

# Is This Really Church

by Francis Chan

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*Francis Chan's sermon challenges believers to live out their faith through love, service, and community engagement, emphasizing the eternal significance of their actions.*

**Duration:** 58:16

**Scripture:** John 13:34

**Topics:** "Church Community", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon challenges the traditional concept of church gatherings and emphasizes the importance of aligning with the biblical commands of loving one another, proclaiming the message of Christ, depending on the Holy Spirit, practicing communion, and prioritizing prayer. It calls for a reevaluation of what truly defines a church based on scriptural principles and encourages a shift towards a more authentic and sacrificial community focused on obedience to God's Word.

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## Transcript

I think it's a matter of just obedience. It's just like in the depression, you help people or you die. You fed the neighbor or they got sick.

It's just a way of life that we all, I think, should have been living a long time ago, but we all were in this bubble of me and my four or me and my two, and I can't worry about that. I've got to protect my own family. And God's never called us to that type of living.

He's called us to love Him and love others. And His other commandments are, you know, think of others before yourself better than you. And if we're doing that, that means that we are living community, regardless of what you want to call it.

I think that's probably the biggest change in my life, and I don't even think of it as in a selfish way, but it was like you take care of your family, you get a job, you take care of your family, and that's what you're supposed to do. God has really pierced our hearts and my heart that there's supposed to be more than just your family. Your family is supposed to be a unit that then goes out and helps others.

I think serving the Lord is a huge commitment, and it's a huge sacrifice in a sense that you can't have every material or earthly desire that you want, but when an opportunity comes up that God's put in front of you, and you have to make a choice about, do I go talk to this lady that's crying, or do I say, oh, I really

have to clean my house, and I have to, oh, you know, I have to this and I have to that, there should be no choice. We have to get to the point where we're so in love with God that there is no choice to us. Our heart is just so open to dropping these things that will perish and just running for Christ, and that's helped me a lot with my growth is to realize what is so important about these earthly things that I would not serve Christ for.

And when you stand on Christ, your foundation is so much more secure, and you have so much more hope to offer the world. I mean, we're financially in a situation that's probably pretty scary to non-believers, but we can still smile. We can still laugh.

We still have food, and we just go, okay, God, what do you want, you know, and community has also given us a chance to share that hope with our neighbors and say, it's okay, whatever God wants to do, it's okay. He'll provide, or He'll take away, and we have to think that no matter what, He's on the phone, and He has a better plan. Everything we do, we do it with our family.

I mean, when we go down to Mexico, they're right alongside of us. I mean, we have pictures of Jack and Bella just covered with paint, because they were helping us paint, and that's okay, you know. They're getting dirty.

Our older ones are helping wash the younger ones, and sometimes they're in there pounding nails with us. And it's a teaching process for them to work alongside me, which is so cool, just to be able for them to learn how to do construction and help others. I believe that because they've been raised this way, that it's just going to be a part of their lives.

It won't even be a choice as they grow up that, listen, that's what we're supposed to do, is we're supposed to help others. What else would you do? And so that's our hope. Yeah, because it's not an option.

So it's not like, oh, Mom and Dad are down helping, and we had to stay home, but they go with us, whatever we do, wherever we go. There's so many different gifts, or personalities, if you will, in our group, that I'm not a teacher. I'm not, you know, I can't get up in front of people and teach necessarily.

But as a group, we all can do it together, and we can all glean off of each other. All of us, we're just so normal. We're not pastors, or teachers, or prophets.

We just go to work, make a living, and just doing what God's put in front of us. This facade has to be come down, because you're living life with Him, which is so freeing for so many people, that they can say, you know what, this is who I am, take it or leave it. You know, God's working on me, just like He's working on you.

If you center everything around, is this going to further the kingdom, or for eternity, or is it just for this temporal life, if you center everything you do around that, it changes your outlook. It totally changes your outlook. That's so cool.

I don't know, you know, I'm so encouraged by that. I'm so encouraged just by watching the way people are talking around here lately, and just the way, more than how they're talking lately, but more how they're living, and going, you know what, this is the way we're supposed to live. This is what I see in Scripture.

I know, you know, like Matt says, we're used to coming in here, singing some songs, and getting into a message, but I'm so encouraged by that worship time that we just had, to look at our brother and sister in

Christ, see what God's doing in their life, but then also to meditate on those verses. One of the verses that we looked at just now, I couldn't stop thinking about. I know we went on to another one, but I stayed focused on one, because I never really thought about it this way, and so I wasn't going to talk about this, but Ephesians 2, when that was up there, Ephesians 2, verses 6 and 7, when it says that He raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Did you get that? I mean, we sat there and meditated on it for a couple minutes, but did you get that? The reason why He brings us and seats us up there with Christ, it says it's so that, God did that, there was a purpose, so that in the coming ages, so in the future, He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. So why am I saved right now? God saved me for a purpose, and part of that purpose was that one day He could show off just how much He was going to bless me. That's insane! I mean, are you catching that? Like one day, God's going to show us just how much we have in Jesus.

Like right now, I'm already feeling overwhelmed because God has blessed me so much. He says, you don't even get it. One day, I'm going to seat you in this place just to show you the immeasurable, you can't measure how much I'm about to give you.

You can't even measure how much grace I'm about to show you, and I'm bringing you up there for this reason, is just to show off how much grace I've given you in Christ Jesus. I mean, I sit here today, and I'm going, man, I'm blown away by the grace of God. I know what a mess I was, and I know how much He's blessed my life already with this relationship with Him, and then, you know, like Matt was explaining, but this is also about the future, that one day, He's going to show me so much grace, immeasurable grace, immeasurable riches, just so that I see how much I have in Jesus Christ.

And I sit there and go, okay, just like Misty was saying, okay, so we're not in a great financial situation, we're not in this, who cares? I mean, any moment, I'm going to be in the presence of God in such a real way. I mean, He's in me right now in a very real way, but I'm going to see Him face to face, and for ages, for eternity, He's going to show me His immeasurable riches of His grace in Christ Jesus. I don't know, to me, that's pretty cool.

I just didn't know if you caught that. Let me throw some things out, and then I want to continue on this theme of what is the gospel and this whole conference we've been on, and I have been excited to see so many of your faces there this week. Just a couple of announcement type of things.

First of all, this week, we're giving away another \$100,000. \$30,000 is going to, I was going to make a joke, but I couldn't think of one. Okay, that's really weird for me.

Okay, \$30,000 is going to Life Impact International, which is in Thailand, where they're rescuing kids that are being sold into prostitution, and we're, yeah, absolutely. This organization is trying to build an orphanage for some of the younger kids that they've rescued and kind of separating the older kids from the younger kids. They need some money to start a younger orphanage and also to buy a truck that can transport all the kids and take kids safely from place to place, and so we donated toward that.

Another \$29,000 is going to a place called Roca de Ayuda in Guatemala, and it is for food distribution, feeding kids, it's for school, for digging wells out there in Guatemala. Another \$11,000 is going to an orphanage in Tijuana called Casa Hogar Belen, and since 1977, they've helped about 7,000 abandoned

and abused kids. I've been there.

It's an amazing place. It's right across the border. Again, they educate the kids, they give them medical care, they teach them how to worship God, amazing facility.

Another \$5,000 is going locally to some Southern California ministries, a place called Action, which reaches out to the seniors, to the disabled, to the under-resourced, to the homeless, and to those who are at risk. Another \$25,000 is going to Grace Baptist Church in Romania, where they fund an orphanage there for the Romanian orphans. Just so you know, this week another \$100,000 is going out to all these different causes because of the giving, and that's just good stuff, isn't it? What else are we going to do? What are we going to do? Put it in savings and lose it? It's safe now.

Whatever we gave, it's safe now. It's tucked away, it's multiplied 100%, and again, God's going to blow us away by how much our giving multiplies. That's what he does in heaven.

That's what the future's about, is him showing off just how much we've been given in Christ, and it's always to our benefit to give. It's always been more blessed to give than to receive. While we're excited about these things now, I'm going, just wait.

Just wait. If scripture is right, which I believe it is, it's going to work out good in the end. Another thing I want to talk about is the Teerah Rahata project.

I know I emailed you guys, and you probably read some in the news, but let me just clarify a couple little points so you understand it. Basically, we've been working on this project for two years, over two years, and we didn't think it was going to take this long. We thought there was a chance of us meeting there like a year ago, and, well, that was a joke.

It just wasn't going to happen that way. The county, let me explain the vote, because you probably read in the paper it was three to two. Here's what happened, and you could say it was in our favor or it wasn't.

It kind of was whatever. Here we go. The county planning commission, what they do is they come before the supervisors and give them their counsel or their advice.

Basically, they advise them saying, okay, you should accept Cornerstone and let Cornerstone build out their application. You should accept Eternity Bible College and let them process their application. They said you should deny Children's Hunger Fund and deny their application.

What the supervisors had to vote on then, there are five supervisors, and they each had to vote at that meeting whether to accept or reject what those planners had advised them. That's why three of them accepted it, and then two of them said, no, we reject that. Some people have been confused.

They said, wait a second. I thought, for example, Supervisor Peter Foy was mentioned as one of those that rejected the project. Some have been calling him saying, well, hey, why would you reject this? No, he wasn't rejecting.

He was rejecting what the county was advising, which was a rejection of Children's Hunger Fund. The reason why he voted no was he thought that Children's Hunger Fund had a right to be there as well. Make sure you understand that, that he's been a big proponent of what we've been doing here, and I wouldn't want you to think that he was against it.

No. In fact, he gave a no vote because he wanted everything to be built there, whereas Parks gave a no vote because she didn't want anything voted there, and then the other three were saying, okay, we'll go with what the county says, which is yes to cornerstone, yes to EBC, no to CHF. Also want to explain, well, a couple of things, a couple of good things that have come out of this.

I mean, first of all, the planning director, quote, said, I have never dealt with a better group of people on a project this difficult, and has since decided to volunteer over at Children's Hunger Fund. So, you know, that's the stuff that matters, you know what I mean? It's like, okay, how did we carry ourself in the process, though? You know, and in the same way, even their legal counsel, the county's legal counsel said, you know, Cornerstone could have done some other things, that they just called this, this, and this, this, and they could have got this approved. And when a supervisor goes, yeah, but they're unwilling to do that.

They're just going to lay out the way it is, and they're not going to sneak around this way or that way. And I'm going, you know what, you're right, you know? And yeah, we probably could have gotten approval if we stretched a couple things, which is normal, but we just can't do it that way. And so I was grateful that they recognized that, and knew that that could have happened, and knew that we chose not to do it that way, and say God was going to do His thing.

You know, some of the people that have gotten angry, one of the people that was very angry at the last meeting was at church here last weekend, you know, so that was a good thing. There was another guy who I had breakfast with, another very angry gentleman, and so I took him out to breakfast, and we talked, and just last week, he says, you know what, I'm going to be honest with you. He goes, I love to fight.

I just love to fight. And so I got up there, and I wanted to start a fight, I'm just telling you. And that first meeting, I got up there, said some pretty rude things, and your people loved me in return.

He goes, then I got up again, and said some really rough things, and I even questioned your integrity, you know, publicly, he said that about me, and we went out to breakfast, you know. And he goes, it's like I was looking for a fight, and no one in your church would fight with me. They just loved me in return.

And I thought, wow, that's good stuff, you know, that's just good stuff. That's what they're seeing, is what I call the gospel. And I also want to share why I wrote in the note that when it was my turn to speak at this last meeting, I just opened up the Bible, which isn't normally what you do at a hearing.

But the reason why I did this was I really prayed about this, and there was a couple of reasons, and I felt like God was leading me to read Matthew 25. Matthew 25 is that passage that talks about the return of Jesus Christ when he comes to judge, when he comes with all of his angels to judge everyone on the planet, and he divides them to the right and to the left. You know, we've studied this passage before, and I read the passage where it says to those on his left, he goes, wait, depart from me.

You cursed into the eternal fire, prepared for Satan and his demons. Why? Because I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, you didn't give me anything to drink.

And the reason why I shared this was I thought, man, if I really loved these people, I just sat down, and I thought, okay, what if I really loved everyone in this room, everyone up there deciding this case, what would I tell them? If I really loved them, I would warn them that this isn't a manipulative thing. If we wanted to manipulate and make it happen, we could have made it happen. This is just before God, I thought, what's the most loving thing to say, and it's to explain to them, look, God is very serious about the care for

the poor, to care for those who are needy.

We can't miss that. In fact, judgment is based upon it. You know, here he says, you know what, I'm dividing them based upon it, so we can't separate our belief in Jesus from our caring for him.

I mean, whatever we do for the least of these, the same is caring for Jesus, and I was explaining him, that's why as a church, you can't separate CHF or our care for the poor from what we do on a Sunday morning. That is what we do. It's such a big part, but also to explain to them that there is a God, and he is returning, his son is gonna return, and we've gotta be careful in these decisions that we make because of this, and I also thought, you know, there's a lot of schmoozy things I could do up there, but that's really not, you know, like that verse says that we were created for good works.

There's certain things that God made us for, to do while we're on this earth. God did not put me on the earth to schmooze officials. He brought me down here.

I believe I'm a preacher. I believe that what he has given me is a gift to teach, and to teach the word of God, whatever setting I'm in. So if I'm at, you know, at jury duty, my job is to preach the gospel and share what, that's what I was made for, and so here, just because I'm in a room with people that are making a decision, that doesn't change what I'm supposed to do.

There's a side of me that needs to share the truth about the gospel in love for the people in that room, and it was awkward. It's awkward to come before them, but just in love, I just felt like, no, I gotta tell you guys this, because here's the thing. When you look at scripture, there were people that God called to give a message.

All throughout time, God had his messengers, and a lot of times, they gave a message that was rejected by the, most of the time, almost all, maybe all the time, the vast majority rejected their message, but they preached the message nonetheless, and the reason was, is because God's purposes, and God's purposes, I share things every weekend, throughout the week, to whoever will listen to me, I will share things, and some of those truths are so that some of you would believe and be blessed by it, but the flip side is some of those truths are so that you would reject them and be judged for it one day, and that's the way it's always been.

That's the way, that's what Noah did, right? Noah preached, and who accepted it?

A few people that were saved, went into the ark, and then the rest, it was part of God's judgment was to have the truth revealed, and I hate this part of my job, I really do, to lay out truth, knowing that some people will reject it, and that will be part of the judgment, is you heard this truth, and you chose to reject it, and so understand, in this process, it's not so much about winning or losing, just otherwise you would say that the prophet's all lost, you know, no, some of their messages were to say, look, here's what's important, here's what ought to be important to us as human beings, is the return of Christ, and the care for those who are in need, these are important things, and we ought to be concerned about this, and we gave them every legal avenue to show, look, you can do

this legally, there's a federal law that says this is protected, this can work this way, but you have the choice, and so part of the rejection of that, I believe, also is a part of this judgment of God, part of it is for the landowners that are angry, it's part of them to think through, you know what, the whole reason why I rejected that was I didn't want to look at a warehouse where there was food to be brought in to go to these

different parts of the world, I don't want to look at that, and people told me flat out, look, I think it's a great thing, I just don't want to have to look at it, I just don't want to see it, and I go, man, I want you to want this, you know, I want you to think beyond yourself and to other people and the needs around the world, and it's like, I just can't do

that, we don't have the same convictions that you guys do, and that's hard, it's hard, but, so that's just to give you some insight on some of the ins and outs of what happened in this project, so you understand a little bit more fully, there's so many details, but the question is, is what happens now, and as I said in the email, none of the elders are feeling at peace with just pursuing this project aside from Children's Hunger Fund, we've also seen how long it's taken to get to this point, so if we try to appeal, we can just imagine how much longer it's going to take, so pray for us as we're trying to figure out what does God want us to do with this land, as most of you know, we bought at a bad time, I don't know if you guys knew there was a recession, and so values have gone, you guys

haven't noticed, okay, but so there's a struggle there, it's like, well, it hasn't gone down that much, so either pray that God gives us a plan for the land or a buyer for the land, so pray for that, but here's, we're not really worried about it, okay, we're going to do, well, I shouldn't say that, we're not worried, I was worried about it, but then I prayed, I did, I seriously, this week, I was thinking about my message, I thought, I can't sleep, you know, and I'm not supposed to be anxious about anything, and so I just prayed, I said, God, you know what, I'm going to pray to you right now, believe that you heard me, that you got to do something with this land now, and then I'm not going to worry about it again, so I was anxious, I'll confess that to you, but then in the middle of the

night, I thought, no, that's not right, I just preached on this, I'm going to go back to rejoicing, everything's fine, everything's good.

Now, while this whole process has been going on, though, understand that as we talk about the future of the church, when we first started pursuing this land on Tierra Jada, the staff, the elders, we realized that the biggest problem that Cornerstone has is not just space, okay, we haven't been able to grow for the last seven years or so, just been packed out, every service, and that the issue is not really space, there's other things in the church that we believe are bigger problems.

The bigger problems where we look at Scripture and the way the church would interact with one another, and we're going, we're not living those things out, so why do we want a bigger version of a failure in that sense, you know what I mean? It's like we don't want to get more people together who could care less about each other, you know, what's the point of that? Let's work on, does that make sense, you know what I mean? It's, I mean, it'll look good, you know, it looks like a lot of people, but, you know, but we're just looking at Scripture and going, okay, here's the bigger problem, so we'll deal with the land, you know, we have to be working on the land, let's focus on our church, let's focus on caring for each other, let's focus on the things that are mandated by Scripture. It was everything that we talked about this last week at the gospel conference. Everything, you know, Jeff, who spoke last week, and Dave, who spoke last Tuesday and Wednesday, their churches and what they're all about is really what we've been focusing on, and it's amazing how we've all come together and got to know each other, but it's this whole idea of caring for one another, and then it's about making the church as biblical as possible.

That's the goal, okay? It's not making the church as big as possible. Sure, I'd love thousands and thousands of people to come, but that's not the goal. The goal is to become as biblical as possible, and I

believe as we do that, people will be attracted to the church, and it'll be a light into the world, but just to start off what I want to say right here, I want to take you back to one of the first lessons I learned in seminary when they were teaching us how to interpret Scripture.

It was one of the few things I still remember, but one of the first lessons we taught, that we were taught, was what the difference between exegesis and eisegesis, okay? Two kind of seminary type words, but I'm going to throw them on the screen. So, you know, exegesis. Exegesis is an attempt to discover the meaning of the text objectively.

It comes from a Greek word. It means to draw out or to lead out. The whole idea is you're taking a text of Scripture, and you're objectively trying to discover what does this really say.

Now, eisegesis is the idea of importing a subjective meaning into the text. Here's what I mean. You can look at the Bible in two different ways.

One is you can start with the Bible, and that's exegesis. You start with the Bible. You start with the text and go, man, what does that mean? What does that mean? What does that mean? And you try to get the meaning out of it.

The other, eisegesis, what you don't want to do is we all have desires. We all have thoughts. We all have wants.

You know, we all have traditions, and what we'll do is we'll go into the Scripture going, you know what? I think this is true. Let me prove it by taking verses out of the Bible to prove my point of view. So you understand the difference? Like it's very easy to, you know, the temptation is to do eisegesis.

That means, and you can do anything with, you can proof text anything if you really want to. If you want to get a divorce, you can go, well, you know what? This verse actually could mean this. You want to build a mansion, you go, well, you know what? If you take this one verse here, I could justify this.

You want to hate someone, you go, well, you know what? There's this one guy that hate, you can justify anything. That's eisegesis. You have this desire, you start with an idea, and then you pull verses to support it.

Versus exegesis, which you start with the Bible and go, man, what would I come up with if I started with this? And I could put my feelings, my desires aside. What does this really say? That is exegesis. Now in seminary, I was taught to teach exegetically.

That's why sometimes I'll, like right now, we've been teaching through the Philippians. And I'm kind of going into Philippians going, okay, whatever it says, let's just do it. Now let's find out what it says.

And I don't really have a desire for Philippians. Like, I wanted to say this, or I wanted to, I'm just going, let's just go verse by verse, and whatever it says, that's what I'll teach. And I'm learning every week with you.

Here's what it seems like it says. Am I right? Am I crazy? You know, isn't this what it says, even though I don't like it sometimes, even though it doesn't fit with my lifestyle, rather than changing the scriptures, I got to change my lifestyle. And so I try to teach exegetically, and the tougher thing is to live exegetically, is to say, okay, how would I live if I just read this Bible, and I put aside my culture, put aside my desires, put aside what everyone else is doing, and just go, if I started with this, what type of lifestyle would come out

from here? And that's very difficult, and that's what we've been trying to do with the church.

Let me go ahead and turn that off. Interesting, for example, here, let me explain exegesis, eisegesis to you, and maybe a more tangible way. On Friday, a couple Mormons came to my door, okay? They knocked on my door, and we started talking.

You'd think they'd have my address, like, on a blacklist or something, but they came to my door, and you know, and two very nice guys come to my door, knock on the door, and we just start talking. We talk for about half an hour, you know, we just engage in a conversation, and I told them, my struggle is, if you started with this, would you ever come up with your belief system? And I said, okay, so you believe that God has a father, and that that father has a father, and he has a father, so there's a great-grandfather God, great-great-great-grandfather God, right? And they said, yes, we believe that there's a whole lineage of them, and I said, okay, and so where's grandfather right now? They go, we're not worried about him. He's somewhere, but we're not worried about him.

Okay, and they all became God, like they weren't God to begin with. No, they weren't God to begin with. They became God, and so there's just this lineage.

So, Jesus became God, and God the Father became God, and you guys are going to become gods. They're like, yes, and I said, are you gods right now? They go, no, we're sons of God, and I go, but you believe that you're eternal. I go, so were you eternally sons of God? He goes, no, eternally we were just some sort of matter, and then at some point, we're given a soul, and then we're given a body, and then we're going to become like God is now, and I said, gosh, it's so hard to get from this book.

I go, if I just read this book, I would think that God was eternal, that there's just one God that's always been, and that he didn't change, that he was the same yesterday, today, and forever, that he always was God. There's just one. I mean, I would just naturally, like you read, I don't know how you can make it any clearer, and I said, so that's my struggle with this, and I said, let's take the issue of even some of the other beliefs that you have.

I go, let's take blacks. I go, you guys didn't allow blacks into the priesthood until when? He said, 1979. I said, because you believed they were cursed by God, right? He goes, yeah, that was the mark of God's curse was their black skin, and I said, okay, well now, how about me? I said, I'm not black.

I mean, in the summer, I get pretty dark, you know, but you know, just honestly, I go, seriously, I go, what shade of black, you know, and they said, any shade. I said, so the whiter you are, you know, the more pure. He goes, yeah, any color showed that there was some of that in your background, and showed that you were part of those who received this curse from God, and I said, and isn't it strange to you that that ban was lifted in 1979, you know, after the, they're like, no, it makes perfect sense to me, and I go, I go, that's, see, I go, I can't get that.

I can't get that from here. Like, again, they go, no, you can make it. I said, I can't get your book of Mormon and mixing this together.

He goes, oh yeah, you can if you could see the big picture. We went into all different issues. I even had my daughter.

I was going, you know, honey, you got to come listen to this, because I wanted her, I wanted her to learn. I go, I want you to understand, you know, and we're going back and forth. I go, here's my problem is, I

would never put, I would never just read this, and then put it down and go, okay, I need to become God.

I need to, you know, go into succession and everything else. I would just say, no, there's this creator who just made me, and I just bow down to him. I just worship him, and there's Jesus.

It's about him, and I'm not going to become like him one day, you know. There'll be, you know, this sense in which I'm given a new body, and this, but I wouldn't come up with this whole theology if I started with this. Sure, you can take this verse here, and this verse here, and mix it all, and create this theology, but you'd never if you started this way.

It was no similar. It was no different than some Jehovah's Witnesses that came to my door, and when they were, I go, here's my struggle. I go, again, and you guys, I go, man, I like you guys.

I'm trying to, I'm not trying to be facetious here or whatever else. I'm just trying to understand how you think. I go, because you guys are teaching that Jesus is one of the archangels, you know.

You're teaching that Jesus is the same person as Michael, the archangel in the Old Testament, and explain, but Michael was just one of the chief princes, and then showed him Daniel 10, 13, where it says that Michael was one of the chief princes, and he goes, well, I never noticed that. I go, well, now do you notice? I mean, what does that do? I go, here again. My point is not, here, let me show you this, or let me question this one detail about your theology.

My point is, is you'd never open this book, read it from cover to cover 20 times, and go, you know what? Jesus is Michael the archangel. You'd never get that. Seriously, it's not like something that's going to, that's not what you're going to get, just like you're not going to get, you know, the whole succession of gods and on and on and on.

That's not what you would come to. What is, what is, what would you come to through exegesis, through reading this book, and just going, okay, what's the truth? See, and I told him, look, you guys grew up, I go, I feel bad for you. You grew up in a system.

You were told this way, and I can't imagine how hard it would be for you tonight to get by yourself, not even the two of you together, just alone with God. I don't think you really believe this when you're alone, and I said that. I go, I can't imagine you really do before the Holy Spirit, before the scriptures, just you alone.

Could you please just consider getting alone, and reading this book, and studying this book, and being open to the Holy Spirit, saying, whatever it says, I'm going to do, and I'm going to obey. Well, just try that rather than the system you were brought into. That's a really difficult thing to do when you're brought up a certain way.

Now, we'll listen to those examples, and you'll go right on, right on, right on. Okay, but now I want to challenge your upbringing, even in the evangelical church, even what we're doing right now, because this is what I've been struggling with for the last couple of years. If I started with scripture, let's be fair.

Let's be fair to everyone. Let's be fair to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Let's be fair to the Mormons, and let's look at ourselves, and go, if you started with this book, is this the type of gathering you would have come up with? For a thousand people to come, four different services, face forward, sing songs, listen to a message, go home, and say, I'm a part of Cornerstone Church.

Did we really arrive at that exegetically? These are the things I've been questioning for the last couple of years, and especially of late. See, because when I started this church, I didn't think this way. I'll be honest with you.

When I started the church back in 1994, here's what went through my mind. Okay, we're going to start a church here, so what do I need? And so I think to myself, what do I have to do to start a church in my evangelical framework? Well, I must have a building. I must have someone leading music.

I must come up with a sermon. I must have a sound system, and I must have child care. Right? Seriously, those were the five absolutes right there in my mind, because how do you do church without those things? Everyone knows you got to have a place to meet.

You got to have a building and call it a church. Even though it was the Sinaloa cafeteria, you know, that was going to be our building. We bought a little radio shack, you know, sound system, and you got to have a sound system so people can hear you.

We got a band, you know, to lead us in singing, because you got to have singing. And I put a sermon together, because you got to have sermon, and we had, you know, this one lady take care of all of our kids in one of the classrooms, because you got to have that. And now my question is, says who? If I started with Scripture, and I got to apologize for this, because I didn't.

I mean, why look at Scripture when there's so many other great models to follow of people doing church and very successful. If I started with Scripture, what would I have come up with? Because you guys know within a few years, Cornerstone was the place to go. It was the popular church to go to.

It's biggest show in town. The most successful church. Says who? Is it success based upon what the Bible says is success? And what would we come up with? What type of gathering would we come up with if we started with Scripture? This is difficult, you guys.

It's been difficult for me, but I want to be fair. I want to be fair to what we're talking about of exegesis and starting with Scripture. See, if I had started with Scripture, and I've been trying to think this through a lot and redefining success, what would I emphasize? What would these gatherings have to have based upon what I know of Scripture? And I'm not talking about pulling a verse out of the Bible and saying, look, I found this one verse that says this.

I just tried to objectively go, okay, what do I know? What do I know about the Bible? And this may wreck a lot of things that I was in charge of building. But if I started with Scripture, I was thinking, okay, what does it emphasize? What does it emphasize? Obviously, it emphasized the holiness and glory of God. What would we do in these gatherings, though? And the first thing that I believe jumps out more than any other, and you study Scripture, see if it's any different to you, that if a gathering of quote-unquote followers of Jesus got together, the one thing that should really stand out is love one another.

Like when I read Scripture, and I just see dozens of times where God, Jesus commands love one another, love one another, that if I were to gather these followers of Christ together, there must be incredible love in that gathering. I don't care how many people are there. I don't care how massive it is, how small it is.

There's got to be incredible love for each other. That's what I would get from the Bible. And yet the truth is, is for years, I didn't care about that at all.

What I cared about was having quality musician worship, you know, heartfelt worship, and good teaching. And those aren't bad things. Of course you want that.

But is that the priority? I believe teaching is one of the priorities, and I'll get to that. But first priority, I would say, is love. And yet I would say that we've had services for years and years and years where no one's loved each other.

You come, you sit, you look forward, I give a message, you go home. I don't see that in Scripture. I don't see that the body of Christ or believers should ever get together without truly loving upon one another.

And we live in a society that everyone's very, we live in America, so it's all about independence. I don't need you. You don't need me.

I got my own thing figured out. I'm going to work it out. And so I come in here.

This was me. I don't like fellowship. I don't want to hang out with people.

I like being alone. I get irritated. I get impatient.

I get, you know, I do better by myself. You know, I share this before, you know, one of the first things, you know, when Lisa and I were married a couple years, and she says, what do you love most about me, honey? And I said, you know, of all the people on this earth, you bug me the least. Okay, so that gives you a little insight into my mind.

Now she thought that was very romantic at that time. She goes, wow, really? The least? You know, it's just, but honestly, when I'd go to church, I didn't really want to talk to anyone. I'd like to sit in the back and just have my time with God.

Church is my time with God. You guys, I don't see that biblically. Yes, I have my time with God.

Yes, I love him more than anyone. But the gathering was to love one another. How much, I look back, and I'm sick of this.

It really does literally make me sick. I'm not, I'm not going, oh, I've done nothing with my life. Okay, there's good things.

Good things have happened. I'm just saying, come on, this has got to be priority, loving one another. That's what I would get if I started with Scripture, and that's more than feelings like, oh, you know, Gabriel, I really feel love in my heart for you.

It's not about that. It's about, no, I care about you, so do you got any needs right now? You guys, you guys okay financially? Can I help you out? Do you need a place to stay? You know, is Chantal getting on your nerves? You want to come over? No, no, I'm just kidding. You know, but the whole thing is, like, love in that way.

We're a tangible love, not just, oh, we just have this great feeling, and sometimes we hold hands. It's not about that. That's not what I see in Scripture.

In fact, it says, let's stop loving with word, and let's start loving with action and truth. That's what I would see, and so I would see a loving amongst one another. I would also, second thing I'd see in Scripture,

again, and it's not a verse, but I think it's just all through Scripture, that the people gathering together had a focus of getting this message out.

Don't you see that in Scripture? Like, they live, that's the only reason why they're on the earth, is to proclaim this message, this gospel truth that we're talking about, and some of you, you know it doesn't even make sense to you. Your life doesn't make sense to you. Some of you have not told anyone about Jesus in years, and you know that doesn't sit well in your soul, because when you read the Scriptures, you go, that's what I'm supposed to be doing, and you've never felt right about it, but then you meet a bunch of other people who don't do that either, and it just becomes this comfortable thing, and you gather, and you have Bible studies together, and you hang out.

It's like, oh, you know, but we feel for each other more, and you know, a few of us cried at Bible study this week, and so this must be good. Well, I don't see that as the emphasis of the New Testament. I see this commitment, these people that would gather saying, we've got to get this message out.

Jesus Christ came. He died for the sins of the world. He rose from the grave and offers us an opportunity to be a part of the kingdom.

This is good news. Our sins of the past are going to be wiped away, and now we're saved. We can put to death the sins of the flesh right now, and there's this amazing grace that's the unsearchable riches that are in store for us, and we've got this whole future.

We've got to get this word out. I read recently this week, I don't know who wrote it, but he says, you know, God's intention was that we would gather these fishers of men. The church was supposed to be fishers of men, where we go out, and we're trying to, you know, you know, he goes, but instead of becoming fishers of men, we'd become an aquarium.

Wow, that's pretty good. You know, it's just, we've lost that focus because we don't want to. Who wants to go talk to people that are going to reject them, and so let's just change things, and we'll change our method.

I don't really want to talk to even other people, so let's just change things and create a service where you don't have to talk to other people. You can just kind of get lost. Let's create a place where, you know, we can just get together, and you know, and have these Bible studies, and not really reach out to the world, because that's harder, but that's not what I see in Scripture.

I'm going, no, this isn't, and by this idea of proclaiming the message, what I would get from Scripture is that you would teach them to obey everything that God commanded. That's what he says in that great commission. Go, make disciples, and teach them to obey everything I commanded.

It's teaching people to have faith in Christ, but faith in Christ is not just an intellectual ascent that, yes, he died on the cross and rose from the grave. I don't believe that for a second. You wouldn't get that from Scripture.

Believing in Christ means you believe in Christ. You believe everything that he taught. You believe that you could trade in this life of comfort, and luxury, and all about me, and making myself safe for the rest.

You can trade that in for a life that's better. You die to yourself, and he'll give you something better. If you try to hold on to this, and add Jesus to your life, it's not going to work.

He won't allow that. That's what I would get from Scripture, and so we need to proclaim that message. That's what the people gathering together, I would gather together.

If I went just with the Bible, I would gather people that were focused on getting the word out, and let's get together, and let's encourage each other to keep doing this, because we're going to want to stop. We're going to want to stop and just build our own little lives, so we're going to encourage people to keep on doing that, and you know what, and I'll help you. You're my brother.

You're my sister. We're on this mission together. What's mine is yours.

That's what I would get, is loving one another, and proclaiming the message together. Thirdly, I would see a dependence on the Holy Spirit. When I read the New Testament, I go, man, the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, we're dead. There's no way we're going to pull this thing off. This is going to be supernatural.

Holy Spirit, or nothing. There's no way I can reach the holiness that God wants me to achieve on this earth, aside from the Holy Spirit, because I know me. I know where I'll take myself.

There's no way I can figure out this mission God's called me to. I would read the Scripture and go, okay, this Holy Spirit will guide me into all truth, and He would direct us, and we as a group of people, whoever, whether it's in my house, by the park, wherever, the people that gather together, we go, okay, come on God, Holy Spirit, show us what to do next. Where do we go, and we'd really surrender ourselves to Him.

Fourthly, another thing that I just see all throughout the New Testament is this idea of communion. Now, this is weird to me, honestly, because I, in my mind, I wouldn't put so much emphasis on communion, but it seems like in the New Testament, I mean, am I wrong? It seems like they really would intentionally get together from house to house to break bread and take of the cup. They would go from house to house doing that.

Why? They would get together reminding each other, look, this is what matters. They would have meals together, and then at the end, they would break the bread and go, come on, we're a part of something bigger, and they'd break that bread. Remember, Jesus' body was broken for us.

Let's remember that. They'd take of the cup together. Look, you know, look in each other in the eyes.

Look, this is what we're about, right? We're committed to this. This is the most important thing. And the fifth thing, and there's many more, but these were the things that I thought must take place, was prayer.

I would gather people together to pray, pray with these people, and we would pray to come into the presence of God. We would pray and say, God, we're about your kingdom, and so help us understand how to further your kingdom. Let's figure this thing out.

If I were to start all over, I would just gather some people for those things. I would just gather some people and go, man, let's love on each other because we believe in this mission. Let's encourage each other.

We got to keep just reaching the world with this amazing message and put other things aside. I would get together, and we would pray, and we would pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit, and we would break bread with one another. And because my gift is teaching, I would do some of the teaching in that setting, or I, you know, and if there were other groups, you know, and if it got too big, it's like, okay, you do some

teaching.

And we wouldn't care so much about the superstar speaker or whatever. It would just be, man, who can teach me the Word of God? We love the Word of God. See, that's what I would do if I started all over.

And if I gathered a group of people who loved on each other like that and broke bread with each other like that and went out proclaiming the message out like that, then I believe I could rightfully call it a church. And I've really been questioning whether or not we have the right to call ourselves a church unless we're doing those things. Otherwise, we're redefining it.

Otherwise, I could say, well, I went swimming the other day, so I'm a Navy SEAL, you know? Well, they swim. You know, it's the same thing. It's just this whole idea of, wait, we call people followers of Christ even though they don't follow Him.

That doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't make sense that, well, but they go to church. That doesn't make you a believer, a follower.

And in the same way, well, I'm a part of the church. Why? Because you attend one of these services we have? Is that really what God called the church in Scripture, or was it this group of people that got together, encouraged each other that way, and just truly loved on each other? See, I just--here's the thing. Understand, I'm not saying that these services are bad.

I think this is a good thing. I think it's a good thing that we've done. Is it the best thing, and is it the commanded thing? That's what I question.

I would say no. Is it good to--I'd rather you be here than at a movie, you know? So in that way, it's good. You're going to hear the Word of God.

You're going to be together with other believers, and that's a good thing. We're going to worship God. I'm just saying the priority--I mean, shouldn't our energies be prioritized and used on what is commanded first, right? Okay, what is commanded? So I would--see, if I had to do it over again, I'd go, okay, what's commanded? I must love.

I must do this. I must do this. So let me gather that.

Now, if we want to have services like this where some of you come, and you want to learn stuff, and maybe some of you haven't made the commitment yet. You're not full-on, you know, followers of Jesus, but we can do that. There's nothing wrong with that.

Services are fine. They're fine, but what's commanded? What's commanded is this getting together and practicing all these one another's, which we really can't do in a room this size. You really can't love on one another.

You really can't serve one another. I mean, the one another--the Bible, here's the commands. Love one another.

Be at peace with one another. Show hospitality with one another. Honor one another.

Receive one another. Do not fight with one another. Serve one another.

Don't envy one another. Admonish one another. Greet one another.

Care for one another. Bear the burdens of one another. Show deference to one another.

Forgive one another. Be kind to one another. Submit to one another.

Don't lie to one another. Provoke to good works one another. Comfort one another.

Concern yourselves in the affairs of one another. Don't hate one another. Don't speak evil of one another, but pray for one another.

Be like-minded toward one another. Do not hold a grudge against one another. Highly esteem one another.

Don't be partial toward one another. Have fellowship with one another. Edify one another.

Teach one another. Do good to one another. Exhort one another.

Minister spiritual gifts to one another. These are the commands of Scripture. And I'm going, are we really doing that? Or do we have one guy up here teaching and we sing some songs together? And we call it church? I don't think we have the right to do that.

Now, some of you are living out what we were talking about this week. You're getting together in groups. You're getting together in your communities, and you're being the church because you're doing these one another's.

But my point is we've got to stop calling this church. We can call this service. We can call it happy time.

We can call it whatever you want. I just don't feel comfortable calling this church biblically. If I want to be fair to these different cults and fair to everyone else, I got to go back to Scripture and go, here it is.

I believe that to call this church is unbiblical, and I confess that I have called it church in the past because I just started with what people told me I was supposed to do. Now I'm looking back at Scripture, and here's what I'm asking you to do. I'm going to ask you to do something extremely difficult this week, just like I asked those Mormons to do, just like I asked the Jehovah's Witnesses to do.

Now I'm going to ask a bunch of evangelicals to do. I want you to go back to Scripture this week and say, what is obviously in Scripture? What does Scripture really teach, and what would your life look like if you started with the Word of God? And rethink this. This is what I've been doing for the last couple of years, just thinking, okay, if I just had this book on an island, what would I come up with? What would I do? And I will tell you right now, coming from me, I hate it.

A lot of things I hate. I think that's too strong. I just really don't enjoy that every bone in my body fights against doing some of this stuff because I don't feel like doing this a lot of times, and yet when I do it, I feel at peace.

I know it's right, but I shared a couple weeks ago, you know, we took in a family, and I got eight kids running around my house now. Eight. There's 13 of us in this house.

I wake up every morning and go, this stinks. I do, and I wake up every morning and go, there better be a heaven. I'm dead serious, and I love that part of it.

So I go, this is what he was talking about. Like, there better be a reward in this. If there's no resurrection from the dead, like Paul says, I'm above all men most to be pitied, then this looks really dumb.

I look at my bank account. I look at everything and go, this is really dumb. If there's no heaven, this better be right.

There better be a heaven, and that's the way, but I'm feeling more peace than ever though. I'm going, man, this is right. This is right.

This is biblical though, and I tell you, do you know what it feels like? Yeah, it's difficult to just have your whole house in disarray and everything else, but then to see this kid who was homeless, you know, just this, the one, one of them, the three-year-old, just grabbing my leg and calling me daddy, and laughing hysterically. Laughing like to where he can't even control himself as I'm throwing him in the air, and I'm going, man, have I ever in my life painted a better picture of God as a father to the fatherless? Have I ever done that? So, I'm looking at that kid and go, man, that's exactly what Jesus did for me. He took me in.

God took me in. He adopted me. He allowed me to call him father.

He's got me laughing hysterically, and I'm going, you know what? That's what I'm supposed to be doing, and I need to be encouraged by other people to say, you know what? Yeah, hold on. Keep doing that. I know it's hard.

It's hard to wake up every morning. It's hard to go to bed every night. It's difficult, but it's got, it's worth it.

I mean, I'm sure Paul had those times when he's being beaten, when he has rocks thrown at him, when he's shipwrecked in the middle of the ocean, just going, man, what in the world am I doing here? And he goes, but it better be worth it. See, it makes sense, and I'm just saying that it is not easy. It's not easy for me at all, and it's not going to be easy for you.

Now, people say, well, what's the end result of all this, Francis? What's the church going to look like in five years? I have no clue. My elders don't have any clue. I have no idea what my life's going to look like at the end of this.

I just want to be fair to the scriptures and start with the scriptures and say, for now, all I know is I can't call this church anymore, and we're trying to gather people together to be the church, and I don't know what these things will look like in the future or if we'll have these things, but we've got to start with the priority. We've got to decide what is sacred and what is not. If this is sacred, then we've got to start getting together and loving on each other and caring for one another, forgiving each other, putting up with each other, and caring for the needs of the world, going out and rescuing and being Christ to other people.

These services are not sacred, because I don't see that, and yet some of you will want to hold these services sacred because that's what you were raised with, and I'm saying, go back to this book. Let's figure this out. Next week, we are having services, okay? Easter, just for now, this is what we're doing, but I'm telling you, I don't know where it's going.

I don't know where my life is going. All I know is I'm finally feeling peace because I'm aligning myself with this book, and it's not easy, but man, it's just right. Todd's going to come up, and he's going to lead us in a time of communion, which, you know, we've been talking like, is this even the right venue for communion, because so much of it in the Bible was you look in other believers in the eye and going, right, we're

together on this, and you're drinking in that one cup.

There's a unity in that, and so as we talk about this stuff, if you go, you know what, I've never been a part of the church. I want to be a part of the church. There'll be people up here in the prayer room to pray with you because baptism, which goes along with community, is a part of that, too.

I wouldn't have, from this book, I wouldn't have people raise their hand and pray a prayer. I would have them walk up, die to themselves through baptism, rise again to a new life. That's what I would get from this book.

That's why we don't do the prayer prayer thing. It's like, no, I want to, I'm going to follow God and myself and follow Jesus Christ, and if you want to do that, there's a cost to it, but I'm telling you, it's so worth it, and one day God's going to show off the riches for those of us who sacrificed anything on this earth. It is going to be so worth it, and if you want to be a part of us, you can come up during this time of communion.

There'll be people at the prayer room.

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