we support with our prayers it's necessary that we support with our time because when we do so if you've gone on one of these mission trips is you know Eric and

Wes and Amy have testified to is that you realize it just feels good you know we're part of God's great commission here too but you know when you're there it feels good because you know as a Christian I'm fulfilling this commission and this purpose you also feel the burden of the lostness in the world and and it changes you to see God use you because I think when you're in when you're in a mission trip when you're especially in another country it makes you very uncomfortable but God has a way of working in our uncomfortableness to teach us and to change us and to help us to learn some things when we come back home and we continue to apply them in our local setting as well Doylene in addition to all of that I go back to thinking how that prayer you shared wanted us to pray for our church in Colossians and how in other books that Paul or letters that Paul wrote I never ceased praying for you I never ceased praying that you would increase in your knowledge of God and I think we have to be so careful that we don't get so busy that we forget to keep our relationship with God going personally and praying for one another that God would continue to conform us into the image of his son and allow all of that then to flow over into going and everything but it's got to start in prayer and in the word and knowing God intimately and then allow those prayers and but you've got to be praying for one another that we will increase in our knowledge of God and then through that he's going to grow us and send us to God and send us to God and praying for one another, that we will increase in our knowledge of God.

And then through that, he's going to grow us and send us and help us get involved physically. I think we've got to start spiritually. Yeah, I think that's a great point and observation for sure. Because God has a way of using our prayers to change us, to keep us focused on what matters, to thinking more than just about ourselves, but about our church, about our purpose as a church, as a purpose as Christians, and to be involved in all the ways that we can to continue to advance the gospel together.

Good. Let's move on to the last question. What are the consequences when a church forgets its purpose? So if we forget that we're to be making disciples, if we forget that we belong to the body of Christ, if we start thinking that the church is all just about the building, and the building is more important than the people.

[ 49 : 09 ] What a social club. Yeah. Or a cult. Yeah. Eric had his hands up.

Okay. When I was looking at this question, I thought of the revelation of the seven churches, and the Lord taking away their lampstand if they didn't change their ways.

And like the church is all just, they were living on their old self. They were dead.

And he tells us that if we don't change our ways, then it will dissolve us. Yeah. There is a warning. Your lampstand will be removed.

And so it's, I mean, it's something that we got to take seriously, that there are consequences for a church that loses its purpose. The Lord will remove the lampstand of the church.

[ 50 : 18 ] So it's not something that we should take lightly. I just think we'll always be here. Wes? One of the consequences I was thinking of is how sometimes people use the church for a, like a status thing where some people come to make business contacts in the church.

It's nothing about the body or anything else. It's I can meet some people and sell some of my product to the, this big network of people I'm going to suddenly have. I just come to the church that lost their whole purpose of why they're even coming.

Yeah. Good. If, when the church loses its purpose, it becomes more self-centered than Christ centered. They forget that we're to make disciples.

So they don't make disciples anymore. And if they're not making disciples, then inevitably who's going to be there when the current generation is gone.

Nobody. And I think I've shared this before. One of the most tragic things that I remember seeing in a church and I'll close with this illustration. Back in Kansas, we had an association like we do here of churches and we would get together with the other churches in our association from time to time and for worship.

[ 51 : 32 ] And I remember going into one church that was in the heart of a neighborhood in, on a main street. But I mean, they had, I don't know, 40 people maybe in the church that could fit many more and surrounded in a community where there was plenty of opportunities to share the gospel.

And I remember going into the sanctuary and the baptistry was, is in the back. You remember this thing? I got to get some new illustrations. People are, yeah, yeah, the baptistry is in the back like many of our churches are.

And it was covered and it had a big sheet over top of it. And it had a bunch of furnishings on top of it, candles, Bibles, all kinds of stuff.

I mean, it would take a lot of effort to get it all off of the baptistry. And I remember looking at that and thinking, why would you have so much stuff on your baptistry?

You just treat it, treat it like another piece of furniture in the sanctuary. It's because you haven't baptized anyone in a long time. And my voice is starting to go, but it's because you haven't baptized anyone in a long time and you don't plan on baptizing anybody soon.

[ 52 : 57 ] And that's sad. Um, and so may that never be true of us that we get to the point where we think that there's no hope or we don't care.

And that we see, I mean, the Baptist, you know, it's just a, it's a baptistry, right? It's what happens in the believer. That's the most important. What it symbolizes obviously is important as well, but that's a church that's lost its purpose.

It's basically just, we're holding onto this thing as long as we can, and we know that it's going to die. And I don't know whatever happened to that church, but unless God has moved in it in a mighty way, I'm sure it's either close or it has died.

And so, uh, there are consequences if we don't take this seriously matters a great deal to God. And, um, and so we need to make sure that we know what our purpose is.

And so as we go throughout this month, we'll continue to unfold more. And I think for a church like ours, this will be more of a reminding, um, a rediscovering.

[ 54 : 01 ] Um, yes, this is what the church is just to do and just a way to keep us grounded and to keep us laser focused on what it is we're doing so that we don't pursue other avenues that are unbiblical to try to tell us what our purpose is as a church.

Okay. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for your church and that you have blessed us to be a part of it, to be a part of your body.

And, uh, Lord, we're thankful for your word and for its answers, for its truth, for its instruction that Lord, we don't have to, uh, wonder what our purpose is.

Uh, it's clearly stated in your word, what you've called us to be and what you've called us to do. And so father, I pray that, um, as we go through this study, that you would speak to us, that you would remind us of what that purpose that you have for us is, that you would empower us through your spirit to, um, to accomplish that work.

And Lord, we pray that the results would bless you. And God, just help us. Now we pray through, um, the indwelling of your spirit to change our minds about what the church is, about who the church is, that we would see each other differently as a result, that we would see one another as, um, uh, a tightly knit body of which you are the head and that each person is important.

[ 55 : 28 ] And, uh, that we would care and love for one another well, and that in so doing Lord, we would please you. Uh, we pray that the world would take notice and that we'd have even more opportunities to share the gospel with them.

God, as we, uh, prepare to dismiss and leave from this place, Lord, I pray that, uh, you would just work through us, uh, to glorify the name of Christ.  
And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen. Thank you.