The Church: Its Nature, Marks, and Purposes

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Youth Minister Drew Miller teaches on the church. I'm excited to be sharing tonight on the church, its nature, marks, and purposes. Let's pray and get started.

God, we gather in here as your church, those who have been bought by the pressure of the church, the precious blood of your Son, Jesus.
God, who gladly joined together this morning in worship. Worship through song. Worship through the teaching of your Word.
Worship through the listening of your Word. And I pray, Lord, worship through the doing of your Word.
God, we pray that you would teach us tonight as we continue this series discussing different theological adherences that we hold fast to.
[1:18] God, I pray that our theology would impact our daily lives. recognizing that if our theology does not change how we live and love one another and pursue you, our theology must change.

Good theology changes how we live. And God, we pray that we would not lose sight of that truth, that reality, through this series. God, that tonight as we learn about the church, God, that it would impact how we do ministry with one another, love one another, endure with one another, persevere with one another, correct one another, encourage one another.
So God, I just pray that you would teach us tonight. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Alright. So we'll first start with what is the church?
How would you guys define the church? Not the building, but the gathering of the brothers and sisters, the people. Yeah. Saints throughout the ages.
Good. Well, we, throughout this series, are going through Wayne Grudem's systematic theology book. This is the book that we're using to go through.
[2:44] And Wayne Grudem actually gives two definitions. And we, as a church, teach one of them. Alright? And so hold to one of them, and we won't get too much into that.

But the definition that Wayne Grudem prefers, which is actually not the one that we would prefer at Highland, or at least that we teach at Highland, according to our statement, is the church is the community of all true believers for all time.
All true believers for all time. That's the definition that Wayne Grudem gives and prefers. The other definition that he gives, and gives credit to and describes, is the one we hold to, which is, the church is the community of all true believers since Pentecost.
Okay? And that's according to our statement of faith and what we teach. And so, the church is the community of all true believers since Pentecost.
And so this gets into a little bit of a discussion on dispensationalism and covenant theology, or replacement theology.
[3:59] And so it kind of gets into those discussions. Covenant theology would be there's no distinction between Israel and the church, and then dispensationalism.

There is a distinction. And so, it kind of plays into how you might define the church, whether it's for the church, believers for all time, or since Pentecost.
But we here, like I said, at Highland, teach that the church was formed at Pentecost. There are Acts chapter 2, verses 1 through 21. We see, we see the beginning of the church at Pentecost, and we adhere to the second definition given by Grudem.
And this is, so tonight's lesson is not on dispensationalism, or anything like that, but it does impact how we would define the church. But this is an issue that people on both sides that love God, love

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His church, love to preach Christ and His gospel, and they disagree on this, but they love the Lord. And so, Grudem kind of just says, this is an issue, you know, that he's like, I can see both sides of. And I think Grudem actually, though he prefers the first definition, he offers a helpful reason to hold to what we hold to here at Highland, or what we teach.
[5:20] And I want to share some of those. First, is the term, Ekklesia. Ekklesia. E-K-K-L-E-S-I-A.

This in the New Testament is translated to church. Or, translated to mean, specifically, the assembly. The assembly.
And that word begins being used in Matthew 16, verse 18. So you can turn there if you would like. Matthew 16, verse 18.
So this is Peter's confession of the Messiah. And we see here, verse 15, But you, he asked them, who do you say that I am?
That's Jesus speaking. Simon Peter answered, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus responded, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven.
[6:20] And I also say to you, that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not overpower it. And we see, this is the first time that this word, Ekklesia, is used.

Here, specifically, talking about how Christ will build His church. And we see that this word, specifically referring to the church, is used from here on throughout Acts and the epistles.
This is not a term that we see the New Testament use for Old Testament assemblies. Even though it refers to assemblies in the Old Testament, it does not use that term, Ekklesia, Ekklesia, for Old Testament assemblies.
We also see that in Matthew 16, verse 18. Jesus is seemingly talking about future events, right, as the church to come.
On this truth, I will build my church. I will build my church. And so this truth is the foundation, this foundation of Christ.
[7:32] It is the cornerstone which shows the foundation of the church. And I'm not an expert builder, by any means, but I know, like, the cornerstone isn't done, like, midway through.

It's foundational. And so that's where that argument comes from, is, you know, the church is the community of all true believers since Pentecost. And there's lots of other reasons to hold to that. Ephesians 2.20, Paul points to Christ again as the cornerstone of the church. So we see this throughout the New Testament. Like I said, we won't spend too much time there talking about the difference between dispensationalism and covenant theology or replacement theology, but we will. I just want to mention that because it does impact how you might define the church. But the church, for our time this evening, the church is the community of all true believers since Pentecost.
And so continuing into the nature of the church, there's a couple things here. The nature of the church, the church is invisible yet visible. The church is local and universal.
[8:42] And then we'll look at some metaphors for the church. So first, the church is invisible yet visible. 2 Timothy 2.19.

It says, Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm bearing this inscription, The Lord knows who are His. Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.
So there we see in that text, the Lord knows who are His. This is speaking of the invisible church. Right? We know this to be true. We do not have the ability to see the true believers.
We do not have, there is the invisible church that we do not know, only God knows their heart. Our hearts. And so this is the invisible church.
It's the church as God sees it. And then we have the visible church. And this is the church as Christians here on earth see. This is the church that proclaims Christ as Lord and shows fruit.
[9:53] And so we have the invisible church, the part that God knows, and the visible church, the part that we are able to see, those who proclaim and show fruit.

We also see, continuing our discussion on the nature of the church, the church is local and universal. The church is local and universal.
We see local churches throughout the New Testament, right? Letters are written specifically to churches, local churches, local bodies of believers and read specifically to them.
Addressing all the way down to a small house church in Romans 16.5, Romans 16.5, talking to a specific house church, all the way to multiple local bodies within a region.

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We see that with the letter of Galatians, for example. The idea of the universal church is a truth that we confess in the Apostles' Creed.
[10:56] It says, I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of the saints. So what do we mean by Catholic when we make that statement, when we hold to that?

Well, that word Catholic just simply means, in that context, is the universal church, the church as a whole. And so, it's simply referring to that.
And so, in fact, many Protestant churches, when they're maybe quoting that, just have changed that wording to just bring some clarity. They'll say the universal church.
They won't say Catholic church because it can be confusing to some. But not to change the meaning, but to bring clarity to what they are confessing. And as we continue talking about the nature of the church, we see a lot of metaphors in Scripture.
What are some metaphors that we see in Scripture for the church? The Bride of Christ.
[11:59] Yep. The Bride of Christ, Ephesians 5, 32. And 2 Corinthians 11, 2. We see that. What other? The body of Christ.

Yeah, 1 Corinthians 12, 12 through 27. The family. 1 Timothy 5, 1 and 2. Ephesians 3, 14. Good. Building.
A building. Yep. Let's see if I have that one. New temple with living stones, 1 Peter 2, 5. If you're thinking of another Scripture specifically, let me know.
One in Ephesians. The branches. Yeah, branches. And the vine. John 15, 5. An olive tree in Romans 11.
Field of crops in 1 Corinthians 3. A building in 1 Corinthians 3, 9. A harvest, Matthew 13. A holy priesthood in 1 Peter 2.
[13:10] Pillar and buttress of the truth, 1 Timothy 3. And then we see two that I have emphasized are the family and body of Christ.

And I just, I love emphasizing these. One, the family. Just expressing the supernatural thing that happens in the believer's life.
The blood of Christ is beautiful because it saves us, but the blood of Christ is beautiful because it unites us as a family. We are now family not by the blood in our veins, but by the blood of Christ. And that's such a beautiful thing and a beautiful picture. It's this supernatural love for one another. It's not based off of our interest. Right?
We can meet together. I can have you over at my house. It doesn't matter if you're 20 or 120. We have something in common.
[14:07] It is, we are unified in Christ. We are a family. So I love that. That's such a beautiful thing and plug for community groups. Right? It's a, it's an inter mingling of different generations meeting together, sharpening one another as not just people who generally believe the same thing, but as brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's deeper than just having a, being in the same club as a bunch of other Dallas Cowboy fans. Right? It's a sad club. At least for me in my 28 years of living.
You know, they haven't won anything. But, but it's a supernatural love. And it doesn't matter what your background is family wise.
I have a very loving family. They, they love me. I like to tell this story especially since my dad's here. It'll be even funnier. But, but so, my mom always told me I love you growing up.
My dad loves me very much. Right, dad? Okay. But, but we were just not the household where we just always said that. All right? I just, you know, I'm not throwing that out there every time I leave the house to my dad.
[15:21] I don't know. It's just us, I guess. But we know it. We know it. But anyway, we were, we met in Joplin one time because that was halfway between Springfield, Bolivar, and Bartlesville. So we met in Joplin to play some golf and afterwards we're saying goodbye and it's my brother and him in the car and I kind of tap the side of the car and say, love you guys.

And I walk away and my dad just goes, you bet, rolls up the window and drives away. And, he got down the road and my brother was sitting in the passenger seat and was like, dad, Drew just said he loves you and you said, you bet.
You know? And so, anyway, I say that to say, you know, even if your family doesn't tell you they love you all the time, you didn't grow up from a family like that, okay, I love my dad, he loves me, he called me later and said he loves me.

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But, no matter what your background is in family, this, the body of Christ, the family of Christ, I should say, is one where we have a supernatural love and union with one another.
Not based on preferences, but based on the blood of Christ. And the second one I'd like to point out is the body of Christ. There's a, there's a neat preface to a book called What is a Church Member that talks about Mr. Nose and Miss Hand and they're part of this body and they, they want to leave the church because they, you know, they're not finding other noses to hang out with, you know, and anyway, I'll spare you the full story, but I think it's kind of a funny story.
[16:48] But the body of Christ being unified together and different parts. Some are hands, some are noses, some are feet, and we all have specific roles to play.

Each is different, unique, but all important and vital. And I just love how we see that in Scripture. And so, those are different metaphors we see in Scripture for the church.
And then we see the marks of the church. That answers the question, what is the church? This answers the question, what distinguishes the church? Is there a true church?
The answer is yes, there is a true church and that implies the reality that there are false churches. And so, in this discussion in 1530, Martin Luther in the, bless you, in the Augsburg Confession says this, the true church is a congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered.
Congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered. John Calvin, I think, is helpful in this as well.
[18:05] Wherever, he says this, wherever we see the word of God purely preached and heard, I like that he had and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.

And so, the two marks that we see in those two definitions are, one, the preached, the truth preached, the word of God preached faithfully.
So, that's the first one. And the second one is, the ordinances practiced rightly. The ordinances practiced rightly. And so, this is, you know, I can use really clear examples here.
False churches like the LDS or Mormons or Jehovah Witness are false churches for a variety of reasons, but we just need to look no further than they do not preach truth according to God's word. We also can look at Roman Catholicism and see the incorrect adherence to the sacraments and get into a discussion of sacrament versus ordinance.
[19:17] Really, the term doesn't mean anything different, but there's different connotations. And so, we would use the, I would prefer to use the word ordinance. But the difference between Roman Catholicism, the wrong view of sacraments would be that they are a means of grace being infused or earned.

Okay? A means of grace earned versus a right view of sacraments which is a means of grace displayed.
Okay? A visual sign of inward grace. It's not a means of grace earned, but a means of grace that's on display. A visual sign of an inward grace.
Where Roman Catholicism would hold to a means of grace gained versus what the Bible teaches it's an outflowing of obedience of the one who has been shown grace.
And so, the two ordinances that we practice are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And so, we could get into those even deeper.
[20:34] But both of those are an outward visual sign of an inward reality, an inward transformation, grace experienced.

It's an outward sign of those things. Thinking of this idea of a marks of a true church, even claimed Protestant churches can be a false church if they are not rightly preaching the word of the Lord.
So, that is the marks of the church, what distinguishes the church. The next one is the purposes of the church. So, this is answering the question, what is the ministry of the church?
What is the ministry of the church? church? The first one is ministry to God, which is worship. Ministry to God, worship.
Colossians 3, 16. Turn there. Turn there. Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.
[21:54] We see this ministry to God being worship is not simply the songs that we sing to prepare us for the preaching of the word, but worship in and of itself is what we're called to do, is one of the

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purposes of the church.

It doesn't lead into one of the purposes, it is one of the purposes of the church. And we would recognize that worship isn't just the singing of songs, but it's the attitude of our hearts through prayer, through our time of intercessory prayer on Sunday mornings, through our worship in giving, our singing, the preaching of God's word, and in the listening of God's word.
All of those are part of our worship worship, which is one of the purposes of the church, ministry to God. Ministry to believers, to nurture.
See, our goal as a church is not only to bring people to saving faith, but to present everyone mature in Christ, as it says in Colossians 1 28. This is an obligation of the church.
And so, this is an obligation need to be heard by both church leaders and members, right? A warning on who's discipling you as members, okay?
[23:26] Not to entrust our discipleship to YouTube or, you know, something outside or be careful when doing so, but submitting our discipleship to the local body.

And same thing with leaders, recognizing that, you know, we're going to be discipled by something. And so, what is that going to be? And so, there's a call to both the members and leaders there in the ministry to nurture.
And then the third one is a ministry to the world, which is seen in evangelism and mercy as Grudem defines. Ministry to the world, evangelism, and mercy.
We see that in Acts 11, 29, 2 Corinthians 8, 4, 1 John 3, 17. This ministry of mercy, helping one another in the church with needs, coming alongside one another.
But also, we see this as a ministry to the world. Luke 6, 35-36, being merciful to unbelievers. And of course, we see the call of evangelism in Matthew 28, 19, when the Lord says, go and make disciples.
[24:44] And so, it's important, as Grudem points out, that we are careful to keep these in balance. And regularly ensure that these are in balance and not one is seen as more important or one is seen as less important.

But we are called to keep them in balance. An example might be in a seeker-sensitive church. They might prioritize the ministry of the world over ministry to the believer during the Sunday morning service.
Does that make sense? So they could wrongly prioritize one over the other when that is not best for that church.
That's an example that Grudem gives and I think is a good one. All right, and so I have questions for reflection, for discussion at your tables. The first question is this, to which purpose of the church do you think you can most effectively contribute and which purpose has God placed in your heart as a strong desire to fulfill?
Those purposes being the ministry to God, worship, ministry to believers, nurture, and ministry to the world, evangelism. To which purpose of the church do you think you can most effectively contribute and which purpose has God placed in your heart a strong desire to fulfill?
[26:05] And then you'll see the second question up there. If you are a Christian and are meaningfully committed talking to a church, how has that been beneficial to you? Time of personal testimony there.

How has that been beneficial to you? If not, what are you missing out on according to what we have discussed? All right, do we have any maybe questions, concerns, comments on kind of that first part there?
I'd love to hear even just some comments on your answer to how you've seen it be beneficial to you, if you have any. That's a good word.
Yeah, recognizing that and having that, really just reflecting on that often is really helpful. Recognizing just our fellowship isn't just something that's supposed to happen on Sunday morning, something that continues throughout the week.
It turns out hallelujah is the same in every language. And so I was in India and there was a song that sang that quite a bit and I kind of caught the tune and I was singing hallelujah and they're like, you know this song? And I was like, no, no I don't, but I know that word.
[27:31] Yeah, yeah, no, that's good. Yeah, and I do get to experience a lot in my line of work there at the Voice of the Martyrs. You know, we had a young man from Malaysia here with us for about two or three months.

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His father had been abducted in 2017 and hasn't been seen since, is missing. And he was here with us for a time in the States and he was scared to drive here in America and so I was able to give him some rides different places and just various times.
And yeah, I was like, what am I going to have in common with this? He's now like 35, 40 years old, which is older than I am. And from Malaysia, different, you know, cultural contacts, what are we going to have in common?
We didn't have any problem getting along because we were brothers in Christ. Yeah, that's good.
Well, I want to continue our time just talking a little bit about a fun topic.
I actually enjoy this topic, church polity. Okay, I love it. I love this conversation. And so, church polity and then just even emphasizing church membership in that, I think it's just a good opportunity for that.
[29:00] And so, the argument that I would make is for a congregational church governance. I don't think I'm stepping outside of anything at Highland Park in our, okay, so, if I do, just call me out.

But I don't think so. But congregationalism is the most biblical and best. I just didn't okay this with Pastor Mike as I'm sitting there looking at the look on his face. Congregationalism is the most biblical and best for discipleship.
Congregationalism is the best, or is the most biblical and best for discipleship within a local church body. So, there's three traditional views on church polity, church governance, church governance, I should say.
One is the Episcopalian view, where there's an episkopos or a bishop that rules over multiple churches. So, there's one that kind of rules over multiple different churches.
And then we have a Presbyterian view, which is a board or a group of elders that rule multiple churches. And then there's the congregational view, which is the congregation rules.
[30:21] And so, how we would communicate here at Highland would be we are elder-led, but congregational ruled. So, the congregation makes decisions, makes decisions on leadership and direction and all these different things.

But we are led by a group of elders, not elder-ruled. There's kind of this other idea of like independent would be a category, but technically independent doesn't describe governance.
It just says that we're not, we're ourselves, we're not part of the Episcopalian or Presbyterian view, but they might look like that within their own church.
But, so yeah, that's kind of a second category or fourth. But the congregational rule should rule in issues of doctrine, discipline, and direction.
Doctrine, discipline, and direction. And this is always under the authority of God's word. So don't hear what I'm not saying, which is that the church is inerrant or something like that.
[31:27] That's not what I'm saying. But we see in Scripture that the congregation should be on guard. It's up to the congregation to be on guard in regards to doctrine, what is being taught, discipline, and direction.

We see that for doctrine in Galatians 1.6. Galatians 1.6, if you want to turn there. Paul, an apostle, here writing to the churches of Galatia.
And he says, I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. He's not writing this to the elders, specifically. He's writing this to the churches, saying, church, you should be on guard. You should not be turning away from or to a different gospel, turning from Christ, who has deceived you, talking to the church there in Galatia.
And so they are responsible here for turning, they are held responsible here for turning to a different doctrine. And we see this in so many of the different New Testament letters written to churches to protect doctrine, to be on guard against false doctrine.
[32:47] We also see this idea for discipline. In 1 Corinthians 5, 2, 1 Corinthians 5, 2, talking here, specifically dealing with an issue of immorality within the church here in Corinth.

Verse 2, So this is talking about taking them to the congregation.
You can read all of chapter 5 and see who is this tasked to. Who is this tasked to in Corinth? It is the church body.
It is the congregation. We see that again in Matthew 18. If a brother or sister is in sin, eventually you take them before the church. And so we see the church as being responsible in doctrine and in discipline.

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And also I think we see direction. We see that being tasked to the church in Acts 6, 2. And we see this in other areas.
[34:00] Matters of, some of them are just matters of prudence like budget, things like that. It is the congregation's money. We want the congregation to vote on budget, things like that. We do that here at Highland. And so we see that, those three things from Scripture that point to congregational rule when it comes to church polity and governance.

I also appreciate Jonathan Lehman's argument that congregationalism comes from the most biblical view of the priesthood of the believer. in that he argues, this is what he says, the office of priest-king given to the federal head or every man Adam, which involved working and watching over the place where God dwelled, was further specified in the life of Israel, fulfilled in Christ, and now been reconferred to every member of the church.
And so the priesthood of the believer also points to this idea of congregational rule within church polity and church governance.
And so we hold to this idea, this priesthood of the believer submitted ultimately to the great high priest, which is Christ. We've been talking about that in Hebrews. It is then on the believer to tend, watch over, and guard according to Scripture.
Scripture. The reason I believe this is the most, that's the reason I believe it's the most biblical view, but I also believe it's the best for discipleship.
[35:35] Because that view of church governance leads to higher expectations for members. The members need to know what's going on, what's being taught, and be on guard, and know their Bibles so they can test what they're hearing.

There's a greater emphasis there. on the member of the church. There's a higher expectation. And it also intensifies the urgency to disciple and mature.
Right? We want other people being discipled and maturing in the faith so that they can be using wisdom and Scripture to make decisions and be on guard against things.
And so those are the two reasons I think it's the most biblical view. And also, best for discipleship.
And so, it should naturally stem from that view of congregationalism that we hold a high view of church membership.
Right? So for that same reason, we have that heavy emphasis on the expectation for members and intensified urgency to disciple and mature one another.
[36:46] Therefore, it follows that we have a high view of church membership. church membership is a biblical idea. We see that in Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2.

We see about, it says about 3,000 of them were added that day and were baptized. So we see there's this counting of numbers, this number growing. There's an idea of who is coming in.
Who is it that is identifying as a follower of Christ? Hebrews 13. we see leaders are charged and told that they will be given account for you as the members.
And the implication there is clearly they need to know who they're accountable for. They need to have an idea, this person is someone that I should be shepherding and leading and discipling and overseeing.
And these along with the verses there seen in our ideas of doctrine, discipline, and direction. We also see in 2 Corinthians 2.6 the voting of removing someone.
[37:59] That's 2 Corinthians 2.6 vote be inflicted by the majority. Well to have a majority you need to have a number.

You need to know how many are supposed to be there or are part of the body. And so church membership is I think very clear throughout the New Testament and stems from and leads to the most biblical view of church governance and best view of discipleship within the body.
Another book that I like to point out on this is Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever. I think this is a great book for all of us to read.
I'm very thankful to that resource and many other resources presented by Nine Marks. Our church, I don't know if you guys knew this, our church, I don't know who did it, but it is listed on the Nine Marks website as a church that adheres to these nine marks of a healthy church.
You can see in there the nine marks of a healthy church, expositional preaching, biblical theology, the gospel, a biblical understanding of conversion, a biblical understanding of evangelism, a biblical understanding of church membership, biblical church discipline, a concern for discipleship and growth, and biblical church leadership.

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[39:31] So those are the nine marks that it gives in that book and we're listed as a church that upholds to that and that's actually how I found Highland Park. First thing when I moved to Bartlesville is I got on their website and looked up churches in Bartlesville that adhere to nine marks.

And I was like that's just at least where I'm going to start. It was a starting place for me. And so I came here and didn't go anywhere else.
It worked out. So I'm very thankful for that. So thanks to whoever got us on that list as a church worked out for my family and I so I appreciate that.
But I was very excited to be here tonight talking about this topic because I love the church. And I get the blessing every day of interacting with both the universal church around the world and the local church.
I'm just in a unique position where that's possible. where every day I'm hearing of our brothers and sisters around the world facing persecution at the voice of the martyrs. And also every day I'm thinking of and getting ready and prepping for youth ministry here at a local church.
[40:48] And so I have a I think a unique blessing of being able to interact a lot with both local and universal. The universal church has blessed me greatly.

It encourages me, challenges me, leads me to greater commitment to Christ and the Great Commission. Reminds me that I have a family in Laos, India, Mexico, who are loving Jesus and sometimes suffering for Jesus.
And I love my local church. My degrees say SBU and Midwestern, but all of my discipleship, I credit all of my discipleship to the local church.
sitting under the regular preaching of God's word and men in the church discipling me. I give all credit to them for just who I am.
And so I'm a product of the local church and so I'm passionate about it. And that idea of being discipled by your local church, it's not something you ever grow out of.
[41:56] And so I'm excited that I'm here sitting under the regular preaching of God's word, teaching of God's word, and to be discipled just a greater faithfulness and greater obedience to the great commission.

Let me pray for us. God, we love you. I thank you for the church. God, I have greatly been blessed by it.
God, I'm thankful for it. Thank you for this church here in Bartlesville that regularly preaches your word, focuses on your word, leans on your word, and encourages others to your word, and challenges one another with your word.
And so God, I just thank you for this church. I pray, like I prayed at the beginning, that our theology would meet real life, that good theology does that.
And so I pray that we would be more unified, that we would abide in you, that we would love one another well, that we would, God, just stand strong against culture and against just any false teaching.
[43:28] God, I just pray that we would stand strong on your word, on the truth, and on the gospel, and that we would be a people that want to nurture one another and encourage one another towards you.

God, we love you and thank you for this evening. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.

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