

The Bible in "Grace Bible Church"

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Date: 31 July 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Grace Bible Church. And it's not really a modern name, right? There's a lot of cool modern names for churches, and ours is a little bit old school, but I really like it. I think there's a lot to it.

And so, two weeks ago, we talked about the Bible part of our church name. This is a Bible church where the Bible itself is central to what we do.

We don't go with tradition or even any other outside creeds. The Bible is our creed, and some people might find that controversial.

Of course, we are willing and open to learn from anything, including historical creeds or Bible teachers or books or whatever it might be. But when it comes to what is the authority for how we live the Christian life, we turn to and we open up the Bible.

And we not only teach the Bible here, but we encourage everyone who attends here, and even those who don't, to open up their Bibles and see what God has to say to them for themselves.

[1 : 0 1] We want everybody here to be a Bible student. And so, we try to provide what we can to give and equip people with what they need to be Bible students themselves.

Then, last week, we looked at the word grace. And Grace Bible Church is a grace church.

We put a big emphasis and focus on God's grace, and we talked about what that means and also what it doesn't mean. And grace has a simple definition. The word grace just means favor or goodwill, sometimes kindness.

And that is true. But there's a very specific definition or context, you might say, to grace that is important to us in that we looked closely at Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, that we are saved by grace.

And that's very distinct from being saved by the law or by doing good works. And that's an important distinction that we make here at Grace Bible Church. Today, we're going to look at the third word, that last word.

[2 : 1 2] What is a church? This is a church. This is Grace Bible Church. We call ourselves a church. But what is a church? We're going to start, we're going to look at a verse of Scripture.

So, if you open up to the book of Ephesians, this is a passage that is talking about marriage. It's talking about marriage and family. Ephesians chapter 5 is getting into practical matters about the family.

But interestingly enough, in this passage, they're kind of interweaves in talking about the husband and wife relationship. It talks about this thing called the church.

So, if you're there with me in Ephesians chapter 5, we're going to start in verse 25 and go through verse 32. It says there, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

[3 : 41] For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. This is an interesting passage because he kind of mixes two things and compares them together.

He's speaking of a marriage, what a Christian marriage ought to be like, but he's also speaking of this thing, this entity called the church and Christ's relationship to the church.

So, that's what we're going to be talking about today. The word church in the Bible is this Greek word, ekklesia. Ekklesia. It has a specific definition.

It just means a called out assembly or a called out group. A group that's called out, that's formed, that's assembled for a particular purpose. That's what it kind of means to call out something.

[4 : 50] There's a purpose behind it. And that's what we are. We are a group that has a specific purpose to it. There's a purpose for our gathering. There is a purpose for this entity called the church.

But that's not all that we are. We have a purpose, but we actually have a specific purpose. And so, there are actually, if you read through the scriptures, there are actually many things called the church, even though there are a church like we're a church.

I want to give an example. If you open up to Acts 19. Acts chapter 19. And we'll look towards the end.

This is our dear brother Paul, the Apostle Paul, who got into a little trouble in Ephesus. How many of you know, sometimes as Christians, it's okay to get into a little trouble.

We can get in trouble for the Lord, right? In fact, this last week, we got into a little bit of trouble down in Nashville. After church last week, we headed down to Nashville for a pro-life event where we did some standing up for the unborn.

[6 : 06] And went to some different abortion clinics and did some outreaches downtown, trying to raise up our voices and raise a standard for the unborn child.

And not everybody was happy that we were there. They consider what we were doing causing trouble. And I'm okay with that. That's their perspective.

But we're causing the good kind of trouble. Trouble doing the Lord's work. And that's what Paul was doing here in Ephesus. He got into some trouble.

And a riot ensued. The pagans, those who are worshiping false gods, especially those who were selling the false gods, were pretty upset. But if we look at, let's look towards the end here, verse 32.

Let's start with verse 31. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would venture into the theater. Some, therefore, cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

[7 : 18] Ever notice that about a riot? Riot. That's why, if you ever see a riot, I don't recommend getting in the middle of it. I recommend that you just walk away, or sometimes you might need to run away. Riots are dangerous.

And a lot of times, people don't know what's going on. They just know that there's a lot of commotion, and hey, maybe it's like a party. Sometimes it's not the kind of party that you want to be a part of.

But I want to focus on this word, and this is interesting. Some, therefore, verse 32, some, therefore, cried one thing and then some another. For the assembly was confused. Well, that's the word assembly.

Did you know that that is the word *ekklesia*? *Ekklesia*, the exact same word that we use for church. Now, I have a question. Was this a church like we're a church? No, it's very different.

These are actually people who are not Christians at all. These are, we might call them pagans or unbelievers when it comes to Christianity, and many of them worshipped false gods.

[8 : 18] In fact, a lot of these worshipped the goddess Diana. There was a temple in Ephesus called, named after the goddess Diana. And, but these people were called an assembly, or what we would today call a church.

It's the same exact Greek word. So, we'll look at a few verses later. Verse, we'll skip down to verse 35. And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana and of the image which fell down from Zeus?

Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly, for you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. Verse 39.

But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. There again, that word assembly is used. And what word is that in the Greek?

[9 : 38] *Ekklesia*. It's the same word. So is he talking about a Christian church gathering? Not at all. He's talking about a legal gathering. The proconsul getting together to make a judgment, some kind of a legal judgment.

And then they had a little bit of a council, a judgment going on. And then it says in verse 41, And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

He dismissed the *ekklesia*, the church, as we call it today. So the word church is just a symbol that is called out, or excuse me, not a symbol. The word church is a called out or a group, an assembly called out for a specific purpose.

And so the word church, the word *ekklesia* in the Greek and the word church that we use today is just any kind of group that's called out for some kind of specific purpose.

But like with many words, and we talked about this with the word grace last week, is that when we talk about Christian things and the Christian context or definition of words, there's more to it than just the definition.

[10 : 48] When it comes to grace, grace is so much more than just favor, more than God's kindness. In the same way with the church, it's not just any called out group.

The church is a very specific kind of called out group. I want to talk about two ways or two uses of this word church when it comes to God's people, because we can even make a further distinction, if you will, between maybe two different kinds of churches that we see indicating God's people in the Bible.

So let's turn, we're just going to remain in Acts, but we're going to turn back a few chapters to chapter seven. Acts chapter seven. And it says this, verse 37, this is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, the Lord, the Lord, your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren, him you shall hear.

This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and with him our fathers and the one who received the living oracles to give to us.

This is Stephen speaking. He's speaking to the people of Israel and they're preaching Christ. Not all of Israel was interested in Christ.

[12 : 39] Some of them were upset with this man who had been crucified and his followers. But Stephen was giving an address to Israel about this man, Jesus Christ.

And he got into basically the whole story of the Jewish people. He got into the story of Moses. And this is what he's talking about here. He's talking about Moses. And in verse 39, he says, or excuse me, 38, this is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel.

He's talking about when they went up, when they, after the Exodus and they were at Mount Sinai. And that's where God delivered those tablets of stone. Oh.

Go to the podium. Okay, we're going to the podium. He delivered the tablets of stone. When Moses was given the tablets of stone, the Ten Commandments. And here it calls them, this was he who was in the congregation.

Can you guess what word that is in the Greek? Ekklesia, the congregation, the church. And so here, in the New Testament, in the book of Acts, the people, God's people, God's people who are called out for a special purpose, and that's exactly what is actually happening here, in this story of Moses, is that the people of Israel, the sons of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, are being called out for a purpose, to be God's special covenant people.

[14 : 08] To be God's people of the law, identified by things such as circumcision, and animal sacrifices, and keeping this law, not just the Ten Commandments, but so many others beside.

And he says there in Exodus, in this episode, that if they would keep that law, if they would keep the commandments, that they would be to him, a special people. And so God called them out.

And so here, that word ekklesia, is an appropriate term, isn't it? They are, quote, the church of the Old Testament. Israel was the church back in the Old Testament.

But really, the people of Israel, it was more of a political institution, political and religious. And so, you were born an Israelite, and one of the requirements, was you had to be circumcised.

The boys, the male boys did, as a baby. But if so, you were part of this, of this nation, of this people, and you were part of, quote, the congregation, or the church of God, at that time.

[15 : 20] But there's another group, in the Bible, called the church. And this is the one, that we're going to focus on. This is the one, that we identify with, today. There's a lot of confusion, I think, caused, in mixing up, these two groups.

They're both in the Bible, they're both the people of God, Israel. But the group, that we're going to talk about, and focus on today, is a group, that we call, the body of Christ.

It's a special group, that is, defined, and has a purpose, based on what, Jesus Christ, did, for us, on the cross.

There are certain churches, I can think of, the Roman Catholic Church, that tends to be more, and especially in history, not so much today, but there has been, kind of an integration, with that church, and the rulers, the secular rulers, of the day.

Especially, if you look back at history, there was this alignment. movement. Also, even on the Protestant side, I can think of, the Church of England, which had, close tie-in, with the political government.

[16 : 28] And that's, very similar to, or similar in some ways, anyway, to Israel. And so, they were that kind of a church. But the kind of church, that we're talking about, the kind of church, that we are, is actually, a very different type.

It's not political, at all. More of, an organism, and we'll talk about that, in a moment. Let's look at a few, Bible verses, that just talk about this.

So let's look at, 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. We're just going to look at, one verse.

This is Paul speaking, to the Corinthians. Chapter 12, verse 27. Now you, are the body of Christ, and members, individually.

You, are the body of Christ. There's this thing, called the body of Christ. And you, Paul is not just talking, to the Corinthians, but he's talking, to all believers.

[17 : 39] Those who put their trust, and faith, in Jesus Christ. You, are his body. Let's look at, another verse, Acts 20, verse 28. This is Paul ministering.

He's done these missionary journeys. He's spread the gospel, in different parts of the world. And he's coming back to Ephesus, and doing some exhortation. And talking about this, he's talking to, especially the leaders in Ephesus, and telling them about this thing, this entity, that they have, responsibility to care for.

He says, he says in verse 28, therefore, take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit, has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased, with his own blood.

And so, this entity, called the church, is a group of people, who have been purchased. Purchased, by the blood of Jesus. Not just called a church, called out ones, called out for a specific purpose, to be God's people, through the blood of Christ.

But also called, the body of Christ, in Christ's body. Now, I've heard this many times, maybe many of you have, but it's common, I think, for those who are, not believers, those who are not Christians.

[19 : 24] Christians, when they think of the word church, what do they typically think of? They think of a building, right? And, we do call this, a church building, right?

We call this, hey, we're going to go to the church, on Sunday morning. Or, we're going to go, to the prayer meeting, on Wednesday night, at the church. And, that's, an appropriate thing to say, that's okay.

But, is the building, is that really the church? No, not at all. And, here at Grace Bible Church, and when we say, Grace Bible Church, we can sometimes use that, to refer to the building, but that's not the most, meaningful, aspect, of our name.

When we say, Grace Bible Church, we're talking, about, all of you. Those who are, regular, attenders, members, whatever we want to call it, and we don't make, too big of a deal, about membership here, but those who, make this their, we call it a family, right?

Church family. So, this is, a, not only a Bible Church, not only a Grace Church, but it is a family, a church, part of, this body, that God has, called out, that God has, created.

[20 : 41] So, we're not a building, we're part of a body, and a body is more of, like, an organism. You know, in the past, especially if you look, in the Old Testament, there was a place, where it was said, that God lived, a special, a special place, for God to have a home, and what was that called?

It's called, the tabernacle, at first, because at first, it was a tent, they were in the wilderness, and then later on, King Solomon, he built, a more proper building, a more permanent place, called the temple, and it was said, that God was supposed, to live there.

Now, we know, in the Old Testament itself, it says, well, it's not that really, God is limited, to, to a temple, to a tabernacle, made with hands. It's not that, that's really, actually the case.

Now, it is in a certain sense, in fact, we read accounts, about the glory, of the Lord, filling the temple, God's presence, filling the temple, in a very tangible way.

We saw, in the wilderness, right, what would be over, the tabernacle, at night? It would be a pillar, of fire, at night, and over, during the daytime, while they were in the wilderness, it would be a pillar, of cloud. And that represented, that God was present, there, over, or even in that, tabernacle.

[22 : 05] But, you know, God is not limited, to, you know, a single space. Even the earth, is just, the Bible calls, the earth, what? His footstool. But, does God still live, in a tabernacle, made with human hands?

Or, has there been a, change, since those days, of Moses, and the Israelites? There's been a change, hasn't there? And so, in 1 Corinthians, just, for the sake of time, we won't go there, but in 1 Corinthians 3, 16, it says this, do you not know, that you, are God's temple?

And that God's spirit, dwells, in you. So, for those of us, who are believers, those of us, who put our trust, in Jesus Christ, for those of us, who has received, the gift of eternal life, that he's offered, through the blood of Christ, we are the temple of God.

We are the temple of God, individually, the Bible says, that he lives, in our bodies, individually, and we are the temple of God, corporately, as a group of believers, we make up the temple of God, as well.

Would you say, that's a pretty big change? That's a pretty big change, and it's a pretty big deal. You know, some people go overboard, and they, I think, and they say, you know, they'll correct you, if you call the building, a church.

[23 : 33] And, you know, I get it, I understand, it's a good point to make, but it's okay to call, a building, a church. But, it's so important, that we recognize, that this building, is not the church.

In fact, if this building, God forbid, burned down tomorrow, this would still, we would still be, Grace Bible Church, wouldn't we? Right? If we moved into another building, we would still be, Grace Bible Church.

Because, Grace Bible Church, is a people. It's a fellowship of believers. You know, I, this became, more clear to me, that the church is not a building, when I had the opportunity, to go overseas, as a young man, and work with the underground church, in Vietnam.

I spent some time, in Vietnam, working with the underground church. And, the underground church, in any country, is just a church, that they operate, in secret. It's not that they, have these buildings, that are in caves, under the ground, or something like that.

Even though, that's kind of, what can be conjured up, in our minds. But, underground churches, are those who just, do not have, the, permission, if you will, from the state, to operate.

[24 : 41] Excuse me. And, in Vietnam, what I found out, was that there are actually, state churches, they would call them. So, these are churches, that have been approved, by the state, to operate. And, they're, not only are they approved, but they are regulated, in what they can say, the kinds of literature, that they can distribute.

But, there are many, Christians, who did not want to have, that kind of, regulation, on what they could teach, what they could say. And so, they chose to operate, underground, in secret, and illegally.

So, we worked with, the underground, a specific underground, church movement, in, in Vietnam. When, you don't have, a church building, I found out, very quickly, that you can still, have a church.

You can meet, in homes, which we did, many times, in businesses. You can, go on the, outside, and, anywhere, the people of God meet, that is, the church.

And you can have, quote, a church, a church meeting. We're used to having, buildings, it's nice. But even us, right? When we go to, somebody's house, to have a Bible study, you can call that, a church.

[25 : 57] That is the church, meeting, isn't it? I want to make, some further distinctions here. Like I said, we're the body of Christ, we're not Israel, we're not a political organization, or a political entity.

We are a family, a family of God, and we are, identified by those, who have been purchased, by Christ's blood. But I want to make, a distinction between, even further, between, what I might, what you might call, the global, or even universal church, and then a local church, like ours.

So this is a local representation, of a larger group of people. You know, there are some churches, and many of you may have, come across these, where you get the idea, whether it's stated explicitly, or, just implicitly, that this church, we're kind of it.

We're God's people, and everybody else, not so much. And I don't ever want to see, this church have that kind of attitude. You know, we, there are certain things, that we emphasize here, we talked about grace, specifically last week, things that we think, are really important to teach.

But I think it's really unhealthy, to kind of get the idea, that this is the only church, this is the only place, where God is actually working, or is actually doing anything. And that's not the case at all.

[27 : 19] God is working, and moving, and, he has people, all across Springfield, all across, Clark County, and Green County, all across Ohio, all across this country, and is it just in America?

No, all across the world. It's so interesting, you know, as, again, being a missionary overseas, in Vietnam, and Cambodia, and the Philippines, you get to meet believers, people who, you're in the same family, you were purchased, by the same blood, and you don't speak, the same language.

You know, these people in Vietnam, the food they eat, is really strange, and weird, and they have different traditions, and practices, and things that they do. Actually, the food's pretty good. If you ever get a chance, to go to a Vietnamese restaurant, get some good pho soup.

Uh, you'll, you won't be disappointed. But, you know, there are things that are different from us. They speak a different language, it's hard to understand, but when you get together, when you meet them, you can fellowship in the Lord, and it's like, we're family.

It's absolutely incredible. Has anybody ever experienced that, meeting somebody who's, maybe not from, doesn't speak our language? Yeah. Many of us have. It's just incredible. But we have the global church.

[28 : 44] So the global church, is the, the body of Christ, globally. In fact, we, we mentioned the Roman Catholic Church before, and that is one entity. It's kind of, we might call it a denomination, if we can use that terminology, and there are other denominations.

But that word Catholic, is actually, a word, and sometimes we call, we say the Catholic Church, with a capital C, because that's a very specific type of church. But, if you look at some of our past creeds, there's reference to, the Catholic Church, lowercase c, and that word Catholic, just means universal.

And so, we are part of the, Catholic Church, lowercase c, the universal church. We don't use that word Catholic, in that sense, very much these days, so it's not really, that useful to use that term.

But if you ever see it, especially in older writings, you can know what that's what it means. It just means universal. There's a universal church. There's Christians all over the world, that share our background, that share our faith, that share our family.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Then we have a local church, like ours.

[30 : 00] So we are a local representation, a local instance, of this greater body of Christ. Let's look at a few examples, in the scriptures, that talk about that.

Actually, I forgot to, talking about the global, we won't, well actually, let's go there, to look at Ephesians 5.2, or 5.25, excuse me. we'll see a reference, to the global church, to the church global.

Ephesians 5.25. And this is part of what we read earlier. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ, also loved the church, and gave himself for her.

As he loved the church, the church universal, all the members of the body of Christ, Christ gave his life, for her. If we turn to Romans, we can see some instances, where the term church, is used for a local body, of believers.

Turn to Romans, towards the end there, chapter 16. Paul's finishing up his letter here.

[31 : 24] And a lot of times, we start our letters, with greetings. Here in the book of Romans, the letter is ended, with greetings. He says in verse 3, greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers, in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks, for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches, of the Gentiles.

So there's a reference, to churches, many, plural. Verse 5, And likewise, greet the church, that is in their house. And so they didn't have, a church building. You know, there weren't many church buildings, back then, were there?

There weren't really any. Sometimes the new Christians, would actually meet in synagogues, but sometimes they would, get kicked out, wouldn't they? And so they would, just have to meet in homes. And that's perfectly legitimate.

We've had the experience, of meeting in homes, in a church fellowship, over the years. It's a smaller church. Sometimes it's, in many ways, more intimate, and it can be, more like a family.

Sometimes with these church buildings, you know, it's harder to, to become more familiar, with one another. But he says, likewise, greet the church, that is in their house. He's talking about, a specific church, an instance of this, greater global body, called the church universal.

[32 : 46] There's a local instance, in Priscilla and Aquila's home. One more example, 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Actually, I'm realizing now, that this is the exact, same example, because he's writing, to people in Corinth, and that's where, it seems Aquila and Priscilla, lived.

So 16:19, it says this, the churches of Asia, greet you. So there are churches in Asia, individual churches in Asia. Aquila and Priscilla, greet you, heartily in the Lord, with the church, that is in their house.

Sorry, I guess I misspoke there. So this is, he's speaking to the Corinthians, and saying, hey, the church that is in Aquila, and Priscilla's home, we also greet you.

So, there are individual churches, and our church, is just one, of many instances, of local assemblies, that meet together. We're not the whole church, sometimes there are churches out there, that maybe think that they are, I think that's unhealthy.

But we're no more, this church, is no more, a member of the body of Christ, no more or no less, we say that, no more or no less, a member of the body of Christ, than the Baptist church, or the Presbyterian church, or the Methodist church, or the Assemblies of God church, down the road.

[34 : 13] We're all members, of the body of Christ. And we may have some differences, in how we parse out the scriptures, and I will say, it is important to know, that there are some, some places, that they put the name church on it, but they are not a church.

And it's because a church means something. And again, what does it mean, if we looked in the, in Acts, what Paul said to the Ephesians, the Ephesian elders? He said, the church is a people, who have been purchased, by the blood of Christ.

A people who have been purchased, by the blood of Christ. Those who put their faith, in the blood of Christ. On our way here, every week, driving from Cedarville, to Springfield, we pass a church.

It's called the, Unitarian Universalist Church. I think that's, I think that's the end of it. They're in Yellow Springs. And, you know, you might be saying, well, you know, why are you criticizing another church?

Well, it's not a church. It's a, it's a, a den of lions. That's the kind of a church, where you can believe, anything that you want.

[35 : 25] Do you like the Bible? Go ahead and read some scriptures. Maybe they'll help you. Do you not like the Bible? Read some other holy book. If you don't like any of them, ah, do what you want.

Do you want to believe in God? Great. Do you not care to believe in God? That's fine too. So, that church, is a church you could go to, where, if you want to make up your own religion, for yourself.

This morning we were talking about, uh, relativism. And relativism is this, uh, bizarre, idea, that is popular these days, in a, what we call a post-modern culture, in which people believe, and, it's funny, a little tongue-in-cheek, they believe that you can believe, uh, that whatever, how do I put this, that truth is not absolute.

Truth is not the same for everyone. That you can have your own truth. That, uh, if you want to believe in God, well, that's a truth for you. But if somebody else doesn't want to believe in God, well, that's true for them.

Is that how truth works? That's just not how truth works. Reality doesn't work that way. You know, reality has a way of, when we don't believe in it, of really coming down hard on, on people, when we deny reality.

[36 : 44] But, we ought to, uh, we ought to recognize what is real, and what is true. Uh, but, in, in our culture, and, you know, this specific church, you can basically create your own religion, and that's the religion for you.

But is that how truth works? It's not. There is one truth, and we need to figure out what it is. And sometimes we don't always, know what's true about everything, but we want to continue to work towards it.

And that's a big part, we'll talk about this in a moment, of the purpose of this body. A few more, kind of, notes about this distinction between a local body, and, uh, the global body.

You know, we don't want to neglect the global body, and there are ways that we can interact. You know, we're, many of us here are members of this church. But we don't want to just become a siloed people, where we only interact with the Christians that are in this church.

And I don't think that there's really a huge risk of that here. But there, there may be. It's healthy, it's good, to interact, to work with, those who are part of the greater body of Christ.

[37 : 57] We can support missionaries, even missionaries, who are not sent from our church, can't we? We can go help missionaries, and go serve. We have friends that just, they just left for Thailand last week.

There were missionaries in China for many, many years, and they're not able to get back into that country, because of some of the things going on there. So they're heading back out to Thailand. We don't go to the same church, they don't attend here, but we love them, and we support them in the work that they're doing out there, sharing the gospel with people.

It's healthy to visit other churches. And I know some, you know, pastors might think, well, that's not a good idea. What if they like that other church better than ours? We don't want them, you know, maybe we don't, we want to keep people here, but that's not healthy either.

We hope that people would come to Grace Bible Church, because they are served here, and find a family here, and that they enjoy the Bible teaching here, or whatever it might be, not just because they haven't experienced anything else.

We can go to conferences, right? We just had a conference here, the Berean Bible Society put on. We joined with other believers at other local churches. There are other conferences. There's conferences I've been down to at the Creation Museum on different topics, other members of the body of Christ.

[39 : 15] We can collaborate in evangelistic efforts. In fact, that was one of the things that we did in our trip down in Nashville. We worked with all kinds of believers from, oh my goodness, all kinds of different groups.

There were Baptists and Presbyterians, and Charismatics, and Church of Christ, all kinds of different believers, and we worked together to stand up against abortion, and also to share the gospel with those who we came across.

I want to say, I know just a little bit about the history of our church. We've been here for five years, but in talking to Pastor Marv and others here, it's my understanding that this kind of tendency to not collaborate with the greater body of Christ was at least a small part of what brought this church together to begin with.

My understanding that there were some churches that were really not happy. In fact, Pastor Marv tells a story that he got into a little trouble. He was on the radio in the area here and was working with the Billy Graham Association.

And back then, especially, the Billy Graham Association was doing a lot of evangelistic efforts, holding meetings in movie theaters and different venues, things outside the church that unbelievers might be more apt to go to.

[40 : 42] And so he participated in some of these efforts to go try to win the lost. But it was a collaborative effort among many churches, many denominations. And after he attended one of these events, I think he got into a little bit of trouble with the Baptist church that he was at because, you know, you're not really, those people aren't quite, you know, as good of Christians maybe.

I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it's kind of the idea. And so I think part of the culture here is to be willing to work with other members and other people in the body of Christ.

But at the same time, we do want to give special attention to our local family. You know, there are things that we, ways in which we can serve one another in the body of Christ globally, outside of a local family, a local church, but there are ways that we can't.

You know, Bible teaching is a big part of what a church does. And you can get Bible teaching on the radio, on YouTube, podcasts, all kinds of things these days. And that's great.

And I would recommend it. It's a great way to learn more about the scriptures. But there are other things that you can't do so well. When somebody's hurting, when somebody's grieving, it's harder to serve that person through a YouTube video, through an online service, or something like that.

[42 : 09] So in light of that, I want to talk about two purposes, I think two general purposes. What is the church for?

Why are we here? Why do we operate? Number one, and we'll look at Ephesians again, if you go back to Ephesians. Ephesians chapter four this time. Ephesians chapter four, verse 11, says this.

We'll read 11 through 16. And he himself gave some to be apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Now there's a lot of words in there, a lot of things to parse out. But just a few things from there. Part of the purpose of the church is edification. That's not a word we use too much today, but edification is teaching.

[43 : 48] It's growing in knowledge. So part of the purpose of the church is to have teaching, to both teach and to be taught. There's also equipping, which includes teaching, but other things, to equip others and to be equipped.

There's a reference to, and this is also another part of the definition of the word edify, it means to build up, to build others up. You can build others up in teaching, but there's other ways we can build up others as well through encouragement, an encouraging word, to build up and to be built up, to grow, and to cause others to grow.

And so there's a lot of family language here, that we're all working together. And it's not just the responsibility of the leaders, the elders, to do this, but we're all working together to grow as a family.

And that's a huge part of the local church, is growing in the Lord together, to become more like Him, to become more like Christ.

The other thing I say, the other thing I would say is a purpose of the church is to care for one another. If you turn to 1 Corinthians, or excuse me, well, we're already there.

[45 : 14] Turn to verse 25 through 27. So 1 Corinthians 12, 25 through 27. And he says this, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. So this is a place of care. This is a local church where we're able to care for one another.

And again, that's one of those things that a local church is unique in being able to do. Now, we're able to care for those outside of this church in some ways. It's true.

Supporting missionaries financially. Sometimes there will be a GoFundMe for a Christian in need. I've done that. We've had, I remember, I can't remember what specific event it was, but someone's house was destroyed by a hurricane or tornado or something like that.

[46 : 21] And there were, a call went out to help that family. It was a Christian family. We didn't know them. We didn't know anything about their church, but you could reach out and care for them in some kind of way.

Some people might go and help them build, actually travel. And we can care for others in that way. But the best way to care for others is those that you look at in their eyes and that you can put your arms around and give them a big hug when they're grieving.

that you can, when they got a new job or a promotion at work, you can give them a high five. Good job, guy. When a mom has a baby, we can go bring a meal and deliver it to their house.

That the members may have the same care for one another, that we can care for one another. Care and be cared for. And so I kind of want to wrap up with this.

We're talking about what the church is for, but I want to remind us that we are the church. I'm the church and you're the church. And so we can ask this question another way.

[47 : 36] Not what is the purpose of the church, but what is my purpose in the local church? Again, back to that verse in Acts 20, 28, he's telling the Ephesian elders, therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.

What is he talking about, a flock of geese? No, what's the imagery used for the church? A flock of sheep. I heard a few. So sometimes we act like geese though.

But a flock of sheep. Sheep are very needy. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.

And so all of us are sheep. Even the elders, the leaders of a church are still sheep. Do you ever graduate from being a sheep? Never do.

We're still sheep. We need the great shepherd. He's the head, the Bible says, the head of the whole body, this body of Christ. But here he's talking about specific shepherds, the leaders in the church.

[48 : 50] But did you know that all of us have a role to play as shepherds as well? You know, when you're a new believer, when you're still growing in the faith, your role may be very small as a shepherd.

But it's still there and hopefully it will grow. So all of us, I think, our purpose in the church is to be good sheep and to be good shepherds in the different ways that God has called us to those different roles.

We can be good sheep whether we're young or we're old. We need to be purposeful about growing in the faith, growing in the knowledge of Scripture, growing in wisdom, growing in spiritual maturity, growing to be more like Christ.

Sometimes we need to ask for help when we need it. That's being a good sheep, right? Sometimes the needs aren't apparent and we need to ask, whether it be just a more physical need or sometimes a spiritual need.

Hey, I need help in this area. There's something I don't understand. Can you help me to understand it? There's a decision I'm trying to make, an important decision. I want to make sure I make a good decision. Can somebody in this church help me to counsel me to make a good decision?

[50 : 11] We also want to be purposeful about sharing our lives with each other. It's easy to just show up on a church on a Sunday morning, listen to a sermon, go home.

but we lose out on some of the benefits of the body of Christ when we do that. We need to share our lives with one another. When we're hurting, when we're suffering, when we lose a loved one like the renters did, sharing that is so important.

There are hugs that we can get and words of comfort. When we're doing well, when something good happens, we want to be able to rejoice with one another.

Tell people in the church about the great things going on in your life so that we can rejoice with you. And you know what? That means showing up on a regular basis, getting to know the people as part of your local church body.

You know, as Grace Churches, we make very clear that there's nothing that you have to do. There are no good works that you have to do to be more in God's favor than you are right now.

[51 : 15] We are in God's favor. We don't have, we are in Christ. So God's favor is 100%. There's nothing additional that we can do to earn God's favor, including going to church every week.

And some people think, well, if I go to church every week, God will be extra happy with me. And we make clear, well, that's not the case. But sometimes what can happen is people, well, I just won't go to church because, you know, it's not a big deal.

And, you know, again, it's not going to change your relationship with God in any way. But there will be some benefits that you miss out on if you don't create good relationships.

And that includes showing up on a regular basis. And then on the other side, being a good shepherd. It's not just the pastor's job, the elder's job, though those people should lead when it comes to these things.

For those who have any kind of Christian maturity, find ways to be a shepherd, to guide those, whether they're those who are younger in the faith. Even as parents, we have young people.

[52 : 18] We have to be shepherds, right? We don't get the opportunity to just skip out on that role. We have little sheep that we need to shepherd. We can teach Bible studies.

We could even just share a scripture verse with somebody who needs some comfort or some counsel. Grandmas, grandpas can share things, whether it's counsel or scriptures with their grandkids.

Moms and dads, of course, should be doing this. For those who are going through a difficult time, we can make a phone call. Send flowers, cards.

For those who have, again, a difficult decision to make, we can provide the counsel that they might need. And then some people just need encouragement. Anybody here ever needed encouragement? You know, no matter how well people seem to be doing, everybody could use a word of encouragement.

That's an opportunity that we all have regardless of how mature we are in the faith. You can always encourage someone. The last thing I'll say and I'll end here is, you know, when you're not in a church body like this, a local church, it's easy to kind of get weird.

[53 : 43] You know, when you get weird and you're not around other people, because in every church there's a spectrum. Did you notice this? There's a spectrum of people who are different from you. Some are very similar to you and some are very different from you.

And usually we think of the people who are different from us as weird, right? And so there's a spectrum in a church of weird people and normal people. You know what? They're all our family and we get to love all of them and they don't always do things the same way we do or think always in the same ways that we think.

But you know, if you're never around the body of Christ and you get really weird, you'll never know it because you don't have anybody to compare yourself to, right? So we're going to finish there.

This is, you know, this last part was, you know, some food for thought. What can I do to be a better sheep? What can I do to be a better shepherd to those around me?

How can I serve those, especially in this local body? Amen? Something to think about today. Let's close in a word of prayer and we'll be dismissed. Father, this body of Christ, sometimes it pains my heart when I hear people disparaging the church.

[55 : 07] Sometimes people are so angry at the church and there's all kinds of nonsense that goes on. We see it regularly. But these are your people that you love, that you died for, that you shed your blood for, that you called out for your purpose to be named after you, the body of Christ.

We ask that we would grow together this specific body, that we would grow together to be more like you, that you would impress on every person in this room something that they might do, just maybe one more thing that they might do to be a better member of this body, to reach out, to serve, or even to grow in different ways maybe that they haven't grown before.

That all of us together, all of us corporately, might be better Christians, might be better church members, might be better members of this body of Christ, serving one another, and also being served.

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.