

Church: God Acts

Lecture Transcript

- When I originally wrote the doctrine book, I'd been preaching the Bible every week for about 10 years. I wrote it in my 30s. It's been an additional 10 years. And so I'm doing the revisions. This is one of the sections that has the most revisions, some things that I've sort of rethought. And in addition it'll be one of the sections where we cover a lot of scripture. So a lot of this is just going to be reading the Bible. And ultimately what we're looking at is Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose, Jesus ascended back into heaven, and then what happened? This is the church. These are the people of God in the presence of God declaring the praises of God. And as I told you previously, the church of Jesus Christ is the largest, longest standing, most multicultural, multi-global, multinational, bilingual movement of any sort or kind in the history where there's nothing bigger than the church. There's no nation bigger than the church. There's no empire bigger than the church. There's no movement bigger than the church. The church of Jesus Christ is the biggest thing to ever hit the world. And it has brought, and I'll just defend this to my death, the greatest good. We have education because of the church. We have hospitals because of the church. We have mercy for those who are poor and suffering because of the church. We have dignity for human life because of the church. We have opposition to slavery because of the church. That if it weren't for the church of Jesus Christ, nothing in western civilization would be the same and nothing would be better. And so I don't make any apologies for the church. I believe that God works through his imperfect church, but the good news is this, a perfect God can do perfect work even through imperfect people, and that's the church. So that being said, we're gonna read a lot of scripture. And I'm gonna to start with how did Jesus prepare his people for the coming church? He says this in Matthew 16:18, I will build my church. What I love about that is, the church belongs to Jesus, not you and not me. Sometimes really bad things happen when the pastor thinks this is my church, but Jesus already said, it's my church. Or when people walk in and say, "We want, or we demand 'cause this is our church." No, no, no. This is Jesus' church. If it's Jesus' church, then who do we need to ask what we're supposed to do? Him. He's the owner. So if Jesus owns the church, the church is his people in possession, then our first job should be to seek him and say, okay, it's your church, what do you want? And we like to say, then that the church should be run kingdom down, not pew up, thrown down, not pew up. And it doesn't mean that we neglect people, we love them, but we don't ask them, what do you want? We ask Jesus, what do you want for them? What do you want for them? 'Cause He knows what's best. I will promise, build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Are gates offensive or defensive? They're defensive. I've never seen anybody march into war with a gate. A gate is defensive. What this means is that Jesus is on offense, the church is moving forward and it is kicking down gates where demonic work and hell and sin resides. So it's our opportunity if someone is locked up and they're in addiction or slavery to some sort of substance or behavior, Jesus wants the church to come in and to kick that gate open and free that person. It's about liberation. It's about deliverance. It's about setting captives free. And it's about the church of Jesus Christ kicking gates down. He says this as well in John 14:16, 17, 25, 26, I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, non-Christians don't have the Holy Spirit. This is how we know who the people of God are. The people of God are

the people with the Holy Spirit. And the people who do not receive the Holy Spirit are not the people of God. That's what he's saying. The primary distinction from God's perspective between a believer and an unbeliever is this person is filled with the Spirit and this person has rejected the Spirit. That ultimately there is no spiritual life without the Spirit. You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. Here's the question. Jesus is on earth. God is with us. He's gonna die. He's gonna rise. And then what happens after 40 days? He ascends. He goes back up. And then the question is, have we been abandoned? Is this like the dad who walked out on us when we were little and we never see him again and we're on our own? And what Jesus says is, I will not leave you as orphans. When I go, you still won't be alone. I will come to you. These things I've spoken to you while I'm still with you, but the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. So what he's saying is, I'm gonna go away, but don't worry, it's going to be okay. The third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ will come and God will be present with you through the Spirit in you. That's exactly what he's promising for us as believers. In addition, he says in John 16, it is to your advantage that I go away. Now, here's why it is our advantage. When Jesus incarnated in a body in a time and a place, he was limited to that time and place by virtue of the fact that he accepted those limitations in his humanity. Once the Holy Spirit is released and unleashed, we now have access to God's presence at all times. We don't need to get on a plane and go to the Middle East and find someone. The Holy Spirit comes to be with us wherever we happen to be. And that's what he is referring to. It is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth for he will not speak on his own authority, whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come, he will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. To summarize all of this. Jesus is saying, I'm gonna build my church by sending the Holy Spirit. I'm gonna build my church by sending the Holy Spirit. The reason I've had a bit of a change in my thinking is this, and we'll deal with this when we get into the definition of the church, Christians have often debated, well, how do we define delineate the church? Those who are Catholic would say, well, Peter was the first pope and there's succession. There's people authority and succession through the church. So the true church is that which follows in the wake of Peter. But yet they would even say that there were multiple popes who were completely godless and political leaders using the church for their own gain. So how can it be succession through ungodly leaders who don't have the Holy Spirit. The reformers will come along and say that the church is basically wherever the word of God is rightly preached, and the sacraments are rightly administered that constitutes and qualifies for the church. We'll get into this. I believe in the sacraments, but you can do those things and they mean nothing without the Holy Spirit. If you don't have the Spirit, baptism does nothing. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, a sermon does nothing. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, communion does nothing. None of these things have the power to change you apart from him. And so my definition, my understanding of the church is, of course it's a little ambiguous, of course, it's a little confusing, of course it's a little clear, because it is the presence and the power of the person of the Holy Spirit that causes the church to come into existence. And that the church are the people with the Spirit. The people with the Spirit. And you know this, right? For those of you who are believers, you might meet someone. They don't even go to your church, or they're

not in part of your tradition and you meet them, you're like the Holy Spirit is in them. They love Jesus. They hate sin. They're family. That's how we know who the church is and what the church is. It's by the presence and the demonstration of the work of the person of the Holy Spirit. Now, this being said, the next question is what is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church? So we'll go over to Acts. We're gonna read a lot of Bible. Acts chapter one. In the first book, O Theophilus, what's the first book? Luke. The number one contributor by virtue of content to the New Testament is Luke. He wrote two historical books and his gospel Luke is the only one that is chronological. Acts is also chronological. He was a historian traveling companion of Paul. He was a medical doctor and in his first book, he showed us how the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and Jesus was filled by the Spirit and led by the Spirit and lived by the Spirit. And then Jesus returns to heaven. And then the question is, well, what now? As Jesus goes up in the book of Acts, his sequel, the Holy Spirit comes down. Just as the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus so the Holy Spirit descends upon the church as the Holy Spirit empowered the life of Christ. So the Holy Spirit empowers the life of Christians. That we continue the legacy and ministry of Jesus by the person, the presence, the power of the Holy Spirit. And so he's writing here to the one who is believed to be the benefactor that funded the project, Theophilus who was probably a political leader. I've dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up. After he had given commands through the Holy Spirit, to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days, speaking about the kingdom of God and while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise from the Father. Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose, Jesus appeared for 40 days, and then Jesus went up into heaven and he told everybody to wait because something needed to happen. The next slide. It goes on to say, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Not many days from now, you will receive what? Power. The demonstration of the Spirit's presence is supernatural power. And one of the greatest demonstrations of supernatural power is a non-Christian becomes a Christian. That's a miracle. The Holy Spirit does that. And occasionally the Holy Spirit will show up with supernatural signs, wonders, miracles, because the Holy Spirit is bringing the kingdom of God to the earth. And so here we are in the culture on the earth, the kingdom of God is separated from us. The Holy Spirit comes down to bring the kingdom down and now we can live kingdom down instead of culture up. And the church is the place between the culture and the kingdom, where the people are filled with the Spirit belong to the Lord, bring the message to the culture, but ultimately are headed to the kingdom. You get all of that? So it's all about the Holy Spirit. There is no understanding or power or enlightenment or transformation or regeneration. Nothing happens without the Holy Spirit. I just feel inclined to say this, it's not in my notes, but I was in a theological group with a bunch of professors some years ago, and we were working through some issues and they kept saying the gospel saves people, the gospel bursts the church, the gospel does this, the gospel does that. I said not without the Holy Spirit. Judas heard the gospel, but didn't have the Spirit. Judas met Jesus and didn't have the Spirit. It all comes down to this issue. Do you have the Spirit? If you do everything will work itself out. If you don't, nothing will work itself out. And that's what he's saying. Wait, you want to go tell everybody, you want to do ministry, you want to start a movement, wait for the Holy Spirit and he'll bring you supernatural power. That's why the church, despite disorganization, despite conflict, despite schism, despite failure, despite inefficiency is the biggest thing in the history of

the world because it's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I'll just add this as well. The book of Acts is often called the Acts of the what? The apostles. I would rewrite the title to be the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Because if you read the book of Acts, anything that the apostles did was by the power of the Holy Spirit. And apart from the Spirit, they didn't do anything. If you look at the apostles before they got the Holy Spirit, they were denying and doubting Christ, and then they become bold for Christ because the power of the Spirit empowered them for Christian life and ministry. Get back to the text. You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, how many days from now? You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses. The Holy Spirit empowers us for mission, for evangelism, to extend the influence of our king and his kingdom in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. It's showing you start where you live, you work out to your city, your region and the nations. And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. Jesus ascends back into heaven. And they're supposed to wait. That's an act of faith. I've actually been to this place where they believe that Jesus ascended from. And just imagine that moment. Jesus is alive. Jesus died. Oh no, Jesus is back. Hey, Jesus. 40 days later, Jesus is leaving. And they're watching him go. This had to be a thing. How many of you just wish you were there? There he goes. It's like the balloon going up. Like there he goes. And now what? Wait, but Jesus is alive. Yes. But wait, because without the Holy Spirit, you can't do anything significant, successful for the kingdom of God. You're gonna need the Holy Spirit. So they are instructed to wait. And what he's saying is the Holy Spirit will come upon you, he'll do a work in you, and then he'll cause you to be my witnesses. So here's how we like to say it. God works for you, in you, through you. That's how I like to say it. And when he talks about here is Jesus died on the cross for your sins. That's God's work for you. Then the Holy Spirit will come upon you. And John told us, or Jesus told us in John, that he would live in us. So that's the work of the Holy Spirit in us, and then being witnesses and the birthing of the church. That's the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit through us. A lot of times, my opinion, when the Bible talks about grace and the Holy Spirit, it's talking in large part about things that are synonymous. That the grace of God is unleashed and applied through the power of the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit shows up the grace and power of God come with him. And so ultimately the way I see all of this is that all of Christian life, all of Christian ministry, all of Christian Church is about the Holy Spirit. And if he is present, certain things happen that are only attributable to the presence of God's power at work. And again, God works for you, in you, through you. The church is God working through you. When you give, when you serve, when you participate, when you bless, when you use your gifts, you are being used of the Holy Spirit to join Jesus in his mission to build his church, which is awesome. Now our life has purpose. We're part of something. We know why we're here. We've got a cause to get behind. And it's not just a cause, it's Christ. So they wait. And here's what happens. Many of you know this very well 'cause you're familiar with the scriptures, but we'll revisit it. How did the church begin? So they're waiting. What are they waiting for? Waiting for God the Holy Spirit. Acts two. When the day of Pentecost, that's a Jewish holiday. They'd all get together. Take the day off. People would go to the temple from lots of different regions, languages, groups. They were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from where? Heaven. The Holy Spirit, he comes from heaven. He comes down. He comes down. One commentator I read said, Jesus went up, the Spirit came down and the church went forth. That's God's movement. Jesus went up, the Spirit came down and the

church went forth. And what he's talking about here, the kingdom of God shows up. A sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting, and divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each of them. I believe that this is an appearance of God's divine council. There is a scholar named Michael Heiser who's written on this quite extensively. It's sort of the leading edge of some of this Old Testament study. But I would agree with his conclusion. As we dealt with in an earlier lecture, God has two realms in one reality. He has a supernatural Spirit realm where he has angels and also what are called the sons of God, as well as other Spirit beings. We dealt with all of this in a previous lecture. So God has a divine family of spiritual beings. And then he has a human family of physical beings and that's us. And the divine council is present at creation and they're working with God, and they're like his staff and servants. And here, God wants his human family to join his divine family in supernatural ministry. And so what happens here, the two realms come together at once. The divine council shows up with these people and is going to see the Holy Spirit, regenerate them, save them, transport them, fill them, empower them, commission them to do ministry. What this means is when you step out in faith, if you're a person with the Holy Spirit, let me say this to you, somebody will ask, how do I know if I have the Spirit? If you love Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit. No one could say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. You'd be like, I love Jesus and he's my God. You have the Holy Spirit. That's how you know. Because the Holy Spirit's job is to bring you to Jesus. That's his first ministry for you. But once you have the Holy Spirit and you step out to have God work through you and do ministry, you are participating with the unseen realm. You are participating with a heavenly host. You're participating with the angels and the angelic. And I'm way off my notes. But where this really struck me is in Revelation one, two and three, there are churches. Every church is said to have an angel. Because ministry can't be done without the participation of the divine council and the heavenly host. What that means is our church has an angel. I don't know what our angel is or named. But I know that in addition to the physical people who are serving, there are spiritual beings who are also protecting. This is how it's going to be forever. The day will come when the realms come together and the children of God from the unseen realm are together forever with the children of God in the seen realm. And in the meantime, the key is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to, here's what Revelation says, hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So our job as the people of God is to say, okay, Holy Spirit, what are you saying to us? And what are you calling us to do? And what am I supposed to contribute? And what's my participation so that you can work through me? I love the fact that we get to die and go to heaven. I really love the fact that we have something to do before we go there. And that's to be filled with the Spirit, to participate in sacred things, to extend the kingdom of God and to introduce people to Jesus, because he's amazing. And suddenly there came from heaven, a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and entire house where they were sitting was filled, divided tongues of fire appeared to them and resonates to them. Again, I think that's the divine council showing up, and they're all like, "What is happening?" And they were all, what? Filled with the Holy Spirit. I wrote a whole book called "Spirit-Filled Jesus." Before Acts says that the church was filled with the Spirit, Luke in his first book says that Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was filled by the Spirit. He was led by the Spirit. He was empowered by the Spirit. And so what does it mean to be spirit-filled? It means to be like Jesus. Sometimes when we talk about being spirit-filled, we'll just pick the weirdest people who do the strangest things and say, well, they must have the Spirit. No, no.

What it means to be spirit-filled is to be like, Jesus. Jesus lived by the person presence, power of the Holy Spirit. He ascends into heaven. Everybody's excited. We got to go tell everybody about the resurrection. He's like, not yet. You're gonna need the Holy Spirit. If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit, you need the Holy Spirit. If Jesus lived by the Holy Spirit you can only live by the Holy Spirit. If he was the helper who helped Jesus, you really need him to help you. And as a church family, we need him to help us. And that's what the Holy Spirit's ministry is and does. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. There's the concept of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit is the one who decides what gifts you. Some of you have administration. Some of you, you have gifts of teaching or encouragement or mercy or service. The Holy Spirit decides sort of what your role is and what your thing is to be. And here it's the beginning of the giving of gifts with the speaking in tongues. And the speaking in tongues, let me just, I don't want to get deep into this, but it's there so I'll hit it quickly. Sometimes when the Bible speaks of speaking in tongues, it is a speaking gift where Jesus loves them and you don't speak their language. And God gives you the supernatural ability to speak a known earthly language so that they can learn about Jesus. Missionaries will give this report. They're like, "I went into this place and I met these people and I didn't know their language. And I talked, and I'm talking their language." That's overcoming what happened at the Tower of Babel by the coming of the Spirit. And that's the bridging of the gap between the nations and languages of the earth. Sometimes speaking in tongues seems to be a hearing gift. Like one person will talk and they all hear in their own language. Their own language. It's almost like you're at a United Nations meeting and one person is speaking, but all the different delegates have translators that are translating into their language. It's like the Holy Spirit is doing that for everyone at the same time. Sometimes it's a speaking ability of a known earthly language. Sometimes it is a hearing ability where something is said, but God allows you to hear it in your language so you understand it. And sometimes when it uses the language of tongues, it's speaking about a heavenly language, an angelic language, where Paul says, if I pray in the tongues of men and angels, seems to me like tongues might be the language of heaven. America's got a language, Russia's got a language, China's got a language, heaven's got a language. And this is the language of God. And this is the language of God's divine beings. And sometimes when we pray, the Holy Spirit in us is connecting us to the unseen realm. And this ability to pray in tongues is praying in the supernatural language of the kingdom of God. Just so you know, I believe in all of this. And I believe the Bible is clear and I believe in the history of the church, it wasn't really debated until more recent days. And something called cessationism came into existence. And cessationism says that God did things that he doesn't do anymore. And this would mean that the supernatural gifts have ceased, but scripture and church history prove that to be wrong. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. And we need all of these gifts in operation until Jesus returns. Once Jesus returns, says in first Corinthians 13, when the perfect comes the imperfect passes away. And some would say, oh, well, the Bible is perfect. And once we got the closed canon of the Bible, we don't need all the spiritual gifts and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And I would say, no. It says, when the perfect comes, we will see him face-to-face. What it's talking about is until Jesus comes back, we need all of the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives. In heaven, we won't need the gift of healing. Amen. If you have a gift of healing, thank you for that. In heaven, I'm just telling you, you'll retire. We're not gonna need that. There are certain gifts that we need until we're in the eternal state and all the work is

completed. And the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us for that work. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. Next. And at this sound, the multitude came together. All the people are like, "What is going on?" Like this is different. We come all the time. Every year we come for this holiday, we've never really seen the tongues of fire, felt the rushing wind and seen the angels show up. What in the world? This is different. And they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in what? His own language. But Peter standing with the 11, he's the leader, lifted up his voice and addressed them. This is the birth of the New Testament church. What brings, or I should say it better this way. Who brings the New Testament church into existence? The Holy Spirit. There's no church until the Holy Spirit shows up. You can have a building, but you don't have a church. You can have people, but you don't have a church unless the Holy Spirit shows up. And once the Holy Spirit shows up, you get Christians and they are the church. And so it's really all about is the Spirit present and are people surrendered, submitted to the Spirit. That's really how the church comes into being. And it starts with a sermon, which I love. I think that's a good idea. Peter, standing with the 11 lifted up his voice and addressed them. But this is what it was uttered through the prophet, Joel. He is saying, oh, the Bible told us this was gonna happen. And he quotes Joel, "In the last days, it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out," it sort of has this language of lavishness and generosity. Amen. If somebody pour something for you, it's like, oh, that's a large portion. I'm gonna pour out my Spirit, God says, on all flesh, I will pour out my Spirit, they shall prophesy, that's speaking in God's name and anticipating the future. And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below. So the church is the outpost of the kingdom of God. It's where the Holy Spirit he is present. And he saves and he transforms and he blesses and he gifts. And he unleashes people to bring the kingdom of God, and as the kingdom of God moves forward through the church, and let me just say this. The big issue is not the church, it's the kingdom. The church will come to an end. The kingdom of God will endure forever. The church is the outpost. It's the beginning of the unveiling of the kingdom of God. It's God's inauguration of his kingdom, but it's not the full unveiling of his kingdom just yet. We'll get into that when we get into the doctrine of the kingdom. But what makes the church significant and important is the presence of the Spirit and demonstrations of the power of the kingdom of God. When people are saved, when people are healed, when prayers are answered, when supernatural things happen that only God can get credit for, we say the Holy Spirit is in our midst and he is doing work. And that is evidence that Jesus is Lord. And that is proof that the Spirit has come down. And that is certainty that the kingdom of God is real. And this is only the beginning. In addition, they then start doing things. So the Holy Spirit did something. He descended with the divine council, and then the people start doing things. So again, God's work for you, in you, through you. Jesus died for them. The Holy Spirit descended upon them, took up residence in them. And then God the Holy Spirit causes them to start doing things. So God is working through them. We call these the marks of the church. That's typically what Protestants call it. When the Holy Spirit shows up, people start doing things they weren't doing before. Some change happens. And this is what we find in Acts chapter two, beginning in verse 37. One of the marks of the church. As they hear Peter's sermon, and I'm just going to deal with a portion of Acts, they were cut to the heart. You know what that is? The ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit will come and convict us. They're convicted. We're sinners, and we killed Jesus. They're cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the

apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent." And let me say, God creates Satan counterfeits. The counterfeit of repentance is tolerance. Tolerance says, there's nothing wrong with me, repentance says, yes, there is. Tolerance says I should celebrate this and repentance says, no, you should crucify this. Tolerance says nothing needs to change, and repentance says, no, you need to change. This is why repentance is always difficult. And why the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ must include repentance. And that's why for some, the preaching of the gospel is offensive, 'cause it's saying, you're the problem, not the solution, you need Jesus. You're spiritually dead apart from the Spirit's work. Repent and be, what? Baptized. Every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So those who received his word were baptized. They were added about 3000 souls. So they went from 120 to 3,120 in a day. I'm sure their bathrooms were worse than ours. And they devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Next slide, please. And now came upon every soul. Jesus did what in your life? And Jesus did what in your life? And many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles and all who believed were together and had all things in common. Now they're generous and they're taking care of one another. Now they're acting like family. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all. You don't have any food, well, you're my brother, you're my sister, I'll feed you. You need a house, come live with us. Your car broke down, here's the keys. When people have the Holy Spirit, their behavior starts to change. We call those the marks of the church. And day by day, attending the temple together, these are large meetings. And breaking bread in their homes, these are small meetings, and communion meals. They received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God, having favor with all the people and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. People are becoming Christians. So let me give you the simple summary. What are the marks of the church out of what happens in Acts two? The Holy Spirit does a work in them, does a work through them, applying the work of Jesus for them. And the actions are not things that people are doing so that they can have a relationship with God. It's the Holy Spirit compelling people to do certain things. How many of you know what I'm talking about? That for you, you're reading your Bible, you're praying, you're walking with God because the Holy Spirit has given you new desires. That's what you want to do. That's what makes you happy. That's what brings you joy. You're now fulfilling your God-given destiny and purpose. And so I would say based upon what we see in Acts chapter two, here are eight marks of the church. Believers born again of the Spirit. So again, how do you know who the Christians are? Those are the people with the Holy Spirit. Well, how do we know if they've a Holy Spirit? They really love Jesus. And they've turned from sin and trusted in him. Those are the people. Those are the people. And sometimes we can make this too complicated. Sometimes when you go to another country or you're ministering in a rural area, it's really simple. It's like, I love Jesus, I have the Holy Spirit and he's changing my life. And sometimes we get so tied up in our denominations, in our traditions, in our, are you in the right group or the wrong group? We forget that there's one group and that's the people who have the Spirit. And if they have the Spirit, they're family. Believers born again of the Spirit. Spirit-led leadership. It says that Peter and the other leaders are filled with the Holy Spirit to lead what is the unveiling in the inauguration of God's church. It says in Acts six, when they go to a point, additional leaders, one of the qualifications is find people who are filled with the Holy Spirit. It's exactly

what it says. It's exactly what it says. Somebody can go to seminary, but it doesn't help unless they're filled with the Holy Spirit. Somebody can have amazing ability, but it doesn't really help unless they're filled with the Holy Spirit. People can go through lots of training and preparation, but it doesn't really accomplish anything unless they're filled with the Holy Spirit. And so ultimately church leadership is about finding people who are filled with the Holy Spirit and then allowing them to use their gifts of leadership so that the Holy Spirit can work through them. They gather for preaching and worship. It says that they met. And Peter preached a sermon. And the Bible talks about, worship the Lord with gladness and sing psalms, hymns, spiritual songs to one another, making music in your hearts. Part of it is the language of heaven seems to include song and celebration and triumphant proclamations of the goodness of God. Sacraments of baptism and communion. We'll get into those in a moment. Unified by the Spirit. It says that the people held all things in common and they took care of one another. They loved each other like a family. Previous to the descending of the Holy Spirit, they weren't taking care of each other and they didn't really know each other. Once the Holy Spirit comes, now they love each other and they're acting like a family. Correcting works of the flesh. That's repentance. Repentance is how we correct works of the flesh. And this is more thoroughly explored in Galatians five and six, but the works of the flesh are sexual morality, and addiction, and spirituality, and relational conflict and all of these issues. And the way we repent and correct that is by being filled with the Spirit so that we live according to the fruit of the Spirit. And so the job of the church is not to be the more of police and fruit inspector in people's lives. But in loving relationship, as we're walking together, if there is something in your life or my life that is a work of the flesh, we bring that into the light and we go to the Holy Spirit to correct that behavior so that we can walk in what God would call holiness in his sight. And this is not punitive. This is like coaching and parenting and loving. Helping someone to become the fullness of who they will be when the Holy Spirit has concluded his work through them. Obey the great commandment to love. The Christians just started loving each other. Hey, let's do lunch, dinner. Here's my coat. Come stay at our house. They just love each other. How many of you, the Holy Spirit has just caused you to be more loving? Maybe even some people will be like, I don't know what happened to you. You're a lot nicer. His name is the Holy Spirit. Once he showed up, he showed up with the love of God, because God has poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. Once the Holy Spirit showed up, he came with a bucket of love. That's how this works. And then obey the great commandment to evangelize and make disciples. It says that 3000 were added and then day by day, others were being added. And now what I would say is just doing these things doesn't make you a church. 'Cause cults can do this same thing. Unbelievers can do these things. What we're talking about is first, God does a work for you through the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descends, and does a work in you to change you, to be a believer and follower of Jesus. And then these are the things that the Holy Spirit is compelling through you. And it's evidence of the presence of the Spirit. And those are the marks of the church. How many of you, this is your experience, how many of you you're like, "Yeah, I go to church, didn't do that before. And then we sing songs and I'm doing this, and I haven't even stolen anything. I'm not under arrest. I'm just doing this. Well, I don't know. That's new. Why? I don't know the Holy Spirit's in me. I like hearing the Bible and celebrating Jesus. I don't know. It's new. What's the Holy Spirit?" How many of you you're like, "I need to get baptized, and you were, or you will be. Or communion,

you're like, yeah, I remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus and it means a lot to me." Unified. "I want to get along with people and I want to have healthy relationships." Works of the flesh. "These things in my life. I want to repent of them. I want them to change. That's not following in the spirit-filled character of Christ." And you start loving people and talking to people about Jesus, 'cause I want to share with them the greatest gift that's ever been given and that's the gift of eternal life. The church is what happens when the Holy Spirit shows up. Three expressions of the church, let me hit it briefly. The church is universal and local. Right now the church is in one regard, all of God's people across all of the nations. That's the universal church. All of God's people in all times and places. And then there's also the local church. Our church is a local church. There are other churches that are local churches. Those are local expressions of the universal church. No local church can lay claim to being the universal church. When Jesus says, I am the vine, you are the branches. The universal church is all of the branches and no branch can say, I am the vine. We got it right. We are the real true people of God. That's the difference between the universal and the local church. There's also the invisible and the visible church. So we hold services in this room on Sunday, people come in, we can see who they are, but we can't see who the Christians are. Only God sees the heart, only God knows. So there may be two people sitting in church and they're part of the visible church because they're meeting with us, but they're not part of the invisible church because they've not yet received Jesus in the Holy Spirit. And so we need to be careful. And Jesus talks about like a field where wheat and tares grow together. And he says, don't worry about that. And the end that ultimately Jesus will sort out like who is the wheat and who is the chaff, who are the tares. And then thirdly, the church exists when it's gathered and scattered. So when we come together, that's the church gathered. As we go out to live our lives and talk to people about Jesus and do ministry, that's the church scattered. And so those are three expressions of the church. Let me hit a few things in closing and then hit your questions. Number one, I want to hit preaching. The Holy Spirit descends and the first thing that happens is that a sermon is preached. That's important. That the church is birthed and sustained by the preaching of the word of God. We dealt with this in the doctrine of creation. 10 times in Genesis one, we are told God said. So God speaks creation into existence. The universe that we inhabit is, if I could just use this analogy, it's the result of a sermon that God preached. We also see in Genesis three, we looked at it in the doctrine of the fall. God preaches and Satan shows up to preach a counterfeit message. One of the reasons that we need to keep preaching is because Satan is going to keep preaching. And if people are going to be deceived by his message, they need to be delivered by the truth. What happens then throughout the rest of the Old Testament, the prophets keep preaching repentance of sin, faith in God. And then the Old Testament ends with this promise, Malachi 3:1, behold, I send my messenger, he will prepare the way before me, who is that? It's John the baptizer. And the Lord, who's that? Jesus whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple, which was destroyed in 70 AD. So that sets a historical deadline. And the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. God preaches creation into existence. Satan comes to counterfeit what God communicates. God sends forth prophets to preach repentance and faith and the coming of Jesus. And then the last book of the Old Testament says, all right, the next thing to happen in human history will be a preacher shows up and gets you ready for Jesus coming. And then there's something called the 400 silent years. There's no book of the Bible written. That God is

at work amongst his people, but we don't have that authoritative, thus sayeth the Lord, prophet of God until Matthew three. In those days, John the Baptist, here he shows up, Jesus' cousin came preaching. He's a preacher in the wilderness of Judea. And what does he say? Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand for this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, it's chapter 40 verse three when he said, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. The preacher shows up. I just don't understand people who will say like, well, I don't believe in preaching, and I don't believe that one person should talk. It's like, well, we don't have the universe, the Bible, the church, or Jesus without a sermon. Next scripture, Matthew 4:17, not only does John the baptizer preach a sermon to prepare people for Jesus, Jesus is a preacher. From that time Jesus began to what? He preached. I mean, he's a preacher. Saying repent. Turn from sin, trust in me for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. So Jesus is a preacher. Jesus dies. Jesus rises. The church in Acts is birthed with a sermon that Peter preached. As you read the remainder of Acts, it's sermon after sermon, after sermon. Sometime they give in yet. Sometimes they give summaries. We don't have a full transcript, but the church grows and moves forward and expands and plants and enters into new cultures and communities through the preaching of the good news of Jesus. Second Timothy 4:2 says, preach the word. In first Timothy 5:17 speaks of church leadership as labor and preaching and teaching. And sometimes I love preaching, but it is labor. It's because you're not only communicating to the people in the room, but the powers, principalities and spirits that are, or against them. And preaching is a supernatural act. There are many times that I get up and I think of things I did not know. I say things I wasn't aware of. Sometimes it's the flesh and I have to apologize. But sometimes it's a supernatural moment with the Holy Spirit where something is happening that is not perfect, like the Bible, but is supernatural and more than the preacher. And some of you have had that experience of preaching or teaching, or I don't know, I started talking what I said. That was from the Holy Spirit, that wasn't me. And it helped that person in a way that is supernatural. And I just praise God that I got to be the mailman, the mailwoman that delivered the mail. That's what preaching is and does. And it is a labor, but it is a labor of love. The last two I'll hit on baptism and communion. Baptism. Jesus was baptized. So that's how we should be baptized. That's the big idea. Luke 3:21 and 22, when all the people were baptized, Jesus was baptized and was praying. The heavens were opened. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove. A voice, God the Father from heaven says, "You are my beloved son, with you I'm well pleased." So John the baptizer preaches, prepares people for the coming of Jesus. Jesus shows up and says, "John, I need you to baptize me." And John says, "I shouldn't baptize you, you should baptize me. You're greater than me. I'm not even worthy to untie your sandals." No, no, no. This must be done to fulfill all righteousness. So Jesus picks up where John leaves off. It's like a track race. The baton gets handed from John to Jesus. Jesus is baptized and brought forth, being submerged, immersed in water, which is foreshadowing his death, burial and resurrection. Baptism points to resurrection. That's what it points to. And then after Jesus dies, rises, Matthew 28:18 through 20, Jesus said to them all authority. And that's amazing. That's all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations, doing what? Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There's the Trinity. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Not just that. Then teaching them, right, take them through books of the Bible, take them through the doctrine class, sit down and pray with them,

do an inductive study, whatever it is. Teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age, how is that? By the Holy Spirit, whom is the presence of Christ. The Spirit of Christ. So then, the early church, Acts two, they do what Jesus did and they do what Jesus said. Peter to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let me just say this briefly, there is two basic positions on baptism. What I'll call paedobaptism and credobaptism. Paedo is for infant or child. So that would be the baptizing of babies. Credobaptism would be those who can articulate a belief in the person and work of Jesus. And I believe in credobaptism, not paedobaptism. I believe part of the purpose of paedobaptism historically was, in Christian nations it was like your social security card. It was your way of sort of getting inaugurated as a citizen. It's not what it was intended for national allegiance and alliance, but for kingdom allegiance and alliance. Furthermore, infant mortality rates, particularly in the ancient world were very, very high. Some cultures they wouldn't even give a name to the child until the child had lived for a week because so many of their children died. And some would have a fear, well, if they die, do they go to heaven or not? Let's baptize them. And then that'll put them in the covenant. I believe that the Holy Spirit puts people in the covenant, not water. I believe water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, but it's the Holy Spirit that puts you in covenant, not to water. The reason I hold to a credobaptist position, I'll give you a couple lines of reasoning. Number one, every time we're told, be baptized, we're told something just previously, we just read it a bunch of times. Blank and be baptized. What's the word? Repent. So those who repent can be baptized. If you don't repent, we don't baptize you. Others will go to certain texts in the New Testament and they'll say, well, it says that their whole household was baptized. And they will say there were probably little kids there, infants, babies. But it doesn't say that. In every occasion, it says that the household was baptized. It says that they all believed, or they all went forth and served the Lord. We've got five kids. Our household has children who all believe in Jesus, belong to Jesus and serve Jesus. So just because there was a household doesn't mean that there was a baby that was also baptized. So then the other question is, do you need to be baptized to be a Christian? Yes or no? No. Now Jesus saves, the Holy Spirit seals, baptism is symbolic, but it's not saving. The thief on the cross. Jesus says today, this day you'll be with me in paradise. No baptism, just faith in Jesus is all that was required. The Philippian jailer asked Paul, what should I do be saved? And he said, believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ. It's faith. So then how should baptism be done? To baptize literally means to plunge dip or immerse. The Greek word was used outside of the Bible for shipwrecks. So if you had a boat that sank, they would say it was baptized. That means it's fully submerged. Even theologians like Calvin and Luther, they agree that the meaning of the word is to plunge dipper or immerse. And it says that they would baptize here because there was plenty of water. So we baptize by immersion those who have repented in sin, of sin rather, and received Jesus, and we baptized them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, of the Trinity. There are occasions, I have to say this, where somebody loves the Lord. Maybe they give their life to Christ on their deathbed and they're surrounded with machines. And so we'll sprinkle water, anoint them. We can't baptize them, like take the person with all of their machinery and their bed and drop them in a tank. I mean, that's not very loving. I'm not sure who pays the deductible on that. So there are occasions where there's the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. And there are occasions where to fulfill the spirit of the law we need to be creative

with the application of the means of things like baptism, but as a general rule, those who repent and believe are baptized through immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Last one communion also called the Lord's Table. First Corinthians 11 talks about this, 27 through 31. Answering the question. What is communion, whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord, and serve the Lord. So it's regarding Jesus' broken body and shed blood, in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink the cup. Before we partake, we've got to say, have I really repented of sin and am I committed to Jesus? Or is this just kind of a religious superstitious, traditional thing I'm doing not really from the heart? For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died. People are going to communion without repenting of sin and some get sick and some die. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. So communion is the sacred thing for God's people that God takes very importantly. And what he's saying is when you partake, you are publicly declaring Jesus died for me, therefore I want to put my sin to death 'cause it was my sin that killed my savior. And if you're loving and feeding and nourishing your sin and partaking of communion, you are desecrating the Lord's Table. So examine yourself and judge yourself. And I'll close with this. Just think for a moment of the greatest meal you've ever eaten. Can you think of that? I can think of a few meals, amazing place, great food. Obviously it's gonna be with Grace and the kids and the family. Meals are how we build relationships, meals are how we build friendships, meals are how we get to know one another. And communion is ultimately a meal. We'll practice it on Sunday, but also in life groups, and homes, and meals together. Next slide, please. One of the ways to look at communion or rather to look at the Bible. So different theologies will put different things as the center. Some will say it's dispensations of time. Others will say it's the fulfillment of covenants. One way to read the Bible is as a series of meals. The first meal was the meal we ate without God. And it's the meal that we ate with Satan. Satan wants to eat with you. Satan wants to be at your dining room table. Satan wants to be part of your family. He wants to come and build a relationship and eat with you. That's why when the Lord Jesus shows up, Satan shows up and what does Satan invite the Lord Jesus to do? Eat with him, have a meal. He says in first Corinthians that some are participating in the Lord's Table and eating with demons. What happens then is there's another meal called Passover. It's in the book of Exodus, but especially chapter 12. And the centerpiece of that meal, the whole family would get together in faith. And the centerpiece would be a lamb without spot or blemish, they would be sacrificed and their blood would be painted over the doorpost of the home so that the wrath of God would literally pass over them. Hence the concept of Passover. So everything in human history went south with a meal, but this was a meal of faith to be eaten with the Lord, waiting for the coming of Jesus. Jesus shows up, the next meal is the Last Supper. And what that is, that's Jesus celebrating the Passover with his disciples. And he breaks with thousands of years of tradition. And he says, this is my body broken for you. This is my blood shed for you. And he's pointing that the ultimate purpose of Passover was to prepare us for him. Christ our Passover lamb has been slain. And then the early church starts having communion to remember, to celebrate the fact that we can invite Jesus into relationship and life, and home, and meals with us. This is why Christians will pray before the meal. That God is present. Some of the eastern tradition will pray after the meal. Some Christians pray before some pray after. Some eastern

Christians pray after the meal to thank God for the things they enjoyed most about the meal. But either way it's dining in the presence of the Lord because, first Corinthians 10:31, whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God, including your eating and drinking. And so communion could be something we do on Sunday. It can be a meal that you have with believers in your home. All of this culminates, and all of human history culminates with one final meal. Everything went wrong when we ate without God, everything is made right when we sit down and eat with God. It's called the wedding supper of the lamb. And it says that Jesus will throw this eternal party in Revelation 19. Isaiah says that it'll have the choicest of wines and the best cuts of meat. You're like, I'm a vegetarian teetotaler. Well, more for us. But that's what it says. It's going to be amazing. The menu is amazing. Can you imagine what a perfect steak will taste like? Can you imagine what a perfect glass of wine will taste like? Can you imagine what perfect ice cream will taste like? Somebody testified, boy, this is something to look forward to. And Jesus is the one that sets the table. And the picture of heaven is the whole family of God gets together like a big meal. Do you know why we get together for holidays and meals? Because something in us ultimately wants to go to heaven, and to sit down where there's peace with family, and break bread and make memories and make laughter and to share joy. And that's God's picture of the kingdom that we'll get into a little more on the last. I'll close with this. When it comes to the Lord's Table, communion, the Catholic church will teach something called transubstantiation that the elements literally become the body and blood of Christ. So they see the church is like the Old Testament, Holy of Holies. And the priest is like the Old Testament priests. And the centerpiece is not the sermon. It is the sacrifice of Jesus through communion. So they're literally seeing Christ as re crucified. We don't believe that. We believe that Christ died once for the sins of all. And we don't re crucify him every Sunday. Those who hold a position of Martin Luther teach something called consubstantiation. And that is that God is somehow supernaturally present when we come together for communion and the Holy Spirit is present, but that doesn't become the literal body and blood of Christ that is for us. The celebration of the presence of the living Christ as we commemorate his death. Then there is a position from a man named Ulrich Zwingli. He's a reformer. And he said, it's basically a memorial feast to remember the death of Jesus. And as a result, those that hold that position don't take communion every week. Catholics take communion every week. Lutherans take communion every week. Those from the tradition of Zwingli will elevate preaching, and they will not elevate communion. So communion happens irregularly or very rarely. And then there was a guy named John Calvin and his position was, I don't know, take communion. And that's a summary of Calvin's. Where he's like, I don't know, take communion. I like Calvin's position. And I tend to adhere more to Luther's position. I believe that God is present with his people in the same way that when a family gets together, right, the parents want to be there with the kids. One of the sacred things at our house is dinner around the dining room table. And I want to be there 'cause that's where my family is. And I love them. And I believe that when the family comes together, that God is present 'cause God's got a father's heart and he loves getting together with his kids, especially if they want to sit down and break bread and take some time to build the relationship. And so that's why we take communion every week. And some churches will do a lot of worship, and some will do a lot of preaching, and some will do communion and most say, well, you can go for an hour so pick one or two. We just go forever and do all three. That's kind of how we do it. Long sermon, a lot of singing, oh,

and we're doing communion. So we can always tell the new people, 'cause they're like, are we done yet? Oh no, this isn't even half time son.