

Rethinking Church

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan emphasizes the need to rethink church by focusing on love, community, and the mission of spreading the Gospel as defined by Scripture.

Duration: 11:14

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Church Life", "Ecclesiology"

Description

The sermon emphasizes the biblical description of the church, focusing on four key aspects: love, mission, gathering, and equipping. It highlights the importance of a church being a loving family that cares for one another, is dedicated to spreading the message of Jesus, gathers to focus on communion and prayer, and equips leaders for ministry. The speaker challenges the traditional church structure and encourages a more intimate, mission-focused, and biblically grounded approach to church life.

Transcript

If someone asked you to describe church, just using the Bible, like you're not allowed to use any of your experiences, just use the Bible and explain church to them, what would you say? Okay, we've got to start with that. We have to start with God's Word. Otherwise, we're going to start creating these things that we like or we want and go, well, I want this in a church.

I want this in a church. And we could spend our whole life getting good at that even, but it would be almost like making a great bowl of spaghetti and then come to the end of your life and God going, I ordered steak. I ordered something completely different.

So what does the Word of God say about the church? I've been asking people this question, describe church just using the Bible. And four things keep coming up. The number one thing is love.

They would say it's a group of people. They're like a family. They're so in love with one another.

They care for one another. They meet one another's needs. It's like, what's mine is yours.

If I hurt, you hurt. It's just this body of people. Second thing that people say from the scriptures is it seems like it was a group of people that just had to get this message out.

Like they were on a mission. There are people who do not know about Jesus. So this group assembled to figure out how are we going to get this message out to them.

The third thing that they brought up was it seems like they gathered. And when they gathered, they were focused on the body and blood of Jesus Christ. That communion was a big deal.

And they were devoted to praying for one another, fellowshiping with one another, and learning this book. And then the fourth thing that they would bring up is it seems like there was an equipping or a training that took place. Like there were leaders in the church that actually instructed the other people on how to do ministry, equip them for working, equip them for serving the Lord.

And everyone has this gift. And so the leaders equip them to do those things. So that's what they're saying is church.

And I would agree. When I look at the Bible, I don't know what you see, but I go, man, that's a beautiful picture. That's what I see about the church.

And so then we have to ask ourselves, are we experiencing that? Am I experiencing that in my church? And I don't know what you go through or where you attend church, but in my experiences, in the churches I've observed and been a part of, it's rare when I see family. It's rare when I see that love that we were talking about, where you walk in to a gathering and go, I cannot believe how much these people love each other. I mean, if an unbeliever walked in, they'd be shocked going, I've never seen this kind of love.

And then we can just say, man, that was the Holy Spirit. That's something that God's done in us. But when have you seen that? And then as far as urgency in mission, I don't know if I've ever seen a group of people that just go, okay, we've got to get the word out.

We're on this mission. We got to get to all of these people. I mean, is that what you're experiencing in church? Thirdly, with the gatherings, are we really seeing this type of coming together where we're all using our gifts to bless one another, where there's just this fellowship with one another, and there's this prayer for one another, and we're studying the Bible together, and we're putting the body and blood of Jesus Christ on the forefront, and really celebrating that with one another as a family.

It's going, gosh, it doesn't seem like there's that type of participation in the church. It feels more like going to the movies rather than going to the gym. It's sit back and let them do it versus, no, I'm going to give to this, and I'm going to leave feeling great because I put effort into this.

And then as far as training, most of the churches I've been a part of, it feels like we're trying to recruit leaders rather than develop them and send them out. And it just seems like, man, how can we get this person, how can we gather all these people here rather than having that family mentality where we go, I'm going to raise my kids for 18 years, and then when they turn 18, I want them to be able to go out there, start their own jobs, eventually start their own families, take care of themselves. Instead in the church, it's more like, hey, you know, I want my kids to live in my house for the rest of my life.

It's like, no, we've got to put that pressure on them. We've got to train up these leaders, all these sheep that God's given you. The goal is let me raise them to stand on their own two feet and even start their own ministries.

And so when we looked at the shortcomings of church experiences that we had, we said, you know, something has to change. It's not optional. And it's not like we have all these answers now.

It's just saying we've got to experiment. We've got to just try something different. Maybe there's something in the way that we structure that would enable us to prioritize the things we see in Scripture.

This has to be done. It has to change. So we said, okay, let's start a church.

Let's start a new church. But let's put aside all those assumptions that we started with last time. Like when we start a church, we usually assume that means we need a preacher, a good preacher, right? How do you start a church without that? We need a building.

We need a guy that leads a few songs. We need a youth pastor. We need a children's pastor.

You know, we go down this road and go, okay, no, I don't see that in here. What do we need to start with? We need to start with people who are followers of Jesus who say, you know what? We will love one another like a family. And we will focus on this mission of getting the message of Jesus Christ and spreading his love to those who don't know it.

And you know what? We are going to gather to train one another up, to build one another up so that we can go out and really obey this word. And so by doing that, we said, okay, let's be careful not to get distracted by these other things. And what do we want to do? What is the form that this church is going to take? And one of the first things we decided was let's meet in homes.

Let's meet in homes because this will enable us to actually know each other, care for each other, and live like a family. Let's meet in a house. This will also keep us from getting distracted by salaries because you can shepherd 10 to 20 people without a salary.

You can work a full-time job and all we're saying is build into three or four people who will in turn build into three or four people. And so we're not distracted by that. We're not distracted by a building.

You know, we have homes. So let's use those and let's just focus on loving each other. Success is how much did we practically love each other throughout the week? Second thing we decided was let's only be together for a year maximum.

Okay? So six months from a year from now, we'll split into two churches and you're going to hate it. You're going to hate when we multiply because we're going to be so in love with each other. But for the sake of the mission, if we don't just determine we're going to divide and multiply, we're going to want to stay together forever and we'll become this ingrown church and we'll just be about each other and not about the mission that God called us to.

And so it puts this great pressure of, you know what? I've got to be prepared. We're going to be dividing and multiplying and reaching the rest of the people. Third thing we decided was let's read through the Bible together.

Let's read through the Bible in a year. We'll read the same passages every day. And what this causes is now the focus is on the word itself rather than a messenger.

Now, when Sunday comes, we've already talked throughout the week about the passages that we studied. And so Sunday, you don't have this dire need for 45 minutes of instruction. Feed me everything I can from

the Bible.

I've already studied it for myself. I've learned to study and I've fellowshiped over it. So now we can share what we've learned.

And so we can just give a short little teaching and spend the majority of our time on Sundays praying for each other, really expecting results, and celebrating the Lord's Supper together. Let's prioritize. And God wanted us to get together just to remember his son.

And we can fellowship and share a meal together. It's that type of gathering. And then the fourth thing that we decided is, okay, let's start training leaders.

We have to because six months to a year from now, we're going to have two of these. And so let's start raising up leaders. Let's teach theology to the key guys who are going to spread out and lead their own church.

Let's prepare them as men of God, as elders, and get them out there. And so it's that type of mindset where we're producing leaders and we're gathering together in this way and we're learning theology as we're doing ministry. And it's been a great process.

Not that we have everything figured out, but it's been an amazing process. And a lot of this sprung up because I was a pastor for 17 years at one church. It was something we started in the home.

And man, I tell you, it's one of the greatest experiences of my life. What an amazing season. We saw God do great things.

And I was in love with that group of people. And a lot was done, so much fruit. But we also saw that there were limitations.

And the larger we got, there was concern about, wow, was this the most effective way to use God's resources? I mean, when there were 20 people and we multiplied it by 200, I go, man, that was great to see that type of growth come from those 20 people to 200 or 200 to 2,000. But when we had 4,000 people and we reached maybe 100 or 200, now we're going, okay, is this the most efficient way? Is there a way to do church that would resemble more like the church in China, where without buildings, without salaries, they were able to multiply in these homes and grow to an estimated over 100 million people? It's like, okay, could that same type of format happen here? And could we even do it in a way that it's more biblical and more love, more mission, more fellowship, and the right attraction to the gathering, and a multiplication of leaders? We believe it can happen. And again, I'm not saying, hey, this is the way to do it.

I'm just saying, this is something we've been pursuing. We've been loving it. And I believe we're going to spend the rest of our lives pursuing this dream.

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