

“The Church as the Lord Intended” **

What do you think of when you hear the word “church”? I checked the yellow pages in our local phone book this week. There are over 125 churches listed in our area. They are all different, yet they all (I assume) have a sign out front that says, “Church.”

Ponder that word...

“Church”

What’s a church supposed to be? Ask a dozen people that question and you’re likely to hear a dozen different answers.

What the Church looks like today...

See: Pictures of various “churches”

The various styles of church buildings demonstrate the huge differences that exist when it comes to the way various congregations view their identity:

- Cathedral
- Country church
- Store front church
- Modern church, resembling a college campus
- The Angkor church in the jungles of PNG

I believe the church is special, so special that we’re taking time this month to do a self-examination, to rethink and revamp our ministries, which will climax on June 5 with “Celebrating the Church Sunday.” Last week I began a four part series, “What’s So Special about the Church?” Today my aim is to address a very fundamental question. Before we can move ahead, we need to look back...

What is the Lord’s intent for the church?

Thankfully, we have the answer. God gave it to us in His Word. The word “church” appears 114 times in the Bible, all in the New Testament (2 times in the gospels, around 20 times in Acts, 70 times in the epistles, and 20 times in the book of Revelation).

Our Aim: My intent isn’t to do a detailed study of any one particular text in this message. Rather, we’re going to survey the entire New Testament seeking to discover the Lord’s intent for His church, so that we might appreciate the church more fully and be more fully prepared to fulfill God’s intent for us as we move ahead.

I. Jesus made a promise in the Gospels.

The four gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are biographical presentations of Jesus' life. Matthew records an important promise Jesus made regarding the church:

Matthew 16:16-18 "Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'"

With these words Jesus revealed three very important points about the church here.

A. The Lord said He would build His church. "I will build my church..." That's a promise. It's a guarantee from the sovereign Lord who cannot lie. The future success of the church rests on His shoulders. I *will* build it, He said. It's as good as done. But how?

B. The Lord said He would use people to do it. He selected twelve men, taught them, "discipled" them and designated them "apostles." Then He told them to go do with others what He had done with them. "Go make disciples," He said in His parting words (Matt 28:19). He also gave them what they would need to accomplish this task, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." It would be through these men that the Spirit of the Risen Christ would lay a foundation in the next fifty years, the foundation of the church with Christ the cornerstone, a foundation we are still building on nearly 2,000 years later. These men have all died, but the Spirit used them to give to the church what remains our authority today, the New Testament.

C. The Lord said there would be opposition. "The gates of hell will not overcome it." The Evil One hates God and seeks to get at God by getting at His people. He does not relinquish his hold on sinners easily. He opposes with all his wicked might. But when the Sovereign Lord says, "I died for that sinner. Let go of him..." the evil one complies and another sinner is rescued and added to the ark of safety, the church.

That was Jesus' promise. In the gospels He said, "I will build my church." Then we come to the book of Acts.

II. Jesus began fulfilling His promise in Acts.

It's called Acts because in this book Dr. Luke, an associate of the apostle Paul, records the acts of the apostles. He tells the history of the first thirty years of the church and shows that Jesus kept His promise. What He said He would build, He began to build right after His return to heaven.

As we walk through Acts we observe four things pertaining to the church...

A. The church received its marching orders.

On a hillside outside of Jerusalem, just before ascending to heaven, the Head of the Church, Jesus, delivered these instructions to His followers...

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

And that's what happened. The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost in chapter 2, and the church was born. The followers of Jesus took their marching orders seriously...

Acts 5:41-42 "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace

for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, *they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*”

Acts 8:4 “Those who had been scattered *preached the word wherever they went.*”

Acts 11:20-21 “Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene , went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, *telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.* The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”

Acts 15:35 “But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch , where they and many others *taught and preached the word of the Lord.*”

Acts 28:30-31 “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he *preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

The followers of Jesus did what the Master commanded. As a result...

B. The church grew.

On day one there were 120 meeting in an upper room (1:15). The number mushroomed to over 3,000 following Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 (verse 41). In Acts 4 the number of men passed the 5,000 mark. After that Luke stopped counting, just indicating growth with statements like these:

Acts 9:31 “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, *it grew in numbers*, living in the fear of the Lord.”

Acts 16:5 “So *the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.*”

What Jesus promised took place. His church grew. The other part of His promise took place as well...

C. The church faced opposition.

Ironically, devout religious leaders instigated the persecution. The priests and Sadducees arrested Peter and John in Acts 4. Stephen was martyred in Acts 7. Then a zealous young Pharisee really turned up the heat...

Acts 8:1 “And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.”

Acts 8:3 “But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.”

Political figures also unleashed their wrath against the church...

Acts 12:1 “It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.”

No, it wasn't easy to be a church member in the first century. The persecution was fierce against those who identified themselves as followers of Jesus. Many lost their jobs, their homes, and even their lives. But the Sovereign Lord kept doing exactly what He said He would do. The church moved forward! Consequently...

D. The church began to take shape.

The book of Acts is historical narrative and as such simply *tells us what happened*. That was its Spirit-given intent. The purpose of Acts isn't to give us a pattern to follow (the epistles do that). We can get in all kinds of trouble by finding a story in Acts and saying, “Do that again, Lord, in our church.” Granted, the Lord can do what He wants but remember, Acts tells what happened in a *transitional time period*.

Having said that, I believe there are vital lessons we can learn from Acts about God's intent for the church. I'll mention five lessons...

1. The church is people rather than a place, a body rather than a building.

In fact, there were no church buildings for a couple hundred years. The church meetings took place in homes. The emphasis was on relationships. We see this in the beginning of Acts and throughout...

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

2. There really is only one church.

In our day there are hundreds, even thousands of denominations and divisions in the church. There are eight different kinds of “Baptist” churches within 15 minutes of WBC. Not in Acts. There was simply “the church.” Not that everyone was the same, by any means. As we move through Acts we see the Spirit causing the Church to reach out, in fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

☐It includes Jews (chapters 1-7).

☐It includes Samaritans (chapters 8-9).

☐It includes Gentiles (chapters 10-28).

But it's not called “The Jewish Church,” and “The Samaritan Church,” and “The Gentile Church.” It's one church, comprised of all kinds of people, and these people have one fundamental thing in common. They

know, love, belong to, give their allegiance to, and serve with all they've got...*Jesus Christ*.

3. The one church is made up of many local churches (congregations).

Sometimes people today say, "I don't need to be a member of a local church. I'm a part of the universal church." That type of thinking overlooks a very important point. Sometimes in Acts you see church in the singular, "the church," but sometimes it's plural, "churches."

Acts 15:41 "He went through Syria and Cilicia , *strengthening the churches.*"

Acts 16:5 "*So the churches* were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."

What does the plural term indicate? That although every believer in Christ is a part of the universal church, the first century believers also identified with a local church where there was meaningful accountability. There were "churches" all over the Roman Empire , specific local churches comprised of the believers in that geographic location. We'll come back to this thought momentarily...

4. Though the church is an organism, it requires organization.

By saying the church is *people*, don't get the idea it's people doing whatever they want. When you look at Acts you see a developing structure in the church. What kind of organization is required for a church? Here's what we see in Acts:

There must be elders (pastors) to lead and feed the church.

Acts 14:23 "Paul and Barnabas *appointed elders for them in each church* and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

Acts 20:28 "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*. Be *shepherds of the church of God* , which he bought with his own blood."

There must be servants to do the work of the ministry.

In Acts 6 we see an important development. As the church began to grow, some people felt neglected, namely widows. Some people apparently thought that it was the church leaders' job to care for the widows. The leaders responded...

Acts 6:2-3 "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them...'"

And so the leaders clarified their role: to teach the Word and pray; they also delegated ministries to qualified individuals. Churches need leaders AND servants to do the work of the ministry. Here's another example...

9:36 Dorcas... "who was always doing good and *helping the poor.*"

Indeed, as we continue to search Acts we find out that more and more organization developed to make sure ministries were done in an excellent, Christ-honoring way...

¶There are ministry teams to accomplish our mission.

I see several teams developing in Acts...

6:1 Benevolent ministry team

11:25-26 Discipleship team

13:1 Outreach team

20:1-6 Missions Support team

15:6 Doctrinal review team (apostles and elders)

In terms of organizational development we notice something else in Acts...

¶There are collections of money to meet practical needs.

Think about the administrative side in making the following happen...

Acts 4:34-35 "There were *no needy persons among them.* For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and *put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed* to anyone as he had need."

¶There are special councils to deal with doctrinal confusion.

In Acts 15 a controversy began when some church members from Jerusalem went up to Antioch and told the Gentile church members they weren't really saved and needed to be circumcised. How did the Antioch church members respond? They didn't say, "It's none of your business what we do in our church." Remember, there's ONE church. And so, with a commitment to this unity, the Antioch church sent a delegation of leaders to the Jerusalem church and had a council meeting to deal with this doctrinal question...

Acts 15:4 "When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them."

5. If a person is committed to Christ he should also be committed to the local church.

There's a key phrase that Luke uses in Acts: "added to their number." That phrase tells us a lot about how the first Christians viewed the local church...

Acts 2:41 "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

Acts 2:46-47 "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Acts 5:14 "Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number."

Sometimes people say, "I don't see church membership in the NT." I do. Oh, perhaps they didn't have a piece of paper with a roster of names on it, but the New Testament churches knew who belonged to them, and they apparently knew how many people belonged to them. When a person became a follower of Christ, that person was "added to their number."

You say, "But having your name on a church roll doesn't make you a Christian, does it?" No. But Acts indicates that if a first century person was committed to Christ he or she was also committed to the local church. The Lord never intended for His people to serve Him without being connected to others who belong to Him. He knows we'd never make it, especially not in a hostile world.

III. Jesus provided care for His church in the Epistles.

The Holy Spirit inspired 21 letters for local churches or for individuals serving in local churches. This is the "epistle" section of the NT. Whereas Acts tells us what happened, the epistles tell us what *should happen* in the church. It's here we learn about five key subjects pertaining to the church.

A. We learn about the identity of the church...

Who are we? You'll find several important word pictures that answer the question for us. We'll consider three...

1. The church is a body.

Colossians 1:18 "And *he is the head of the body*, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

Your physical body is a living organism, and as such it moves, grows, accomplishes specific functions, requires nourishment, and so on. So it is with the church. We are the Body of Christ.

2. The church is a bride.

In Ephesians 5, while addressing the subject of marital roles, Paul tells us something very wonderful about Christ...

Ephesians 5:23 “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”

The church is the Body of Christ, but also His bride. Jesus gave His life for His bride. He loves His bride. His intent is to make His bride holy and spotless (Eph 5:25-27).

Let that sink in. Jesus loves the church. He cherishes the church. Can we do less? How can we treat as trivial or optional what He gave His life for to make His own?

3. The church is a “mystery” and as such has a significant place in God’s redemptive plan.

We don’t have time to develop this thought, but it’s a significant one in Paul’s epistles. The church is a mystery, that is, the church is the fulfillment of a plan God designed in eternity past and has been working on for centuries. The Lord made a promise to Abraham, to bless Him. And He did. He turned Abraham into a great family, then a great nation, and through that nation He sent the Messiah into the world. Then Messiah Jesus sent His Spirit into the world and formed something that Paul calls a “mystery,” that something is the “church.”

Ephesians 3:10 “His intent was that now, *through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...”

Ephesians 3:21 “...*to him be glory in the church* and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 5:32 “*This is a profound mystery*—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

Colossians 1:24-27 “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, *which is the church*. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— *the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints*. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the *glorious riches of this mystery*, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Let these words sink in. If you want to live your life for something that matters, so you won't have any regrets at the end, then make sure you are investing your time, money, and resources in something that's the apple of God's eye. And that something isn't IBM, or OSU, or ATT, or any other man-made organization. The institution that's on the very heart of God is the one that's a mystery to those in the world. It's the *church*.

The church is at the center of God's plan in this age. Is the church at the center of your plans?

B. We learn about the organization of the local church...

As we scan the epistles we can make some important organizational observations.

1. The churches met in houses.

Philemon 2 "...to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to *the church that meets in your home.*"

2. The churches had structure: overseers (pastors/elders), deacons, and saints.

In the first verse of his letter to the church at Philippi Paul mentions three categories of people in that church...

Philippians 1:1 "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the **saints** in Christ Jesus at Philippi , together with the **overseers** and **deacons.**"

3. The churches had clear expectations for their leaders.

We find qualifications that a man needs to meet in order to be a leader, as well as responsibilities of what a man need to do as a leader.

1 Timothy 3:1-2 "Here is a trustworthy saying: *If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer*, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach..."

Titus 1:5-6 "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and *appoint elders in every town*, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife..."

4. The churches had clear expectations for their members.

What does it take to be a good church member? Remember, our God-given mission is to make disciples. But what does a good disciple look like? The epistles tell us. To put it simply, the epistles taught church members to value three corporate responsibilities.

¶They emphasized the importance of Christ-centered **worship**.

Philippians 3:3 “For it is we who are the circumcision, *we who worship by the Spirit of God*, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.”

1 Corinthians 14:26 “What then shall we say, brothers? *When you come together* [i.e. for worship services], everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.”

Hebrews 12:28 “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and *so worship God acceptably* with reverence and awe.”

Hebrews 13:15 “Through Jesus, therefore, *let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise*—the fruit of lips that confess his name.”

¶They emphasized the importance of **fellowship/accountability**.

Hebrews 10:25 “*Let us not give up meeting together*, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

1 John 1:3 “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you *also may have fellowship with us*. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

See also: the “one another commands” in the NT

¶They emphasized the importance of **service**.

Romans 12:6-8 “...if it is *serving let him serve...*”

1 Peter 4:10-11 “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to *serve others*, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms...”

Worship. Fellowship/accountability. Service. Three privileges. Also three non-negotiable responsibilities for followers of Christ. Three local church activities that God’s Word says are to priority in our lives and at

the heart of our weekly schedules. If I call myself a follower of Christ but am not investing time for worship, fellowship, and service, I will be in for a rude awakening when I stand before the Master and give an account for my life.

C. We learn about the importance of God's Word in the church...

The church is not a democracy. The fact that Christ is our *Lord* necessitates that only one opinion matters in the church. *What does the Lord want?* is the question that ought to be on our minds at every business meeting.

And since we can't see Him, how do we know what He wants? Through His Word. The Bible is not just a book of good ideas for the church. It's our *authority*.

1. Pastors were expected to teach the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 "...*Preach the Word...*for the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine..."

Titus 2:1 "You must *teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*"

2. The people were expected to apply the Scriptures to their lives.

Colossians 3:16-17 "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly* as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."

2 Peter 1:19-21 "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and *you will do well to pay attention to it...*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Solid churches are made up of pastors who teach the Word, not their own opinions, and of members who hunger to learn and live by the Word. But what happens when a church member breaks rank? In the epistles...

3. The churches disciplined members in unrepentant sin.

This is vital. If we say we are a biblical church, we must take action to deal with those who call themselves followers of Christ who aren't following Christ.

1 Corinthians 5:11 "But now I am writing *you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler.*

With such a man do not even eat.”

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, *take special note of him*. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

Titus 3:10 “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. *After that, have nothing to do with him.*”

Please realize that although it’s never pleasant, church discipline is the loving thing to do. How so? If the wages of sin is *death* (and it is), are we loving something by winking at their sin or when we take action to help them forsake their sin? It’s the latter, right?

In fact, as we look at the epistles we gain insight into a related, fourth subject.

D. We learn about how to deal with problems in the local church...

According to the epistles...

1. All churches have problems.

There’s a common attitude for church goers that says, “If my church starts having problems, I’m outta hear! Because I don’t want to belong to a church that has problems.” Beloved, take a close look at what Paul told the Corinthian church members...

1 Corinthians 11:17-19 “In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. *No doubt there have to be differences among you* to show which of you have God’s approval.”

There have to be differences? Yes. All churches have problems.

2. No two churches are the same.

2 Corinthians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus ... *To the church of God in Corinth* , together with all the saints throughout Achaia.”

Galatians 1:2 “To the *churches in Galatia*”

When we read the NT we find out there were churches in cities all over the Roman Empire, and that they were different. They had different kinds of problems. In Philippi there were two ladies that couldn't get along. In Galatia there was a doctrinal crisis. In Corinth there was a member living in sexual immorality. In Thessalonica there were folks who were sponging off others instead of working for a living.

Different churches, different problems. But they have this in common...

3. Churches that please God insist their members follow Christ's example.

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Follow my example, as I *follow the example of Christ*.”

1 Peter 2:21 “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, *leaving you an example*, that you should follow in his steps.”

Here's the key for dealing with problems. Insist that everyone in the church asks this vital question: *WWJD. What would Jesus do?* Think of what would happen to the typical church squabble if all parties asked that question and then did it.

E. We learn about the relationship between the local churches...

Again, there's only one church of which local churches are one part. We are linked together and ought to function that way. According to the epistles, the early church did, as evidenced by the following...

1. The local churches were concerned about each other.

Romans 16:16 “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.”

2. The local churches sent financial gifts to help each other.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 “...we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that *they gave as much as they were able*, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, *they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing* in this service to the saints...”

Philippians 4:15-16 “... for even when I was in Thessalonica, *you sent me aid* again and again when I was in need.”

3 John 5-8 “Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you... *We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.*”

We might not at first consider the next action to be a way one local church can show love to another local church, but it is...

3. The local churches warned each other of problem people, including:

Those who taught error

2 Timothy 2:17-18 (Hymenaeus and Philetus)

2 Timothy 4:14-15 (Alexander the metal worker)

Those who refused to work

2 Thes 3:11-12

Those who resisted church discipline

1 Timothy 1:19-20 (Hymenaeus and Alexander)

3 John 9-10 (Diotrophes)

There's one more book in the NT, the last. It, too, has something important to say to us about the church.

IV. Jesus gave His church a reminder in the book of Revelation.

Jesus gave this book to His persecuted church. John was exiled on Patmos ; his readers were facing hostile aggression by the Romans. They needed a word of encouragement. And the Lord gave it to them (and us) in the book of Revelation.

He reminded His church of three hope-giving truths...

A. Chapters 1-3: “I am with you.”

In chapter one John saw a peculiar vision of the Risen Christ. Do you remember what He saw Jesus doing? Revelation 1:12-13—Jesus was standing among “seven golden lampstands.” As John continued his gaze he noticed that Christ was holding something, in His right hand he held “seven stars” (16).

What's that all about? Jesus told John in 1:20, “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

Let that sink in. Where is the Risen Christ right now? He's right in the midst of His church! He's with us, beloved, *with us!*

If you want to know the presence of Christ, it can be yours, my friend. It's in the church. If you want to be close to Christ you must make it a priority to be close to His church. "I am with you," He said.

He gave His followers two other reminders...

B. Chapters 4-21: "I am going to judge the world."

That's what this book shows us in graphic detail. Right now the world mocks the church, hates the church, oppresses the church. But know this. One day the Lord of the church will take action. He will judge the world.

Is it worth it to identify with Jesus and His people? You may lose your job. You may face your family's rejection. Is it worth it? Yes, it will be worth it all.

C. Chapter 22: "I am coming again."

Three times in the final chapter we hear this one statement coming from the lips of our Lord and Savior, "I am coming soon (7), I am coming soon (12), I am coming soon (20)." Yes, He is coming!

Make It Personal:

Having seen the Lord's intent for His church, I need to ask you two crucial questions...

1. *Do you love Christ?* He is the only Savior, my friend. Do you love Christ?

2. *Do you love Christ's Body, the church?* The fact is, we can't see Christ, but we can see His Body. And if we fail to love what we can see, then we are failing to show the One we can't see the love He desires and deserves. Love His church, beloved. It's a special place to be!

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.