

August 16, 2015 - 11:00 a.m. Pastor Jonathan Falwell

TR Playbook Our Playbook for Change: Why Church?

Scripture: Various

Summary: In today's sermon, Pastor Jonathan begins a three-week discussion about church, today focusing on why the church is THE vehicle to push back the darkness and change our world.

What a great reminder for each and every one of us that indeed there was a group of men and a group of women who have gone before us who boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. That Romans 1:16 wasn't just some words on a page to them, that when it says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it and it alone is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes," that they stood up in the face of a culture, that they stood up in the face of Satan, and proclaimed those words, preached those words.

And today as we come together, let that reminder be something that spurs us to be that group of believers in the generation to come. That one day when Charles and Michael stand up on this stage and they've both got gray hair and are barely able to walk and they sing that song again, let that song not be about those who came before; let that song be sung of us, that we are not ashamed of the gospel.

Right now. I'm going to ask our ushers to go ahead and pass out a booklet that we are going to walk through over the next couple of weeks, and I want everyone to take one, and I encourage you to take it, to slide it into your Bible or purse and hold onto that. Bring it back next week and the week after that as we're going to walk through this series of talking about the value and the importance and the influence and the impact of God's local church.

Now you know we've been walking this summer through this series called *Best Supporting Actor*, where we have talked about and look at the lives of some individuals that many of us maybe had never heard of before. People like Nathan and Manasseh and Hadassah and others. Josiah last Sunday. People who were minor characters in the Old Testament but who had huge impact and lessons that all of us can learn from studying and looking at their lives according to the Word of God and how we can make a similar difference as they did.

And what they did is they trusted God and they allowed God to use them, and so this booklet that we are placing into your hand, this playbook, we're going to walk through this, and I want you to hang onto that. We're going to go through it a little bit today and again next week and the following, as we talk about what it is that God wants to do in and through us.

Now you remember a few moments ago we shared that video with you of that testimony of Josh Farricks. Joshua normally plays the guitar right here on our stage. He's part of our church staff. And we saw in that story, what an amazing story of the power of God. That the power of God intervened in his mom's life when he was about to be a statistic through abortion, that he was about to be a statistic when it came to his drug use at a very young age, that he was about to become a statistic when he ended up going potentially to prison.

Yet how what should have been a statistic ended up being a life that was changed because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as a result of that, being used today to change his world. That's a message that each and every one of us needs to grab ahold of, because all of us have a story that God can use.

And let's pray right now that God would use our time together today as we read God's Word, as we study God's Word, as we talk about what God wants to do through His Church, let's pray that God speaks to all of us and transforms all of us so that we can be like those of old—people who will boldly stand and to preach the truth. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for the encouragement that it gives and for the hope that it offers to each and every one of us. God, we stand here today, all of us, as a broken people, with all of our hang-ups and our problems and our challenges. But we also stand here as a people today that no matter how difficult our situations might be, that nothing is too hard for you. And God we thank you for that.

God, I pray that today, in this moment as we open your Word, speak truth into our lives. Prepare our hearts and prepare our ears to hear not what I say but what you say. Lord, help these words today that we read from your book to change our lives, and as a result of what you're going to do in our lives, that we, too, can go out and change our world because of what you have sent us to do.

And God, if there is somebody here today or somebody watching or listening by radio that has never accepted you as their Lord and Savior, God I pray that in this moment that you would speak truth into their lives and help them to see, as it says in Romans chapter 3, that all of us are just sinners who've fallen short of the glory of God. And Romans 6, that because of that sin, we deserve to be eternally separated from you, God. But Romans 6:23 says, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus. We thank you that He died and that He rose again. And God I pray that any person here, any person who hears this message today that has never accepted you as Lord and Savior, that today would be the day that you allow them to do what it says in Romans 10—believe that Jesus is God's Son, believe that He died and rose again, and Romans 10:13, to call upon the name of the Lord today. And the promise is that they will be

saved. God, do that here; do that now. And God, for that we will give you the praise and we will give you the glory for what you're about to do. In Jesus' precious name we pray, amen.

Today we're going to begin walking through and talking through an important question, an important statement, looking at this playbook that you have in your hands. And again, if you're watching by television or listening by radio, you can go to our website, TRBC.org, and be able to download that and follow along with us as we talk about the importance of the local church, of why church is important and why church is relevant in today's culture.

Now we do live in a world where increasingly more and more people are saying that the Church is not important, that the Church doesn't have value, the Church is not something that we need to be focused on. It's not relevant for today. So over the next couple of weeks we're going to walk through God's Word so that we can get a very clear picture to see why not only is the Church important, not only is the Church relevant, that the Church is the only hope for our world today.

When we see all that's taking place around our world, many times we look to the next election for the hope that we need; we look to the next election for the answers to our challenges as a nation and as a world. And while we certainly are involved in the process and absolutely need to be involved in voting and all of the things that we as citizens have the right to do, I can tell you without any doubts, without any question, without any hesitation that the answer to our country's problems, the ills that we face in our nation today, the problems in our world today will never be found in the next election; it will only be found in the one true and living God and the fact that He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. And that message is told through the local church.

That is where our answers lie, and so we're going to talk about why the Church is relevant, why the Church is important, and I believe firmly that today that we look at this church and other churches in our community, other churches in our nation, other churches in our world, and we see that God's Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, is the vehicle that God has established to push back the darkness in our culture, and it's the only way it's going to happen. It's the only way it's going to take place.

We're going to answer some questions over the next couple of weeks of why the Church is important, of is the Church really still relevant in my life, of how can I fit into the local church, what impact can I make, what can I contribute to something like the local church? We're going to look at questions over the next couple of weeks of things like is it really worth the effort to be involved in a local church?

Now unfortunately the reason we have to do that is because in our culture today we have a lot of myths about the Church. In fact, there is a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary; his name is Michael Svingel, and he came up with and wrote a book that talks about some of the myths that are in our church today, and I just want to share with you before we begin today four very prominent myths about the Church today that I think all of us have experienced, all of us have seen, and maybe even some of us have believed or thought ourselves.

And the first myth is this, Michael says this. The first myth is that the church is really a human organization. Now I can tell you today, when this service is over in a little while and we all go out to lunch or we go out to our businesses or go out to our homes or whatever, you can walk into any restaurant in this town, any business in this town, any law firm, any bank, you can walk in those places and those are human organizations started by human beings to serve humans. All of them are like that.

The only place, the only location that you can walk into that has never been, is not today, and will never be a human organization is the Church of Jesus Christ. Remember back in Matthew 16 when Jesus established the Church. He said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

I'm going to tell you something, and it might be a news flash, it might be new information for you, it might be shocking to you today. There is not a restaurant in this community or any community in the world that can push back the gates of hell. Not one. There is not one bank, there is not one business, there is not one lawyer—amen—that can push back the gates of hell. Only the Church of Jesus Christ can defeat the gates of hell.

Satan is a very real foe. He is somebody who the Bible tells us in John 10:10 the thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy, that he is out there to stop us, to steal our joy, to kill our spirits, and to destroy our future. The Bible also talks about Satan. It says he's like a lion who is walking around, prowling around, looking for whom he might devour.

You see Satan wants to destroy you, and left to our own devices, left to our own abilities, let me just tell you something: we are no match for Satan. Satan has more power than you or I do. Satan can destroy us if left to our own devices. But make no mistake about it, as that verse in John 10:10 says the thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy, Jesus said, "But I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly," which means this: That when we are grafted into the body of Christ when we become a follower of Christ, a believer, a Christian, here's the deal: No matter how powerful Satan is, he is no match for Christ. And when we have Christ within us, when we walk as part of Christ's family, I don't care what Satan tries to do to us; he will not be successful because the Church is not a human organization. It is founded by, it was started by, it is indwelt by, it is empowered by, it is led by, our pastor is Jesus and Jesus alone. We sang about that this morning. Jesus, only Jesus. Man, that's a perfect statement. Jesus, only Jesus. You make that your motto for life and let me tell you something; you're going to do okay.

The Church is not a human organization. The second myth that Michael writes about, which I think is a very important thing, is that sometimes we look at the Church in a different light than what Christ intended because we look at the Church as a supermarket for spiritual groceries. All of us, each and every week pretty much, we walk into a grocery store, and we walk into that grocery store and we go in and we look at what we need to buy and we're looking at prices; we might even have coupons with us. And if it ends up we walk into those grocery stores and the prices are getting too high, we don't really like the selection, we don't like what we're offering, maybe we don't like the people who are working there, you know what's going to happen? Eventually we're going to find ourselves another grocery store.

Does that sound familiar in the Church today? You know why? Because a lot of times we look at the Church as a supermarket for spiritual groceries. In other words, we come to a church in order to be served. We come to a church in order to have our needs met. We come to a church to have our preferences be met. We come to a church to make sure that what we like is what we get.

And that's why so often people will walk into a church and they'll come in and they'll look at the building and they'll talk to the people and they'll go check out the nursery and maybe it comes to a point where they enjoy the service, they enjoy the church, and then at some point they may not like a song that was sung or they may have a run-in with one of the nursery workers or they might not like the color of the carpet.

Or, God forbid, somebody sat in my seat. Listen, you people sit in the same seats every week. That's how I take attendance; I've told you that before. I know where you people are, and if you move or you don't show up, I know it because you're sitting in the same seats every week. And so there are people who will look at the church as when I come in and someone's sitting in my seat or I don't like that song or I don't like that teacher or I don't like that nursery worker, then what ends up happening is we get mad and we leave and we go look for another church.

And every time that we treat the church as being only in existence to make sure that I'm happy, then what happens is we're discounting the fact that this is Christ's Church, not ours. This church is not here that we might be served, but as Jesus said, we are here to what? Serve. So a myth that we have in our world today, in our culture today, that the Church is really all about what I can get out of it. What does it do for me?

The third myth that Michael talks about is that the Church is just a gathering of a few believers, that we don't need to gather together like this; we don't need to come together as the body of Christ and sing together and worship together and study God's Word together. We don't need to get together like this. I can go do that on my own. I can get together with a friend or two and we can go to Starbucks and study God's Word there. We can do that there. We don't need a church.

Well according to God's Word, that's not true. The Bible says that we should forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. The Bible talks very specifically about the importance of gathering together. Acts 2, which we're going to look at over the next couple of weeks, says that every day they continued together in the temple, and then house to house. And then it says that there were thousands added to them daily.

You know why? Because they followed God's plan for the Church. They got together corporately, they got together in small groups and small Bible studies, and then what happened is God used that institution to reach people with the life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We sometimes believe that the Church is, well, you know, I can do that on my own. I don't need organized religion. That's not what God's Word says.

The fourth myth that Michael writes about that we believe sometimes in our culture is that the Church is optional, that being a part of a local church is really not part of walking with God. It's really not part of my faith walk. It's optional. So what happens when we believe this myth is sometimes what we will do is we will replace the local church with sports or we will replace the

local church with a travel team, or we will replace the local church with going to play golf, or we will replace the local church with going to hang out at the beach, or we will replace the local church with going out and hanging out with friends or we will replace the local church with being out too late on a Saturday night and sleeping in on a Sunday morning.

Let me just tell you something. The Church shouldn't be optional. We can't believe, we can't buy into the lie, because make no mistake, all of these myths are found and grounded in what Satan wants to do in the local church. Satan knows he's no match for Christ, but Satan knows if he can get ahold of you, if he can change your way of thinking, if he can get you to believe things that are not biblical with regard to the local church, that's how he wants to stop the Church.

So today what we want to do is we want to begin talking through why Church is important, what the Church is all about. I want you to take your playbook, if you've got it there, and we're going to walk through this over the next couple of weeks just so that all of us can get a picture of what the local church is all about, of why the local church is important.

Now make no mistake. I'm not standing up here today talking about why Thomas Road is important. Thomas Road is important, but it's only because it is a local church like other local churches that preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so all of the things that I'm saying today, if you're part of another local church that preaches the gospel and believes the Word of God is inerrant, infallible, inspired, listen, it goes for your church, too. This is not just about Thomas Road. It is about the Church of Jesus Christ.

And I want us to look on the first panel when you open up that book. There is a question there; it asks the question: What is a church? And I just want to read to you what it says there following that question. It says, "A church is Jesus' family, led under His authority, living out His Word on His mission." Now you'll notice in all of those statements never does it say on our or on my. It's all on His. We are here to bring honor, to worship, to celebrate who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and then to figure out how we can do that and use that to change our world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what we here to do.

Now today I want to focus on four words in that statement; four words that we're going to look at. And the words are *family*, *authority*, *Word*, and *mission*. And they are listed right there on the panel of that booklet on the first page there, on the first panel. Those four statements—family, authority, Word, and mission.

And the first word is the word family. We have the opportunity and the privilege because of being part of the family of God of being a part of a church which makes us part of a family. That is absolutely amazing. Look what it says in Ephesians 2:19. It says, "Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."

And verse 22, “In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.”

This whole passage gives us the idea, gives us the statement, that we have been brought together because of Christ, that He is our chief cornerstone, that we are being molded, that we are being shaped, that we are being built into this body and this body that we are being built into is a force for good that will change the world. That is what Jesus decided, determined, that He told us His church was all about.

God does not intend for His children to grow in our faith alone. God does not intend for His children to walk in this thing called faith all by ourselves. God does not intend for us to do this all by ourselves. We stand here in a world, in a culture today where everything is all about self. It’s all about me. It’s all about who I am, about what I want. And it’s all about me and I don’t need anybody else.

That flies in the face of what God’s Word says, that we are brought together, we do this together, we walk together, we learn together, we grow together, we worship together, we are used by God together. No one thrives in isolation. No human can thrive in isolation.

You remember a few years ago, back in the early 2000s, there was a movie that came out. Tom Hanks starred in this movie. It was called *Cast Away*. Anybody remember that movie? Basically the premise of this movie, it was a kind of a new take on an old story, *Robinson Crusoe*. So here he is, Tom Hanks works for FedEx, and he’s flying along and the plane crashes and he’s left on the island, all by himself. No one around. And he’s there for years and years and years, all by himself. And that story, the movie kind of tells the story about how he was trying to survive and trying to make it, and the things that he had to go through; the things that he had to do in order to actually try to make it day by day without going crazy.

And so you’ll remember one day he started going through some of the boxes that were on the plane that he crashed with, and you’ll remember he found one box and opened it up. And do you remember what was in that box? It was a volleyball, right? And he took that volleyball and he’d cut his hand, so he started using his own blood to make a face on that volleyball and kind of crafted that the way he wanted to craft it, and he created his own best friend, and his best friend’s name was what? Wilson. You people have seen the movie, haven’t you?

So he created his own best friend named Wilson. So he actually created this person that he could relate to, that he could talk to, that he could help him, that he could have companionship. Why? Because no one thrives alone.

Let me just tell you something: In the Church today there are so many people who try to do that. There are so many Christians who do that, who isolate themselves from other believers, isolate themselves from the family of God, isolate themselves from all the good that God wants to do through His local church. And let me just tell you something: isolated Christians equal crazy Christians.

Anybody here ever met a crazy Christian? I've met some crazy Christians. Nobody here. Nobody here, but I've met some crazy Christians. I know you have, too. And listen, without fail, every time I've been around someone who's an absolute Looney Tunes, I mean nuts, psycho, crazy, I know this: This is a person who has not spent a lot of time growing in God's family. They've spent a whole lot of time isolated from God's family. And I'm just telling you something. God did not intend for us to grow in our faith walk all by ourselves.

The second word here is authority. This is good news. Being part of a local church gives us a very powerful advocate in Christ. Look what it says in Ephesians 1:22—which, by the way, is our memory verse for this week, Ephesians 1:22. I want you to read that verse over and over again this week and memorize it. Ephesians 1:22 says, “And He [God] put all things under His feet and gave Him [Jesus] to be head over all things to the Church. That's the Church, *ekklesia*, a gathering of citizens called out from their homes.

And so it says that He is the head over all things, the Church, which verse 23, is “the body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” God did not intend for His children to face this world and this culture without power. God did not intend for us as Christians, as followers of Christ, to walk through this world, to walk through this thing called life, in weakness and powerlessness. That is not what God intended.

God desired, God intended for us to walk through this life being children of God, having been adopted into His family because of Christ and Christ alone. When we become part of that family, we have an advocate and we have someone who is stronger than anything that we can ever imagine, that we act on the authority of the king.

Now you may have seen in the last couple of days that John Kerry, our Secretary of State, traveled to Cuba. And just a couple of days ago, for the first time in I think it was 54 years, if I'm not mistaken, he went to Cuba and he raised the flag on the embassy there, establishing diplomatic relations again with Cuba.

Now let me just tell you something. There is no doubt or question that even a Secretary of State, which is a very powerful position in our government, if John Kerry had gone to Cuba and had walked into the embassy there and had raised the American flag there and made the pronouncement that we are now going to have diplomatic relations with Cuba, had he done that on his own accord and without the authority that came from the President of the United States, Barack Obama, those words would have absolutely no meaning whatsoever. John Kerry does not have the authority to do that. He was acting on the authority of the president, correct?

If I went to Cuba, if I decided to go into Cuba and I walked onto the shores there and went to the American Embassy and broke into that empty building and put the flag up and said, “Okay, we can start talking again,” I can guarantee you that that would have absolutely no effect, no meaning whatsoever. Am I right about that?

The same thing comes with our walk with God. When we walk in this world today, if we speak with our own ability, if we speak with our own authority, with our own power, it has no effect, it has no value whatsoever. But we speak, we act, we are here on the authority of the King of Kings

and the Lord of Lords. That is what Christ intends for His Church to understand and for what His Church is to thrive on is the fact that we act with authority.

Acts 1:8, remember that? “But you shall receive power,” remember that? “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” We did a whole series last summer all about that verse, Acts 1:8. “You shall receive power.” That word power there is the word *dunamis*, from which we get the word *dynamite*, which means explosive power. That is what Christ intends for us to have as His Church.

The third word we look at here today is the word *Word*. And I hold in my hand today The Word. Look what it says in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord.”

Second Timothy 3:16, verses 15 and 16, which is where the Awana theme comes from where we study and learn the Word of God as children, says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

I can tell you today without any doubt, any question, any hesitation, God did not intend for His children to figure out the problems of life all by ourselves. So therefore you know what He did? He gave us His Word. His Word that Hebrews 4:12 says is living and it’s powerful and it’s sharper than any two-edged sword. It is more powerful than any book that you have on your shelves at home; it is more powerful than any book that Amazon or Barnes and Noble or any local bookstore or anybody has anywhere on the face of the earth.

Why? Because it is not a book that was written by man. It is a book that was written by God and God alone. And so we stand here today and we believe and we teach and we learn and we understand that God’s Word can change our lives. It’s the manual that God has given to us so that we can navigate all the challenges of life, all the problems that we face, all the situations that we go through. God has given us His Book.

And I just firmly believe this. I believe that God’s Book, God’s Word, is inerrant, is infallible, it is inspired—there is not one mistake within the pages of this book. Every word comes directly from God’s heart, directly to our hearts so that we will know how to live. There is not a mistake in it.

Let me just tell you something. If there is not a mistake in this book, if there is nothing in this book that is incorrect, then let me tell you something. This is where I want to stand. This is the book I want to learn, and there is no greater place to do that than gathered together with a body of believers, a family of believers learning God’s Word

The fourth word is the word *mission*. The word mission. Being part of a local church gives us our purpose, gives us reason, it gives us our ability to make a difference in our world, to do something bigger than ourselves.

Look what it says in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” So be it. That is what Jesus said.

Jesus gave us our marching orders. He gave us our mission statement. And by doing that He told us what it is that we are supposed to do. In fact, our church mission statement here, you’ve heard me say it a thousand times, “To change our world by developing Christ-followers who love God and love people.” All of those words come directly from the words of Christ—Matthew 28, Mark 16, Acts 1. Over and over again, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Make disciples of all the nations. Go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

When Jesus was asked the question, what’s the most important commandment, He said, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the second is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself.” All of those things combined, when you put them all together, we get our mission statement. This is what Jesus told us we had to do.

But then He also instituted His Church so that we could do it better, so that we could go out into this world that is so full of darkness and we could change it all, that we could speak truth in the darkness, that we could bring light into places where there is no light, that we could make an impact, make a difference.

And yet some of us treat the church as a place that we just show up at. We treat the church as we show up on Sunday morning and therefore we’ve put the notch in the belt, we’ve kind of punched the card, punched, the clock, and now we go back home and live our lives.

No, no, no. The church is not a destination. The church is a vehicle to get us where we need to go. How many of you have jobs here? Just raise your hand if you have a job. Okay, a lot of you have jobs. And all of you who have jobs, pretty much for the purposes of this conversation, we know that you have to actually get to your job in order to do your job, right?

I know there are some people in a new world that you can stay at home and work. I get that. But for the most part, we all have to go somewhere to go to work. So you either drive a car or ride a bus or walk or ride a bike or some other way, carpool with somebody to get to your job. So you know that when you leave your house in the morning, somehow you’ve got to get transportation that will get you to the place that you actually have to do what it is that you are supposed to do.

The same thing is true of the church. It’s a perfect picture of what the Church is all about. The Church is not a destination. The Church is the vehicle that God has chosen for us to be able to get where we need to be, to do what we are supposed to do, to push back the darkness of this culture with the only light that there is, with the only hope that exists, with the only truth that reigns, and that is the message of Jesus Christ and Him alone. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except through me.” And God has sent His Church to tell that message.

Let me just tell you something today. We stand here today in a place that is a building. It's a beautiful building. God has provided it for us. But let me just tell you something: this is just a building. Just a building.

In fact, this complex that we're sitting on—not the specific space that we're in right now; this used to be a parking lot—but just beyond the walls of this past parking lot is the building that we use for educational space here at the church. And you know what it used to be? It used to be a cell phone factory. Many of you have been around Lynchburg, you know that. It's been here a long time. In fact, I met a lady in the earlier service who was visiting here today from another town, and in the early service she came up and said, "You know that cell phone factory you were talking about? I used to work in that cell phone factory! I went looking for the place I used to work; couldn't find it because it doesn't look anything like it used to."

But it was a cell phone factory. This building, if we decided to, one day if we decided to move our church and go somewhere else, do you know what it could be? It could be a Toys R Us. It could be a really big restaurant. It could be a really cool house. It could be a lot of things, right? It's just a building. It's block and it's steel and it's carpet and it's paint, all the wood. But let me tell you something: it's just a building.

The church is not a building. The church is you and me. It's the very body of Christ that He has put together, that He has formed, that He is growing, that He is strengthening, that He is teaching, that He is leading, that He is guiding, and it is so vital that when each and every one of us recognize that we are part of something that's bigger than ourselves, that we know that we have to show up and contribute to that major part, to be what God intends us to be.

Why is the Church relevant? Because we live in a culture today that is further and further away from who God is, and God has sent us, the Church, to tell them about Jesus. And together that's exactly what we're going to do.

Keywords: Church of Jesus Christ, body of Christ, local church, family of God, isolation, fellowship, authority, Word of God, spiritual growth, mission, purpose