

# Who Is the Cult?

by Francis Chan

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*Francis Chan challenges the modern church to embrace the radical community and boldness exemplified by the early believers in Acts.*

**Duration:** 50:13

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42, Acts 2:44-45, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 2:14-26, 1 Peter 4:8-10

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true commitment to following Jesus, challenging the congregation to reflect on their level of dedication and action in living out the teachings of the Bible. It addresses the need for believers to love one another, pray for boldness, and be willing to sacrificially serve and care for those in need, drawing inspiration from the early church in Acts. The speaker encourages a shift from mere attendance to active participation in the mission of spreading the message of Jesus, highlighting the power of the Holy Spirit to enable believers to live out their faith.

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## Transcript

What goes through your mind when you hear that story of the early church? Like, do you listen to that and go, man, that would have been such a great thing to be a part of, right? I mean, don't we all listen to that and go, gosh, I wish I could see that. I wish I could be a part of that. I wish I could have been there.

But I wonder what goes on in your mind after you hear that in the sense of what does that mean for us today? Because I'll tell you what happens when I read through the book of Acts. Like, I want to read just a real short passage to you. It's in Acts chapter 4. You continue on, you're reading about the church and its beginnings, and you get to Acts chapter 4. And I was reading this passage, verse 29.

The believers are together and they're praying. There is Larry Redd. You know, they're in this upper room and they're praying for like 40 days for something to happen.

And then this amazing, I'm sorry, they were praying in that upper room for 10 days. And then at the day of Pentecost, as they're praying for something amazing to happen, you see this incredible sound come. You see this fire from heaven come down.

You see this preaching take place in all these different languages that were unknown to them. You see 3,000 people come to the Lord. You see the church get started.

Just an amazing, amazing time. And then in Acts chapter 4, as it continues on in verse 29, it says they're praying again. And they say, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

While you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant, Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul. And no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own. But they had everything in common.

And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And a great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them.

For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid at the apostles feet. And it was distributed to each as he had need. See, I read about that.

And I go, okay, wow. So a group of them are just praying that they would have boldness. Okay, do you believe this actually happened? Yeah? You guys believe this happened? Like, so they're together and they're praying for boldness.

Because all this is that Jesus says, this is what's going to happen. This is what's going to happen. Amazing things are happening.

And then Acts chapter four, they're praying again and saying, God, make us even more bold. Help us get this message out there. You know, I get afraid to talk to this guy about you, but give me boldness.

I want to get through the persecution, everything else. They're praying and suddenly everything starts to shake. And so you've got this, this crazy, you know, filling of the Holy Spirit.

And most of us in this room would say, no, I really believe that happened. And then they start saying, you know what? No one, no one. It says the full number.

So every single person who believed, those thousands of people who claim to believe this message, the full number of them, every single person just kind of let go of all of their possessions and said, you know what? This doesn't really belong to me anymore. It belongs to us. And they start selling everything and they laid it at the apostles' feet.

They just brought it all forward and said, hey, just give it to whoever has need. So everyone let go of their stuff. This amazing, the full number of them.

This wasn't a few individuals. These were all of the believers and they're gathered together. I mean, just, we just got to get this message out and take care.

So no one in that whole number of people was in need because the love of this group of people. Now, I don't know what that does to you when you read it, but three thoughts come to my mind. First thought, that doesn't sound like us, right? That's not us.

Second thing that comes to my mind is I want it to be us. The third thought that comes to my mind, it can be us. Now, I don't know what goes through your mind, but I have a hunch.

I'm willing to even put money on it. That some of you would say, well, maybe all of us would say that's not us, right? But the second thing, I'm willing to bet some of you go, I don't want that to be us. I kind of like life the way it is.

I kind of like just attending a service, doing my Christian duty, throwing maybe a couple of bucks in the box when I leave out, you know, and serving a little bit here and there. But this whole family thing, I don't know if I really want to be that close to people. I don't know that I want to pray for boldness so that I spend my life telling everyone.

I don't know if I want that. And I also believe there are those in the room that go, even if I wanted that, I don't think it's possible today. I don't think we could create that type of culture.

So rather than saying, ah, that's not us, but I want it to be us, and I believe it can be us, I think there are people go, that's not us, but I'm not sure I even want it to be us. And even if I wanted it to be us, I don't know we could pull it off in our culture. See, I think that's the way I've typically read the book of Acts in the past, where I go, I don't know.

I mean, I believe he did it back then, but it's almost like I believe his spirit changed, like it's not possible now because of our culture, because of whatever else. And yet, the more I read the Scriptures, and the more I look at it, I go, I don't know. I really believe that the Holy Spirit is still the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and the same is true of the Holy Spirit.

It doesn't mean that he's going to manifest himself in the exact same ways as he did in the past, because as you read Scripture, you see that, you know, that God is always active, but he manifests in different ways. God's a creator. It's not so much a duplicator.

He's creating new movements, but his spirit is just as strong, as just as powerful as ever. And I believe that. I believe that with all my heart.

And I think most of us, I mean, let's be honest, when you read this, isn't there somewhat of a lack of peace whenever you read the book of Acts? Because you go, man, that's so different, so different, like radically different. The power that was there. Why aren't I feeling that sense of awe? How come I'm not? How come these things aren't happening now? How come we're not experiencing this? How come we're not even praying for the same things? When we get together for prayer meetings, how often do we get together and pray in absolute faith, and pray for boldness? How often do you get together with your believing friends, and your one prayer is, Holy Spirit, give us even more boldness against all of the people who hate this message, who can't stand Jesus.

Give us more boldness, more boldness, more boldness. But most of our prayer meetings are getting together, and just praying for our own needs, or our health needs, or the need, and then there's nothing wrong with that. I'm just saying that the early believers were so focused on this mission.

It's a commitment level. A couple weeks ago, I was talking about commitment level. Now on Monday, I think it was Monday.

When was opening day at Dodger Stadium? Was that Monday? Yeah, I went to opening. How many went to opening day at Dodger Stadium? Anyone? Anyone? Okay, a few of you. A few Dodger fans.

This first time, I'm not a Dodger fan. I mean, I am, and I'm not. I've been to like maybe five games, but I went this year to opening day, because I was invited, and it was free, and it's like everything has to be right for me to go to a game, and I was in the front row, because that's how I roll, and right next to the dugout.

Okay, right next to the dugout, and I didn't know, but you know, and when I was invited, they go, yeah, and you can eat everything you want. It's free, and it's not just Dodger dogs. They actually have this restaurant you go to, and you get a little to-go box, and they had steak and salmon and everything else.

I mean, whatever you want. You go back as much as you want, and so I'm down on the front row eating my steak and salmon, and you know, I mean, the opening ceremonies were amazing. I mean, they had a stealth bomber go by.

They had just everything. It was insane. About 60,000 people in this trying to cram into one parking lot.

I mean, it was insane. The traffic just to get there was so crazy. I mean, we got all the way to the stadium, and it still took an hour just to kind of inch your way into the parking lot, and finally get, you know, finally get your gourmet food, go down to the front, and you sit there listening to the national anthem, and I mean, it was amazing, but then I just look around, and I'm like one of maybe 10 people who doesn't have a Dodger shirt on, or a hat or something, and I'm just looking around, and I'm just looking at this commitment level.

I'm thinking, man, I mean, it was a crazy ordeal to get there. It took so long, and tickets are expensive. I was like looking at the ticket.

I was getting like, wow, that's a lot of money, you know, and I know most of you guys don't pay that much, but you know, you guys are in the cheap seats, but it's just the thought of this. I'm looking, and everyone, the amount of money, the time, everything. I go, wow, that's a lot of commitment to be a Dodger fan, and to me, I look at that, and I go, there are a lot of things in this world that people are committed to.

I mean, radically committed to, so I know a commitment level is possible if it's something you just love dearly, and like I'll be the first to say, I'm not a Dodger fan. I mean, I like them. I like them probably more than any other baseball team, but I'm not.

I wouldn't call myself a fan, because I only go if everything is perfect, you know. I mean, I won't sit up where some of you guys sit. I mean, it's just like, I'll just sit in front of the TV.

I mean, I will only go now if it's in the front row, so if you guys, seriously, if you invite me to a game, I'll probably say, oh, I'm busy, I'm busy, I'm busy. Front row, oh, maybe, you know. Who are they playing? You know, it's just, it's that perfect, particular, and the truth is, is that's the way a lot of people are with church, right? Well, if it's just perfect, I mean, where, you know, how crowded is it going to be that day? Which service are you going to go to? What time is it at? You know, who's speaking? How long are they going to speak for? Are they going to do the music? Are they going to do this? Are they going to do that? I mean, it's got to be just perfect.

See, but then there's those diehards, you know, that says, you know what, I'll meet anywhere. I'll pray with anyone. This is everything to me.

I'll, you know, it's the followers of Jesus. It's the ones who say, I don't care if it's perfect. I don't care if we meet outside.

I don't care if we meet in my house. I don't care if we meet in our backyard. I don't care if it's five in the morning.

Let me just get together with the believers because this is a mission. This is everything to me. It's about commitment, and I was talking about that a couple weeks ago, and I talked about how we really can't call this church, just because we attend a service, that doesn't make us the church.

Just like if we say we prayed a prayer, that doesn't make you a Christian. We've got to be careful with these terms. It's like, are you really a follower of Jesus Christ? That's what a Christian is, and the church is a body of believers and followers of Jesus that are determined to get this message of Jesus out to the world, and I was talking about how the believers or the church, they gather together, and they practice the one another's.

They actually loved one another. They seriously considered themselves members of one another. It's just like the Bible says, it's like a part of the body, like a finger is a part of the body, that I am a part of this body of Christ.

See, that's the church, and all I was questioning is, can we attend a service and call ourselves the church, or is there more in Scripture? And then it was interesting because it caused quite a stir, and that's a good thing, and the response over the last couple weeks has been about, you know, the majority has been positive, but it's split by 60-40 or so, and that's a good thing. It really is. Some are more excited than ever going, man, that's what I've always read in the And I can't wait to just become more and more of that, and others have said, you know what, I think I'm going to attend somewhere else, and again, that's not a bad thing because when Jesus spoke, many were like, oh, I don't know.

I mean, I like it. I like him, but I don't know if I want to commit to that degree, and it says many would leave. Many would leave when he was teaching, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, but you know, and honestly, the negatives I've heard about this idea of, let's really be the church, middle of the week, whenever, wherever, that the comments that are negative has actually brought me more peace, and the reason is, is because I have yet to hear one person quote a verse against what we're pursuing as a church, and that was my message.

If you remember, remember we were talking about exegesis, and let's start with scripture. This is supposed to be a bible teaching church, and so biblically, what does church look like? What does a follower look like? Let's go to the scriptures, and so as people have gone to the scriptures, they're going, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but the negativity, I still want to hear just one verse that shows that this pursuit of these gatherings, where we love one another, and forgive one another, and care for one another, and confess our sins to one another, just one verse to show me where that's wrong, and that's why for me, it's like, wow, this is great, even with the negativity. It's all stuff that is opinion.

It's all stuff that I don't know if we can do that. I don't know if we're going to pull off. Nonetheless, I want to, I want to address some of these, because I just want to address three, three comments that I've heard over the last couple of weeks, and just talk about them, because that's great.

I want the interaction. I think that's how we learn. I think that's how iron sharpens iron, as people go, I don't know about this.

I don't know about this, but again, I encourage you. I strongly encourage you. This is a church that strongly encourages you to read this book, read this book, read this book, read this book, because that's what the Bereans did.

It says in the book of Acts that the apostles would teach things, and what they would do is, they would go back to the scriptures to see if what they were saying was true. They'd go back and say, okay, Francis said this, is that really what it says in that passage, and look through it. That's encouraged here.

We want you to look at this book, and go, man, I don't know if you hit it. I mean, the elders, the other pastors will come to me, and we'll work through passages, and go, ah, I don't know. Before I even speak now, I meet with other elders, and go, hey, you know what, this is what I'm thinking about this passage.

Am I off? And they'll kind of go through, and we'll study it together, and they'll give me some different background, because I don't know everything. I mean, sometimes I think I do, but I don't, and I'll go, hey, am I missing something, because this seems obvious, and sometimes they'll tell me, no, you know, this is it. Oh yeah, you're right, and we work together, and we sharpen each other, and we come to these conclusions, and I love it, because it's even my messages now, it's kind of a collective thing with other pastors, and go, hey, help me out.

Help me understand this passage. What's your understanding of it, and we work together, and we just go, yeah, you know what, this is what it says, and so I encourage that, strongly encourage you to do that with other believers, and go, man, am I missing something here? But here's some things that have been said, and I want to address this, this whole idea of really opening your life up to other people, and becoming the church, and putting together these gatherings. First statement is, I know it's biblical, but I just don't see how you're going to get people to live that way in our culture.

That's a good thought. Secondly, a lot of people have had their lives changed at our services, and I want to bring my friends to hear Francis preach, and I love the singing with the congregation, so I'd hate if you get rid of services. Okay, now that's a good thought.

Thirdly, it's starting to feel a little like a cult, you know, meeting in home, sharing our possessions, loving God more than our own families. It just feels real cult-like. Okay, that's good.

That's good. That's fair. Those are fair thoughts.

These are things that are coming back, and so let me just hit these real quick, one at a time. First one, I know it's biblical, but I just don't see how you're going to get people to live that way in our culture, and my answer to that is, I think you're forgetting about the power of the Holy Spirit. I really do.

I hear you on that though, because I look at this, and I also go, that's impossible. You can't talk people in this very independent, individualistic, I take care of me and my family, no one else type of society. How are you going to get people to be focused on getting this message out where they get together, and they pray for boldness? I mean, don't you understand we're in the middle of a recession, and people are just trying to survive, and you want to get them on this mission of going out and telling everyone about Jesus, and praying for boldness, and being focused on something else.

We're just trying to survive, you know, and then you throw in this whole idea of loving one another, and caring for others, and creating an environment where no one's in need, and you're looking out for that. That's just impossible. You know what? I look at that and go, yeah, that is impossible.

I can't talk someone into that, but you guys, that's what this is about. Why are you in church? Are you pursuing things that are possible in the flesh, or do you come here because you believe there's a power greater than yourself, who can accomplish things that you could never pull off on your own power? When you read the book of Acts, do you really see a group of 12 brilliant guys that came up with a plan, or do you see a bunch of people that just got together and prayed, and then the Holy Spirit of God just started moving, and things started happening that everyone was fascinated by, and going, man, look at these people. Look the way that, and I gotta go.

Man, look, this whole thing about getting in your neighborhood, and meeting your neighbors, and just telling them about God, and just serving them, and caring for them, that people go, man, you just can't make that happen. You guys, look, Jesus looked at a dozen guys, and he says, look, I want you. This is 2,000 years ago.

He looks at a dozen guys, and says, I want you. Actually, 11 at that. I want you 11 guys.

I want you to get this message out to the whole world. Imagine if you're one of the 11, with no internet access, and there's no fallback plan. There's no plan B. It's like you 11, you're going to get this message to the whole world, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

He says, you're going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you are going to be my witnesses to all of Jerusalem, and to Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. You guys are going to be my witnesses to the whole planet, whole planet earth. You guys are going to get the message to all of them, you 11 guys, because I'm going to give you a spirit that's so powerful.

Then how in the world can we look at our neighborhoods? Think about this. I'm just going simple logic. I'm a simple guy, and I go, okay, so we can't get 11 people in a neighborhood to reach like 11 blocks.

No, that's too much. You'll never pull that off. You see how I just go, I don't understand.

Has the Holy Spirit changed? Has he lost a little power over the years? I mean, what happened that suddenly we've set the bar so low that I would say something like, hey, let's get together in our neighborhoods and get to know your Christian neighbors. Ah, you'll never pull that off. Hey, yeah, and let's try to reach, you know, just kind of look at your neighborhood as your mission field, and you just go and love everyone, and serve everyone in your community, and tell them about you.

You'll never pull that off. That doesn't make sense to me. It just doesn't make sense to me.

When I look at what the Holy Spirit did back then to say that this is impossible in our culture, I just go, I don't get that. This unity that they had, they didn't even pursue it. It was just something as they pursued the Holy Spirit of God, as they pursued the mission together, as they all said, wow, this is the difference between heaven and hell.

We just saw this Jesus Christ raised from the grave. We got to get this message out. As they did that, that just, they were consumed with that and said, man, you need anything? You need anything? I don't care.

There's something bigger out there, and it just happened, and I got to believe that same Holy Spirit is alive and well today. See, it just, I think the bar is set so low for the Holy Spirit. Some of you have been Christians over 10 years.

A lot, I bet you the majority of this room, the majority of you have been Christians for over 10 years, and you still feel unequipped, like you don't know enough. Do you realize you know more than those disciples did back then, the ones that changed the world? It's not about knowledge. Yeah, keep pursuing the Word of God.

Keep studying, but to feel inadequate, like I could never do that. What in your mind, what has changed about the Holy Spirit that suddenly when He came into you, because you're looking at yourself too much? Because if I looked at myself, man, I would get depressed. We can all do that.

Start looking at our faults, our weaknesses. We start comparing ourselves to other people. Man, I was doing that this morning.

Gosh, that's really, I just realized that. I was starting to have, you know what it was, is that there's this pastor named John Piper. You guys already know what I'm gonna say.

Yeah, he's a lot smarter than you, Francis. It just is. Like, you know, I just got a couple of books in the mail from, and here's the thing is, back when I was going to write my first book, you know, Crazy Love, it was first going to be called Ditch Your Life, which was about just, you gotta ditch this comfortable life you got.

There's something greater, but then he came out with a book called Don't Waste Your Life. So I'm like, this is better than anything I could write. Oh well.

So anyways, I wrote my Crazy Love. Then I write this book that's going to come out in the fall about the Holy Spirit. Well, guess what book came out like two months ago that's way better than mine's going to be? So I'm like, okay, fine, fine.

So he beat me to that. So then Lisa and I are just starting to write this book on marriage. Guess what I got in the mail yesterday? Gosh, and it's better than anything I could write.

You know, so you can look at these people and go, oh man, why am I even doing this? You know, we all do this and we look at ourselves and we're like, oh man, I could never do this. I could never do that. But again, it's because we're looking at ourselves in the flesh.

And you gotta remember what Jesus said. I mean, God himself tells us in 1 Corinthians that he wants to choose those who are weak, those who are foolish, you know, to shame those who are intelligent, and those who are strong. And yes, God has gifted certain people and praised God for those people.

At the same time, like even in Acts 4, as I was reading, if you look back at verse 13, it says, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived they were uneducated common men, they were astonished and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. It's always been God's pattern. He wants to use the uneducated, the common, the ordinary person so that when people see it, they go, they can be astonished and go, wow, God used that guy? God used her? If we keep staring at ourselves, yeah, we're going to feel inadequate.

We're going to feel like we can do nothing great, but we've got to keep our eyes on the Holy Spirit of God. I mean, some of you have been married for over 20 years, and you still don't feel like you could counsel another couple, and you need to send them to someone who has a PhD in marriage. You've got to go to that person.

You've been married that long, and you've got the Holy Spirit of God in you, and you can't, you don't believe you guys are gifted enough to help another couple through. Some of you are 60, 70, 80, maybe even 90 years old in this room, and you've been walking with the Lord, and you've experienced so much, and yet you still don't feel like you could disciple, like you could just gather some people together and follow the Great Commission, going, I'm going to make disciples. I mean, you guys, we've got to start believing in this power that's in us.

This is the Holy Spirit of God, and to believe He hasn't changed. Just like He used those ordinary common men back then, He can use me today to do some great things, and people have said, well, well, okay, well, okay, maybe I can do that. So give me a bunch of people to teach.

Give me a Sunday school class. Give me 50 people. Put them in a room, and I'll teach them, and I go, okay, maybe we'll do that at some point, but the Bible says go out and make disciples.

Why don't you go out in the power of the Holy Spirit and talk to people about Jesus? Why don't you find people in the church maybe that are new to this whole thing and trying to understand? Why don't you talk to some neighbors, find out where they're at, and just start teaching? Why don't you make disciples? Don't ask us to just give you a bunch of them, but go and make disciples of all the nations. You've got power. Second thing that people have asked, a lot of people have had their lives changed at our services.

I want to bring my friends to hear Francis preach, and I love singing with the congregation. If you get rid of this, I just think it's a bad thing. Okay, like I said two weeks ago, we haven't made any decisions to stop having services.

The only thing I'm saying is we've got to stop making this church and calling this church. Like once we attend regularly, we've arrived. I mean, it could be that we just keep doing this.

It could be that we go, you know, this is a great way to get people exposed to who God is and everything else, and this is a great opportunity to teach, and we may continue doing this. No one's made a decision that way. All I'm saying is we've got to stop making things sacred that aren't sacred, and start treating the things that are sacred with this sense of reverence of, wow, I'm not loving my neighbors myself.

I better do that. Versus, don't you dare get rid of service. Point, point, show me somewhere where this is sacred, and the one another's are not.

That's all I'm saying, that our priority needs to be on gathering together, and caring for one another, and praying for one another, and making that happen. And I also, I understand I have an obligation. I have an obligation to you because I'm a member of this body, and my gift is teaching, and so I go, I have an obligation to teach, so I will always do that.

There's no point in me living if I'm not going to use my giftings for the sake of the church. That's the point of my existence. I was created for these good works, and before I was even born, God knew I was going to do these things.

But the same is true of you, that you have a gift for the body that needs to be used, and you've got to stop just looking at my gift, and look at your own, and how God has used you, and consider yourself a part. But here's the one caution I have about this whole thing of, man, is Francis preaching this week, because I want to bring a friend. You guys, we have to be so careful that we don't put too much emphasis on a person.

Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians. You guys know this has always been a concern of mine, and 1 Corinthians, it always happens though. I mean, it was happening back then.

If you read 1 Corinthians chapter 1, in verse 10, Paul says, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it's been reported to me by Chloe's people that there's quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each of one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas, or if I follow Christ, is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Because I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you're baptized in my name.

I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't know if I baptized anyone else. Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

A couple things I learned from that. Number one is that the name of Jesus needs to be lifted up, and that's the only name that should be lifted up. This has always got to be about Jesus.

It's always got to be about the power of Jesus. We can't ever be about a personality. You know, I understand there's men of God, like I mentioned, you know, like John Piper, that I go, wow, so gifted, so knowledgeable.

I learned so much from him, but what I love about him, it's always about deflecting that, and go, it's always about Christ, always about Christ. Christ is so beautiful. Christ is so wonderful.

Christ is the one, the Holy Spirit is the one that enables these people to do what they do, and hear Paul saying, why are you pointing at this guy? I'm a follower of him. I'm a follower of him. I'm a follower of him, and Paul says, what, was Christ divided? Were you baptized in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Paul? You know, let's get rid of any of this personality thing, and make sure we don't put too much emphasis on one person, but the second thing I learned from that passage is that we have to love the message, and not the way the message is presented.

See, because Paul makes a point of that when he says, you know, Christ didn't send me to baptize, but he sent me to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be empty of its power. See, there's a power in the message of the cross, and he goes on to explain, some are going to think it's stupid no matter how you say it. It's kind of like sushi.

Like, some will hate it no matter how well it's prepared. It's still raw fish, you know, and it's the same thing with the gospel. He says, look, some people are going to hate Jesus.

It doesn't matter how good the communicator is. It's not about that. He goes, it's about the cross, and we can't ever be about, wow, but I really like the way he talks about the cross, and he seems to talk about the cross the best way, so if I get all my friends to listen to him talk about the cross, then they'll believe.

No, Paul's saying the power's in the cross itself, and it's not about the eloquent words. It's about you. It's about you having the Holy Spirit in you, and you bringing up to someone, you know what, I believe, and in whatever words you use, but with the sincerity and in the power of the Holy Spirit, you just go, I know this has changed my life.

I don't know how to explain it. I just know that here's who I used to be. Here's who I am today.

I know that I'm a sinner. I know that Jesus died on the cross. However you say it, just to get that message of the cross out, to say, I believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave.

I don't know what to tell you, but I experience his power every day. When I pray to him, he answers my prayer. I don't have all the right words, but that's just who I am, and as people see that, that's going to be so powerful.

You don't need to bring them here to have them listen to me. Your life, you have the Holy Spirit of God in you. You can do that.

In fact, it would be wrong to make it about a personality, and that's what Paul was saying, because God's the one that makes things happen. So yes, do I recognize I have a gift, and I use it to build up the body? Absolutely. I'm obligated to that.

I wouldn't want, honestly, I can honestly say I don't want to live unless I can do that, so I will do that. But let's just be careful about these things, and then the last one. It's starting to feel like a cult, meeting in homes, sharing our possessions, loving God more than family.

This, let me just say, this is not the first time that Cornerstone has been referred to as a cult, and it isn't the last time, but here's the sad part of this, and I think it's, again, gives me more and more peace about the direction I'm going, because I think it's a very sad indictment about the church, the state of church in America. Whenever I talk about a certain level of commitment, that's when the word cult comes out. That says a lot right there, that when we talk about a certain level of commitment, that's when the word cult comes out.

Whenever I preach a passage that says, love your, you know, love God more than your family, they're a cult. I'm just reading the words of Jesus. Isn't it sad that when we think commitment level, we think cult and not church? I mean, what's the definition of cult? I'm going to give you the worldly definition of cult.

I'm going to throw it up on the screen. The word cult, the secular definition, it comes from the Latin word cultus, which notes all that is involved in worship, ritual, emotion, liturgy, and attitude. That's the technical definition of cult, which basically allows you to say everything's a cult, right? Any type of belief system, because you're talking about worship, ritual.

But let's go to the definition that you and I are used to, more the traditional Christian definition of cult. A religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of biblical truth. In more simple terms, a cult is a group that teaches something that will cause a person to not be saved if they believe it.

As distinct from a religion, a cult is a group that claims to be part of the religion, yet denies an essential truth of that religion. It shouldn't be truth, truth. An essential truth of that religion.

Do you guys agree with that? I mean, that's more what we're used to, right? It's a religious group that would deny one of the fundamentals of the biblical truth. And yet, if you go down this road and you follow their teachings, it'll actually cause you not to be saved if you believe what they believe. And it's distinct from a religion, because a cult would say, well, no, I am a Christian, yet they'll deny certain aspects of that religion.

And my question to you is, where in that definition of cult is this commitment level we're talking about? I mean, really, if you think about it, are we denying one of the fundamentals of biblical truth? Is that what I was doing a couple weeks ago saying, hey, we're not going to believe this anymore? In fact, my question is, is who's the one that's denying certain elements of fundamental truth? I'm coming and saying, you know what? We can't be a church if we don't love one another. That's kind of a big one. Love your neighbor as yourself.

From what I read, that's a big one, real big one. And so is it okay to gather together, not love on one another, and still call that Christianity, still call that church? I'm going, that's pretty fundamental. And this whole idea of it's a cult that is someone that they teach something that will cause a person to not be saved if they believe it.

Yes, I am questioning those of us who call ourselves Christians, because I'm looking at passages in Scripture. I look at James, and I'm going, man, it's interesting, like what he says in James chapter 2 verse 14. What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? I'm looking at what he says in verse 18.

You know, some will say, you have faith, I have works. Well, you show me your faith apart from works, and I'll show you my faith by what I do. You believe that God is one? You do well.

Even the demons believe that, and they shudder. See, what I'm trying to say is, how can we say we're followers of Jesus if there's no action to our faith? James says very clearly, can that type of faith save you? The answer is no. You know what I'm saying? There's people all around the world that are teaching, well, you can just say you believe with no action, and there's no proof of that belief, and yep, you're still saved.

I'm going, man, believing that is what keeps you from being saved. I'm just saying that when I read in the Scriptures, when the Holy Spirit comes into a person, there's a change, and when someone's a follower of Christ, you actually see them follow Christ. That's all I'm saying, and I'm saying when there's a church, you know, they're going to love one another.

The Holy Spirit's in you. You're going to have this desire and this want. You'll look at Acts 2 and go, oh, I want to be a part of that.

You'll read Acts 4 and go, oh, I'd love to be a part of that. You look at this mission and go, gosh, I've got to tell these people about Jesus. That's all I'm saying, and I'm just going, man, I just, who's the cult? The one that's, who's the one that's denying the most fundamental, basic truths of Scripture? Could it be those of you who would say, I just need to go to a service and pray a prayer, or is it me who's saying, oh, it seems like more than that.

It seems like following means follow, and seems like the church, they really did care for one another, and I think we may have created a system that I'm very much a part of that allows people to just come, attend,

and sit, and say they have a faith, and yet have no action, and be okay with that. I just don't see it biblically. Let me just say this.

I'm, let me close with this. I'm very, I consider myself very simple-minded, and I think that's why you like me. It's just not rocket science to me.

It's the way I grew up, or the way I grew up. If my dad asked me to do something, you know what I did? I did it, because I didn't want him beating the heck out of me. Just like, oh, dad told me to do it.

I did. Now, not all of you grew up that way. Some of you grew up, dad asked you to do something, and you just go, I don't know, dad, and you could argue, you could banter, or whatever, and I don't get that, you know, because I don't allow that in my house.

It wasn't allowed when I was growing up. It's just, you know, dad says something, you do it. You just do it.

That's, it's called authority. It's God-given. It's just right.

So my mind tends to be more simple than the average guy, so when God asks me to do something, I just go, okay, I'm gonna do that. I'm gonna do that, and it's not so much out of fear. I mean, yeah, initially, there was certainly that, and you go, wow, what am I gonna do, tell him no? I mean, in my mind, simple-minded Francis, I just go, he said to do this.

I'm gonna try to do that, and so when I read something in Scripture and go, ah, that's what I'm supposed to do, here's what I, here's the thought process simple-head does. He goes, God told me to do that. God helped me to do that, and then I go out, and I try to do it.

I know, it's crazy. It's a dumb way to live life, but it's how I do it, and, and, and so, for example, when I see, you know, the believers were cut to the heart, what do we do? They said, you know, repent and be baptized. You know, when I heard that, I said, you know, I'm, if I'm gonna follow Jesus, and, and he, you know, he says, I, I believe that he died on the cross for me.

I believe he rose from the grave. What should I do? And they say, repent and be baptized. I thought to myself, I'm gonna repent and be baptized.

I'm gonna turn from this way of living and say, God, help me live the way you want me to. I want to follow you now. I'm gonna walk up there.

I'm gonna get baptized. See, that's, that's the way I think. Now, what's amazing to me is people will read that and go, I don't know.

I don't know. I, I think I can be a believer without repenting, without being, being baptized. I go, well, okay, maybe, but I don't see why you just don't do it.

And so, now, as I'm reading Scripture, and I'm going, gosh, there sure is a lot of love one another's in there. I go, God, you know what? Help me to, to love the people around me. Help me to love my neighbor, my next door neighbor, my neighbor across the street, neighbor around the block.

Help me to love them like I love myself. Help me, because that doesn't come naturally. Help me by your Spirit, and I believe I can do it, and I just start doing it.

And so, now, as a pastor, my mind's the same way. I'm going, okay, this is the way church ought to be. So, I go, God, this is the way you want church.

Help us to be that way. And I go, okay, let's become that. See, that's all I'm saying.

I don't think this is anything new. Like, people go, wow, you're really talking about something cutting edge. And I'm like, really? Wow, thank you.

You know, I came up with, this isn't anything new. I'm just going, well, if we're disobedient in some areas, let's pursue those areas. Let's fix those areas.

Let's gather together and believe the Holy Spirit can do those things in us today. And that's all, that's all I'm saying. In fact, this is what we're going to do.

This is how we're going to worship at the end of our service now. I'm going to put a bunch of verses on the screen, just one at a time. I just took 14 of the one another's in Scripture, and I just want you to read it and go, okay, am I doing that? Am I doing that with other believers? And if not, pray to God and say, God, help me with that.

I want to do that, and then start pursuing it. Then go to the next one, and you're just going to read it and go, I'm pretty good there. God, help me keep doing that.

That's good. I think I'm okay on that one. Next one, I'm not really doing that.

God, help me with that, and then go do it. That's all I'm saying. This isn't some new, you know, emergent way of doing church.

It's just, let's just obey it. Let's just say, okay, that's what we're supposed to do, and to want it, and say, God, I believe this can happen. 21st century, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark Valley, wherever.

It's the same Holy Spirit, and just pray for that. And during this time, if any of you go, you know what? I haven't even done the first step. I need to start following Jesus and get baptized.

Then come forward during as these verses are going up there, and I will baptize you right at the end as some of the pastors and leaders will be up there. But just read these verses. This will be your worship time.

Come before God and say, Lord, help me with that.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Z9eaeOnzanI.mp4>  
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