

Church Life

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Date: 16 April 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning. I'm thankful to be here. I'm thankful for the songs that we've sung, especially the one that Tony was sharing there. For many years, Satan has tried to stop us, but Christ has not allowed that to happen. And that is the heart of God even today, that the church would stand together. The church is not broken. The church of God is not broken. Or is it?

So no matter if there's a few people that gather together, or if there's lots of people that gather together, if it's not on his foundation, then it's not his church. But if it's on his foundation, whether it be few or many, that is the church. We talked yesterday about purpose and vision, and that God would have us to have a purpose in our life. He has given a purpose for each one of us. And he wants us to have a vision as to what his purpose is. What is his desire for us?

This morning we want to talk some about church life. And I don't have all these words perfectly together on how I'm going to say these things, but may God just again speak to us through his word. His word is all about that. I'm going to share a little story first again. A story that happened 14 years ago to the north here in Alberta. It's again a story of what I experienced, what me and my wife experienced. We were going to different, visiting different little gatherings in Alberta. We were living right close to Calgary. And we just did not fit in with the people where we were gathering. I was making good money, very good money, never made so much money in the years since. And at that time, 14 years ago, I was making \$40 an hour for the work that I was doing.

And everything was going good as far as that. If we had just been concerned about where we were sitting at financially, we should have just stayed there. By now we would be probably multi-millionaires.

But God had a different plan and his purpose is that that is not our goal in life. Finances do not dictate us spiritually. Yes, yes, we need to. We need to have a job. We need to provide for our families.

[3 : 03] Very important. We know what the Word of God says about those who do not provide for their families. We are called. But God has a calling on our life. If we are his children, that we be part of his church.

And really, if we have really been born again, we have really repented and we have been baptized, according to Acts, we are part of the church, whether we act like it or not.

And so we need to be challenged in thinking of, you know, what is God's heart? If I say that I am a child of God, what am I actually saying? Does my life show that? It should work itself out in church life.

That will just naturally flow. So what I want to share with the story of what happened there. So me and my wife are there and we were living there for a year and three months. Financially, everything was just a bed of roses, if we want to say it that way.

It's going really good. We had one little boy and we had a car. We had everything we needed. So we should have just stayed there.

[4 : 21] But no, there was something that was missing. We are not gathering with those believers that we should be gathering with. And so I remember one evening sitting down with my wife and we started talking about these things.

And I got this idea in my head, this vision, that there is a gathering of sheep. And here I am, this lone sheep with my wife and our son.

And where is the wolf going to go? Now, yes, we know that he works in the churches and he tries to destroy and so on. But where is he going to go if there is one lone out there and there is a group of them together?

I was completely struck with that thought. So I said to my wife, I am quitting my job here and we are going to go back to Ontario.

And I think we could have moved to some place in Alberta where there would be a gathering where we could have possibly worked. But I knew that in Ontario there was a gathering where we could go to, where Christ's church was.

[5 : 40] So within the next month and a half maybe, we made a decision that we would sell all the things that we had there and we moved back to Ontario. And then we joined the church there.

So God's heart for us is that we would be together with God's people. Does God have a church with just one person?

Why did Christ say where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also? So there's going to be things that we want to read today. I want to start with this to emphasize that we need to have a vision that if I say I am a child of God, what am I saying?

Does God just have one child? Or does he have children? When I say that I am a child of God, I am saying, and my actions should speak this, that I am part of God's family.

When we read some verses here in 1 Corinthians 12, he talks about the body of Christ. Individually, we are members of that body.

[6 : 59] So to be some lone ranger off by myself and saying that I can follow God in that state, I'm not saying that for a time, sometimes we are not in a position like that.

But just as when we get converted, there's a desire to be baptized, I believe that every believer who gets converted has the same desire to be in fellowship with other believers. If that is missing or we have driven that away, something is not in order with Scripture.

Somewhere, the reality of where we are as a believer is not connecting with God's Word. Is that true?

So if we say we are walking with the Lord, like I said, the same desire that we have to be baptized, which should naturally flow out of becoming a believer, the same desire should be there that we want to fellowship with other believers.

If we believe that Christ's church has existed since it was founded, till today, though it has been through tribulation and much trials, and many have gotten killed even for standing up for the truth, but it still stands today like that song that was sung.

[8 : 13] Will Satan tries to stop us? Do you have a vision that you will stand, like what we talked about in prayer, and have purpose for the church in building the church of the Lord?

Or why do I come? Why do I meet with other believers? It's with purpose. The enemy wants to destroy this gathering. Am I going to just sit back and watch him do that?

Or am I going to battle? Am I going to fight for the church? Like a mighty army. We march onward. We fight. And how do we do that? By biting and devouring each other? No. But by standing on the firm rock, Jesus Christ, he is our foundation, the church's foundation, and we stand there together. And all those who commit themselves to walking out what the scriptures teach, we stand together in that. Something that really blessed me with being committed to the church in Mexico one of the conditions was to commit to love each other.

[9 : 34] Are you committed to loving those that are gathering with you? What does love look like? Sometimes love is hard. You know?

Maybe I have a piece of donut stuck on my beard, and it's not love to let me walk down the street and leave that thing hanging there. Maybe a very poor example. I would really feel loved if my brother then would tell me, look, I've got a donut on there.

Man, I know a whole donut hanging on a beard is obviously not going to happen, but sometimes there might be something in my life that I need some correction in, or I'm not seeing something. That's what we're here for. Are we committed to being open and allowing our brothers and sisters to speak into our life? Now, I have a whole bunch of verses today, and some of them are kind of scrambled and so on, but when we read through some of these verses, let's just see the heart of Christ in the church.

His heart is that we get corrected, so we can see clearly. Maybe our glasses or whatever, our eyes have become dim, and we need some correction.

[10 : 55] Are we committed to loving in such a way that somebody comes up to me and says, there's something I see, that I'm not right away like, well, I'm out of here. No, no. We're part of the church.

We've got to remember. We've got to go back to that. I'm part of the church because I want to walk with God. I want to be with God in eternity. Then I am also committed to allowing others to speak into my life.

Let's read these verses here in Revelation chapter 19. Verse 7 and 8.

I'm going to read this in Amplified. Let us rejoice and shout for joy, exalting and triumphant. Let us celebrate and ascribe to Him glory and honor for the marriage of the Lamb.

At last. Has come. And His bride has prepared herself. This is the bride. Do we take care of the bride?

[12:06] Or am I a spot on this bride's clothing? How I behave myself in the church, I can be a spot or a wrinkle.

And what do we do when we have a wrinkle in our clothing? When it's all crunched up? Our wives, they have this special gift. They take it onto this board and they iron it down.

Which shirt resists getting ironed? I know that's getting off track. But His bride has prepared herself. She has been permitted to dress in fine, radiant linen, dazzling and white.

For the fine linen is, signifies, represents the righteousness. The upright, just and godly living deeds and conduct and right standing with God.

Of the saints, God's holy people. I love how it words it here. The upright, just and godly living deeds, conduct and right standing with God.

[13:15] And that is something that we're in together. When He speaks of the bride, does He speak of one? No, He speaks of us together.

So are we helping each other? Is that what our purpose is and vision? That we're helping each other to continue to walk in this? Or are we right away a grump and have to leave when something gets a little strange?

Now, these words here are very important. Upright, just and godly living. There is a time, there is a time when people are so bent on ungodliness that there is a separation.

Because they have walked off of the stone. They have walked off of the rock. And we need not stand there and judge them. We need to remember that we need to focus on where we're standing. And we continue to walk with God.

And we seek those people who truly desire to live out what God's purpose is for the church. So again, let me just read this again.

[14:25] She has been permitted to dress in fine radiant linen, dazzling and white. For the fine linen is, signifies, represents the righteousness, the upright, just and godly living deeds and conduct and right standing with God of the saints.

God's holy people. There is something to live for right there as the church. Philippians 2, verse 2 through 4.

That is a challenge for us as human beings.

Christ? Somebody else better than me? That's what he says. That we are to esteem them better than ourselves. And that way what happens? The church gets built.

when I become high-minded and everybody has to, you know, watch me as I lift my nose real high, that doesn't build God's kingdom.

[15:39] And lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Exodus 19, verse 6, the Amplified, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, set apart for my purpose.

These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites. I thought this verse was interesting in light of what God's heart has been through the ages. God's heart has always been for a people. And we here in this generation are that people. We are called out. I wanted to read this verse to remind us of the beginning of this gathering.

And I put this in here. I don't know if this is a word, but set up or set apartness. We are set apart. That's why we're different.

That's why when things are flowing, you know, somebody might be in our gathering and they're going down a different stream than the narrow way, we don't walk there.

[16:50] Then we might call out, like I said, hey, Dan, you're going to fall off the bridge. And if Dan thinks that I love him, and he knows because I have walked in love towards him, he's going to be like, yeah, I don't see it right now, but I'm going to turn around.

There's going to be things like that that happen, and that's what the church is for. We're here to stand together. Now, remind yourself again of my story of what I experienced in Alberta. How can I do that when I'm alone on this acre?

Is it possible? Yes, God's spirit can speak to us, and he can direct us. He was. He was convicting me that I was not where I should be. That's what he's going to convict you of if you're out there alone.

And if he doesn't, then something is missing because his word teaches us that we're to be together. 1 Corinthians 12.

I want to read that chapter yet, but here's one of the verses, verse 27. Now, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. Are you alone the body of Christ, or does it say that you are a part of it?

[18:15] It says that you are individually members of it. It's made up of different members, the body of Christ. In one of my lines here, I have this thing that I wrote there.

Take your leg and try to let it walk off by itself. See how far it gets. How far is it going to get? I know, it's a very, very silly thing to even think about. Cut off a hand. What's it going to pick up? It needs the rest.

It needs every part there to function properly. Maybe you're, we talked about some of these things already, but are we, maybe you're a servant.

You know what? Your servanthood is fulfilled with other parts of the body. When your hand is moving to give something or supply something or serve somebody, there are others that are standing behind you.

[19:15] And we need to have that type of vision that we work together. So and so is serving. We talked about some of these things. You know, helping each other with the gifts that each one has or possesses.

I have some things that I looked up about the church. A church, in Christian doctrine, the Christian religious community as a whole or a body or organization of Christian believers.

Is Christ coming back for his church or is he coming back for an individual? There are cases where people cannot meet with other people and I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about when we have the opportunity to meet together and we neglect that. The Greek word ekklesia, which came to mean church, was originally applied in the classical period to an official assembly of citizens.

An assembly of citizens. In the Septuagint, Greek translation of the Old Testament, 3rd and 2nd century BCE, the term ekklesia is used for the general assembly of Jewish people, especially when gathered for a religious purpose such as hearing the law.

[20:28] In the New Testament, it is used of the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world, of the believers in a particular area, and also of the congregation meeting in a particular house, the house church.

Like today. This house church. What did Jesus mean by the word church? Isn't it interesting that in Matthew 16 and in Matthew 18, before the church was even formed, Jesus talks about the church. This just hit me the other day when I was thinking about that. In Acts, we see the church formed. But he speaks of the church already in his teachings.

The word translated church in the English Bible is ekklesia. This word is the Greek word kaleo, to call, with the prefix ekk, out.

Thus, the word means the called out ones. However, the English word church does not come from ekklesia, but the word kuriakon, which means dedicated to the Lord.

[21:46] Are you dedicated to the Lord? then you will have a desire to meet. You will have a desire to function with the other believers.

Because we are the called out ones. What are we called out of? You know, we could go down that line today, but we don't want to go there. The church is to be a people who are called out, who are set apart.

Why do we look different? Why do we do things different? Today, the mainstream church wants to look just like the world. It wants to act like the world. It wants to talk like the world. It wants to do exactly what the world wants to do.

It wants to follow the world, and yet it wants to be saved. Is that possible? No. So we don't need to feel strange about our strangeness.

We're following a Lord. We have a king over us. Jesus is our king. And he has said that we are his called out ones. And we are to be coming out from among those.

[22 : 54] And that in Matthew 16, 18, Jesus says he will build his church on a rock. He says a specific rock.

I want to read a list of verses here that I found very interesting about the rock. In the Old Testament, we find different places where it talks about a rock. In Psalm 18, verse 2, the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength and whom I will trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower.

Psalm 62, verse 2, he only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved. Psalm 18, verse 31, for who is God besides the Lord and who is the rock except our God? Psalm 18, verse 46, the Lord lives and blessed be my rock and may the God of my salvation be exalted. Deuteronomy 32, verse 18, listen to what he says.

You ignored the rock who brought you forth. You forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord is talking about himself.

[24 : 10] You ignored the rock who brought you forth. Psalm 19, verse 14, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

I thought it would be good to look at what we find about this rock. From what we find in the scripture, we can clearly see that when a rock is mentioned, it means God.

It's God. And when we read this verse again, Matthew 16, 18, Jesus says he will build his church on a rock. And I know there's the verse that talks about and probably right there or in a different place in Matthew where he talks to Peter.

It might be this place exactly, but, and he talks to Peter about building his church on a rock. And at times, you know, it's like, is he talking about Peter or is he, what's he talking about?

No, he's talking about himself. Are we founded on that rock? When we're founded on that rock, our personal life is founded on that rock, then we will be standing there together with all the other ones who are founded on that same rock.

[25 : 25] right here in Montana, if you are the people who are seeking God and who are seeking to obey him and wanting to walk with him and wanting his authority in your life, wanting his direction, you will stand together on that rock here.

If you find that you have a disinterest in gathering those who are truly founding their life on the rock, then you need to ask yourself, what direction am I going? where am I headed?

And like we talked about yesterday, what kind of purpose do you have in your life? Do you really want to follow God? Then this is part of that. It's not an individualistic mindset that we can just go off and be a lone ranger and be the body of Christ.

The church is built on the rock or on God. God is its foundation. When we think of this, we must see and believe that whatever we do as a church, that it must always have its foundation on God and his will.

The church seeks direction from God. We form the beliefs, the things that we do on his word, like what we talked about yesterday already too. Acts 4, verse 10 through 12, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name, this man stands here before you in good health.

[26 : 58] He is a stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

There's no other name. This rock, those who are founded, the church that is founded on this rock, there isn't a different church. This idea of there being, you know, a hundred different flavors of churches, there's a problem.

And some of it is actually contradictory to God's word because God has one church. And yet we read in Revelation, it talks about seven different churches, but they're in seven different places.

And they are also part of the same church. That's the church of Christ. And in that, we need to seek what is his heart, like what we talked about already.

What is Christ's purpose for the church? What does he want to bring forth out of the church? And I don't think I have all the answers today for you, but he has a purpose for the church.

[28 : 03] Yesterday, there was a couple times I really had to stop myself from saying some of those things, but he has a purpose for you together. And the way that you will work together, the community will see.

The way you're going to function together, the way that you are going to be following Christ. I have to think again, my sheep know my voice, and they follow me.

Does he say, my one sheep follows me? Or hears my voice? And he says, my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. Plural. We are the sheep.

And our ears need to be perked up to hearing what does Christ have to say to us. Right here. How that will all look, and what he will all want to do with the church here.

One thing is very clear. He wants you to minister. And when we are a lone ranger and we're ministering, to what church are we going to direct people to when we know that it's God's heart that they gather together if they get converted, where are we going to tell them to go?

[29 : 17] I found that in the past when I was trying, you know, I was in some difficult situations. And we're trying to minister, but it's like you run up to a wall. Well, what church do you go to?

Or where are you, well, it just doesn't, it doesn't work together. That's why we need to be committed to each other. It works together with God's word.

I found this interesting in Psalm 118, verse 22, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Same thing as what was written here in Acts. Who is part of the church?

If the church, the true church, is founded on the rock, then it is those who are truly standing on the rock, standing for truth, standing against untruth. What was it that they were saying?

Withstand? Stand and withstand. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the light. It is not those who stand on the flesh and put confidence on the direction of the flesh, making their own choices and saying that this is okay and that is okay.

[30 : 31] We stand together and we seek God for direction. And now, with this, we need to be careful that there might be things that we are doing as believers and somebody comes to the faith and then they don't look exactly like we do or, you know, don't understand some things clearly yet.

Then we look at what direction are they going? I just wanted to put this in here. It makes a difference. We don't squash them if they're coming in the right direction. We walk very carefully with them.

But those who are straying from the things of the word, then we encourage in a different way than those that are coming. In Acts 2, 37-47, again, we read these verses this week already, but who is part of the church?

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

[31 : 46] Then they that gladly received his word, whose word? God's word, were baptized. In the same day, there were added unto them about 3,000 souls.

What were they added to? Added unto them. The church. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Things that we, some of the things that we already talked about. How can you, and I know, I have these, some of these questions further down, but how can you have communion on your own?

There's no need for breaking the bread then, you can eat the whole thing. Can you do it? Even the word communion, community, you can't have it if you're standing alone somewhere.

That's something to do together. You cannot, what's the reason you'd break the bread? Or pass the cup around? Why would you do that when there's nobody else?

[33 : 00] All over the New Testament, you find that when you look at some of these elements, it's about togetherness. It's about working together. The fear came upon every soul.

Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles, and all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having

favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. This goes back to what I was saying about how are you going to witness to people?

What are you going to bring them to if God's heart is to have them in the church? Where are you going to bring them? That has to be there.

That's why we seek fellowship with those who walk and are founded on this rock, the church. Those who have repented and been baptized.

[34 : 07] The question here was, who is part of the church? Those who believe and obey the scriptures. Jesus says, if you love me, obey me. Those who are eager to be taught the truth after conversion.

Not single-mindedness or not being under that teaching. We find that right here in Acts. What were these people eager to do? This is the example we find in scripture.

They were eager to be taught the truth. You can't tell me what to do. Well, has God not given the church authority? He's given the church authority to do what?

To teach their own list of rules? No. To teach the scriptures. And when the church does that and we want to stray from that, we are walking in error.

Those who believe and obey the truth. can a single person then be the church? Just a question. How would they perform a baptism on themselves?

[35 : 19] I know these are very silly questions, but I'm throwing them out there because I was really brainstorming. How does it work that one person can be a church? Does it work?

You can't live out what the scriptures teach. Hebrews 10 verse 25. Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

And then the last part in this verse. And all the more as you see the day drawing near. Are we seeing the day drawing near? Are we seeing things happen that the scriptures teach?

Things are being fulfilled. Wickedness is increasing. Lawlessness is increasing. Do we see this day drawing near? Yes.

Then all the more we should be sticking together with one heart and one purpose and that is to pursue the things of God. Not neglecting to meet.

[36 : 21] Not God's heart. For what? Why do we meet together? Here we find a purpose. Why do we meet together? To encourage one another. together. Because this life has its hardships.

It has things that we have struggles with. We're together to encourage each other. Fight on brother. Fight on sister. Don't give up. We need each other.

Can you do that single-handedly? Can you sit there at home and be the church alone and encourage yourself there? The way that you can be encouraged when you come to a meeting, a gathering, when they're singing?

Just the atmosphere that it brings when the family of God is together. Can you do that at home? Yes. Sometimes we can sing a song and God can encourage us. I'm not talking about that. But there's things that we are going to absolutely miss if we are not willing to meet together, be committed.

Hebrews 3 verse 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God. Verse 13.

[37 : 35] But exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

today, maybe one of you is sitting here and you have, you know, lost the vision. Maybe you have lost sight of what is God's heart for the church.

Today we want to encourage you the same way as what it talks about. You have come here. We want to encourage you. Commit yourself to be fully standing on the rock. The church is founded on the rock.

Again, especially in light of the time that we are living in. Romans 15, verse 2. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up.

1 Corinthians 14, verse 26. What then shall we say, brothers, when you come together? Everyone has a psalm or a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All of these must be done to build up the church.

[38 : 48] The word church many times is used here. Colossians 3, verse 16, that the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

How can you do that if you're not willing to meet with God's people? Ephesians 5, verse 19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Really out of a heart of gratitude, praising God, is he worthy of this? I wanted to just put this in here. The other day, a few weeks ago, I was spending some time in prayer, and just thinking, you know, maybe this is a little bit off from what we're talking about here, but when we are coming before God, and it's Christ's heart, even as a church, when we meet together like this, do we meet together with this purpose that God will be glorified? So here, when I was praying, I just all of a sudden, in my mind, I just had to, you know, bow my heart before God, and I just pictured, you know, kneeling right before him, like some of the stories that we read in his word, and just picturing that, you know, I'm right there in front of his feet, and I see these scars in his feet, and I see these scars in his hands.

[40 : 24] And when we focus on Christ and what his heart is, for his people, there was nothing around me that I could think of right then. I was just like so focused on who is he?

And that should be our attitude when we meet together. Who is he? Our direction. We meet together for him. And when we meet together for him, he gives us his purpose.

Acts 16, verse 25. And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. And this is kind of in light of worshiping, spending time in prayer, corporate worship in prayer.

There are needs all around us. If we bring these needs together, we can seek the Lord together on behalf of these needs. The story was already talked about, about Peter. And I'm still going to read it here, though.

Acts 12, starting verse 5. So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was fervently praying to God for him. Again, where do we find the church? We find them together.

[41 : 37] We're seeking God together. We have purpose in seeking God together in prayer. On the night before, Herod was to bring him to trial. Peter was sleeping between the two soldiers, bound with two chains, with sentries standing guard at the entrance to the prison.

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him up, saying, Get up quickly. And all, I'm sorry, and the chains fell off his wrists. Get dressed and put on your sandals, said the angel.

Peter did so. And the angel told him, Wrap your cloak around you and follow me. So Peter followed him out, but he was unaware that what the angel was doing was real. He thought he was only seeing a vision.

They passed the first and second guard and came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened for them by itself. When they had gone outside and walked the length of one block, the angel suddenly left him.

And Peter came to himself and said, Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's grasp and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating. Why was this happening?

[42 : 35] Was he there alone? No, he was there with the church. The heart of the church was right there with him. And when he had realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered together and were praying.

He knocked at the outer gate and the servant girl named Rhoda came to answer it. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she forgot to open the gate or ran inside and announced, Peter is standing at the gate.

You are out of your mind, they told her. But when she kept insisting it was so, they said, it must be his angel. But Peter kept on knocking and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded. Peter motioned with his hand for silence and he described how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

Send word to James and to the brothers, he said. And he left for another place. I just wanted to read this story in light of purpose, why we meet together.

God wants to do things. And when we call on him together, there's power in us being together.

[43 : 41] When his body, his whole body, pursues him. Now, we need not seek God only for experience, but in the reality of walking with him, experience him.

So it's not that we only want to now have this vision that we want to meet together because we want to experience all kinds of things. The main thing that we want to experience is him. We want to be in his presence.

So it's not for some show or something like that. But when things like this happen, because we've been together, we're praying for a specific person and they get saved, then there's going to be rejoicing when they walk through the door.

You're going to miss out if you're going to be a lone ranger. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 12.

Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

[45 : 04] You know that you were Gentiles carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led. Wherefore, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus a curse, and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Now, there are diversities of gifts for the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations for the same Lord. This is so important. Though we stand on the same rock together, we have different callings.

And there are diversities of operations, but in the same God. But it is the same God who worked with all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all.

For to one is given the Spirit, the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit, to another faith, by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another diverse kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

But all these worketh that one and same self Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. So why does he do that?

[46 : 25] So that we can be alone somewhere? No, so that we can work together. Because we need each one. Each one of these is needed. This is not, he doesn't give this because he wants one just to be alone somewhere.

But this is for building up the body. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit, we are all baptized into one body. Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many. One member, not one, just one single, but a body.

Many members. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? I know, these verses are very familiar to us. But it is so clear, the gift that you have, will God be able to use it if you are just some lone ranger?

[47 : 37] He wants to use it in the body. And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, am I not of the body?

Is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more of those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And could I say this? And we sometimes talk, you know, God doesn't necessarily need us, but you're needed.

You're needed. If you're pursuing God, you're needed right here in Plains, Montana, to be part of His true church. Even though you seem to, maybe you think that you're feeble, or you know, the gift that you have doesn't really, where is it going to be used?

[48 : 54] If you don't bring the gift that you have, then it can't be used. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness, for our comely parts have no need.

But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now here are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles, have all the gifts of healing, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret, but covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

[50 : 04] And then we know that he talks about the way of love. That is the thing that we seek together. We can have gifts that God has given to us, but we do not look down on the other one that might not have the same gift as I have.

But we walk in love towards him, and we try to build that gift in that person. And you cannot, again, you can't do that if you're somewhere up, by not being willing to gather.

Very important. So, this togetherness is not something we've dreamed up. It's not something that we've put together. No, this is the heart of God.

It's God's heart. And the true church of Christ is not divided, because they seek after him. They seek after God. In Ephesians 2, verse 22, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Built together. When you come together, is it so that God can dwell here? Are you being built up, built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit?

[51 : 26] 1 Peter 2, verse 4 through 8. And coming to him as to a living stone, which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God.

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

for this is contained in Scripture. We are a spiritual house together for God. God will be seen when we purpose to be this place. Do you have that type of vision?

Do you have that type of purpose? That you are meeting together with the brothers and sisters, because you know that alone you are not that house. Yes, we are individually members of it.

It's not what I'm talking about, but the church. Do you have that purpose, that you want to be here, and be part of that spiritual house, where that cornerstone is Christ.

[52 : 28] The solid foundation is Christ. The direction we take is Christ. The authority over our lives is Christ. The authority we find in God's Word, the things that are clearly spelled out, how the church should operate with different gifts, leadership, the gifts in ministry.

What is that purpose? Why do we have those? And in Ephesians, I think, for it is, it talks about why. For the work of the ministry. Because God has a ministry that he wants you to do as a church, right here.

I had to think of this Amish couple that we saw riding in on their cart, or buggy, or whatever it is, the other day, when we were going to Dan Steere's place.

So we saw them when we were going to their house, and we saw them when we came back. Does God have something for the church here for them? Maybe some of you are going to go visit there.

Or you're going to go visit there together. Even if one couple goes there from here, or one couple goes to visit there, or a single person goes to visit there, you're representing the church.

[53 : 48] You're not representing yourself. But if they should get converted, you will bring them to the gathering. Christ will bring them to the gathering.

So you have purpose. It's that you be encouraged, that you admonish each other, challenge each other, but then you also have a vision that you reach those that are lost around you.

That's what Christ's heart is. Christ has a body, and it is not divided, as some would have us believe.

The true body of Christ is not divided. What brings divisions, and what brings strife and things into the church, is when we have to bring our own ways of thinking in, when we don't truly seek out what God's word says.

Or we bring our own agenda in, our own rules, and different things. Or maybe it's that we don't want to follow the scripture.

[55 : 02] Somebody brings that in. Well, I don't really want to follow that. I don't really want to obey that. That brings separations. But the body of Christ is still not divided. That's why you're here together.

I know the church here has suffered through some things, and I don't know all the details. But why are you here together? Is it because your heart is after God?

Or is it that you have some personal agenda? No, I believe from fellowshiping with you this week that you have a purpose, that you want to seek God. You want to be founded continually on this rock.

You want to go the eternal path. You want to live as those who are called out. And that brings separation.

That brings separation when we get converted. That should not wander us when people are going astray from truth, walking away from that which is scriptural, that there's a separation.

[56 : 10] And it grieves us. It's not that we go through situations like that rejoicing. It grieves us. But we seek to gather with those who are standing on that rock.

And all those that have gathered here this morning that have that heart, that's why you're here.

That's why you're here. Did you come to give to the church or to receive?

Both are not wrong. There's a time when we have to come because we have a need. And when we have something to contribute, then we need to give that too.

So however we came this morning, as we fellowship together now at noon here, do you have something to give? A question I have here yet, and I didn't go into all these verses, but does the church have authority?

And I think I talked a little bit about that. The church has authority. And when we read in Matthew 18 where Jesus says that we are to bring such and such cases to the church, it's for correction.

[57 : 23] It's not to destroy. It's to bring correction. The church has authority. We have to establish that in our hearts. Can the church bring correction?

Yes. If they are walking out what the scriptures teach, the church has that authority to bring correction. Jesus talks about the church.

He shares a crucial function of the church which we don't like to think about, which is discipline. It's something we don't like to think about. I don't know why I have this on the bottom of my notes here, but it's something that is very important.

If you don't bring correction to children, what happens to the children? Eventually they will just go off. And that's why correction has brought us to keep us together, to keep us focused on why are we here, on Christ.

And then I talked about committing to love, committing to building the church. So again, I just want to challenge us.

[58 : 34] Commit to love each other. And if up until today maybe you haven't felt like you're committed to the true church of Christ, make it your aim to be committed because He has a church.

Christ has a church. It's the gathering of believers, those who pursue Him. So, may God bless His Word.

I'm sure there are many things that I didn't think about sharing. But may you just take what God's Word says and just really believe like what was shared this morning already when Dan shared that his sister was changed.

Believe this. This is God's Word. The church is not our own idea. It's something that God made.

And when we believe that, then we can function there.

God bless you.