

# Why Church?

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## WE ARE A NEW COMMUNITY

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### MESSAGE NOTES

*There are a number of influential church leaders who think online church is the future of the church. We think no way. We're grateful for the internet this past year. But honestly, we're being deformed by 1000 other habits in our digital world right now. While Jesus wants to form us into people of love and joy and peace. He is forming us into a special community that He's the head of. We believe the future of the church is less cameras and more tables and tacos. The future of our church is people growing together, people who know each other's names, people who reach across the table. — John Mark Comer, podcast*

*Today's culture of independent individualism has created many spiritual orphans — "bunny believers" who hop around from one church to another without any identity, accountability, or commitment. Many believe it is possible to be a "good Christian" without joining (or even attending) a local church, but God would strongly disagree. — Pastor Rick Warren, Saddleback Community Church*

*Christians expect to find community by attending church services and coming to a small group. It is possible, however, to hold a weekly small group meeting without adding the elements that create real community. Because of our idols and the habits of our heart, church events simply become places that individuals focus on themselves in the presence of others. It takes deep reflection and costly commitment to live in community. — Timothy Keller*

*God's people are called out, but we are also called together; and this defines our relationship with other believers. It is written of the first church, "Now all who believed were together" (Acts 2:44). In apostolic days, when people trusted Christ and were born again, they took the next step in their spiritual walk and were baptized and identified with the church. They never heard the slogan, "Jesus, yes — the church, no!" — Source Unknown*

*... on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. — Luke 4:16*

*The main reason I gather with the church is because I am the church. I think being the church has something to do with living your life for Christ, demonstrating God's love by serving others and sharing your faith with people. That's very different than consuming church in a back row, which you can just as easily do on your back deck. The reason you would go to church today is that you've moved from being a consumer to being a contributor. You don't just go to be served, you go to serve. There's something deeply scriptural about that. Spiritual maturity, after all, isn't about how much you know. It's about how much you love. And love that doesn't flow out into the lives of other people isn't love. — Carey Nieuwhof, Accessed at: (<https://careynieuwhof.com/why-attending-church-no-longer-makes-sense/>)*

*He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care. — Psalm 95:7*

*... you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, ... In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. — Ephesians 2:19 – 22*

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ... we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people." — 1 Corinthians 3:16 & 2 Corinthians 6:16*

# Why Church?

*New Testament fellowship-koinonia includes the idea of a holy partnership, of genuine communion of souls, best illustrated when we share the bread and the cup together in the Lord's Supper. It connects us as children of the same Father, blessed by salvation from the same Savior, and filled with the same Spirit.*

— Dr. David Jeremiah, *Living with Confidence in a Chaotic World*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. — Acts 2:42 – 47*

## Encountering God

- Worship
- Pray

## Encouraging Each Other

- Group
- Serve

## Engaging the World

- Go
- Give

*We are able to do many hard things, tolerate many conflicts, overcome many obstacles, and persevere under many pressures, but when we no longer experience ourselves as part of a caring, supporting, praying community, we quickly lose faith. This is because faith in God's compassionate presence can never be separated from experiencing God's presence in the community to which we belong. The crisis in the lives of many caring Christians today are closely connected with deep feelings of not belonging. Without a sense of being sent by a caring community, a compassionate life cannot last long and quickly degenerates into a life marked by numbness and anger. This is not simply a psychological observation, but a theological truth, because apart from a vital relationship with a caring community a vital relationship with Christ is not possible. — Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Compassion — A Reflection on the Christian Life**

# Why Church?

## DISCUSSION

- What thoughts or reactions do you have to the seven reasons people might give for not participating in a gathering of believers?
- In what ways does our culture make it easy to have a cavalier or ambivalent attitude toward church?
- In Matthew 16 when Jesus said, “I will build My church,” what do you think He meant?
- Throughout the New Testament, how is the word “church” most often used and what does it mean?
- What are your own feelings about the local church?
- What do you see as the benefits of being part of a local body of believers? What are the costs and/or difficulties involved?
- Read this quote and offer your own observations, reactions or additional insights: *Today’s culture of independent individualism has created many spiritual orphans — “bunny believers” who hop around from one church to another without any identity, accountability, or commitment. Many believe it is possible to be a “good Christian” without joining (or even attending) a local church, but God would strongly disagree.* — Rick Warren, Saddleback Community Church
- Considering both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures, what are some of the reasons the people of God have historically gathered together in local communities?
- As you think about what we’re called to be doing, as people who belong to God, which of those things actually require us to be in community?
- Looking forward, what sort of commitments are you willing to make to a local group of believers, out of sheer love and responsiveness to Christ?